



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 1 March 2011

Mardi 1^{er} mars 2011

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Tuesday 1 March 2011

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mardi 1^{er} mars 2011

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Buddhist prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

**HEALTH PROTECTION
AND PROMOTION
AMENDMENT ACT, 2011**

**LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION
ET LA PROMOTION DE LA SANTÉ**

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 22, 2011, on the motion for second reading of Bill 141, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act / Projet de loi 141, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: We're resuming the debate from my speech last Tuesday, and it's amazing that—

Applause.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much.

Mr. Peter Shurman: You're a stalwart man, Clark.

Mr. Steve Clark: Absolutely. Thank you for your thunderous applause.

We're here to talk about Bill 141, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act. I think it was the member for Thornhill actually who mentioned the naming of bills by this government. I think one of the bills was called the Good Government Act, which was a bill to amend a whole bunch of administrative things. Your bill namer must have been out. I think the person who names your bills must have been working on the Premier's PowerPoint presentation that he's giving all over the province, because the name of this bill is a bit bland compared to some that you have put forward.

As we were talking about it, the chief medical officer of health, Dr. King's, report is really what spurred this on from the H1N1 issues that arose throughout the province. And as I mentioned last Tuesday, during this period I was in the municipal sector—it's funny that we're here during the Good Roads Conference talking about Bill 141. I take my mind back to my days as CAO—my short tenure as

CAO—of the township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands, and this was an issue that we discussed at great length during that time.

As many of you know, municipalities have emergency plans. We actually did a tabletop exercise about the pandemic. Wayne Shields from our fire department exercised a tabletop about what would have happened if H1N1 hit our municipality to the same degree as we thought the pandemic was going to hit. It tried to really challenge us as a municipality to rally what were the most important services and what was required by the municipality to run. I found that places, at least in my jurisdiction, at least in Leeds–Grenville, in eastern Ontario, were very conscious of emergency preparedness. So when the whole discussion of H1N1 took place, we rallied together. We worked with our local health unit. I think I mentioned last Tuesday, in my initial five or six minutes, that we didn't have the region-jumping that was experienced here in the GTA, in the 416 and the 905. We didn't have that situation. Yes, there was some confusion in the early days, and I'll talk about that as part of my address this morning.

I think it goes back to the ice storm, back to 1998, when that hit in my community, in my riding. We rallied around and worked together to try to help each other. So when I was at Good Roads last night and I talked about how I can't stay up late and maybe I can't go to as many hospitality rooms as I wanted to—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Just a few more.

Mr. Steve Clark: No—and I'm being serious. I may have gone to one or two more, but I had to come here and speak at 9 o'clock. I told them the subject; I told them it was Bill 141, and the fact that this was going to give medical officers of health expanded powers to use facilities. And you know what they said? They said, "We thought that was already in place," because when we had the ice storm in 1998 we all worked together. We opened up a Legion if we needed to. We opened up a school if we needed to. We worked together. We moved generators when they needed to be moved. We worked to get power lines when they needed to be moved.

I wasn't actually a part—my wife was a reporter up until my election as an MPP a year ago. In fact, my anniversary, just so you know, is Friday. I just wanted you to know that. When the ice storm hit, my wife, Deanna, was a reporter working for the Recorder and Times. She was out and I was home with the kids, and I think I mentioned last Tuesday the fact that the kids ate

steak and eggs for four or five days during the week of the ice storm.

Again, what happened was we rallied together, and I think what happened to us in 1998 helped us plan for what happened with the health unit and working with H1N1. I know that as a municipal official I talked about the tabletop exercise that we had done. I remember quite vividly as a chief administrative officer our weekly calls with the health unit to understand where they were with their planning in Lanark, Leeds and Grenville.

When I go back and look at Dr. King and her recommendations, the one thing that rings clear is what's not in this bill, and the things that I talked about earlier, where people expect that you can just mobilize and use a Legion or a municipal centre when we want to, or that if we need to open up a vaccination centre, we'd be able to do so. But what's not there—and I remember the paragraph that I quoted last week from Dr. King, where she basically talked about the issues, the fact that they underestimated the logistics of organizing and delivering this campaign. I think we've heard that—the issues I mentioned before, of the disturbing lineups that took place in many communities, the fact that there were, as Dr. King talked about, different plans unfolding in different communities, a different level of service depending on where you lived in the province.

But the issue that she talks about that's not here—and I'll quote it. It says, "That last point is critical." Do you know what she's talking about when she talks about, "That last point is critical"? She's talking about the need for an immunization program, and her quote is, "In an era where there is much talk about electronic health systems and patient records, we do not have in this province the capacity to electronically manage and track our immunization programs." This is the Panorama program that's been in the works since SARS, and it's something that I think needs to be addressed.

I was in Oakville three weeks ago for the Premier's PowerPoint presentation. I think he quoted at one point that they had a big family and they didn't have all the gadgets that maybe we have now, and the fact that he was the remote. Everybody laughed—and I think he did it yesterday at the ROMA conference. You know, he might even be the remote in October; he might be the cause of the channel being changed on the political parties come October 6. But his discussion about electronics and the quote from Dr. King about the problems with electronic immunization—it almost made me think that we've got this backwards, that we should have included something like that in this bill. I hope that during public hearings we'll have an opportunity to talk about that, about the need for that immunization record, the fact that Dr. King felt that it was such a critical piece of the puzzle that wasn't included.

0910

But I don't think that we have such great confidence in electronics, even in this Legislative Assembly. The Premier mentions the use of cellphones in classrooms. Dr. King talks about the need for electronic records. The

way that we operate—we talk about kids using cellphones in classrooms, and technology; I can't even use one of these in the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Good.

Mr. Steve Clark: I don't think it is good.

Mr. Michael Prue: Put it away.

Mr. Steve Clark: What do you mean, "Put it away"?

Interjection: It's a prop.

Mr. Steve Clark: I figured that the Sergeant-at-Arms would come and grab it from me by now.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Put it where the moon don't shine.

Mr. Steve Clark: I just think that when we talk about electronic records and we talk about cellphones in classrooms and we talk about making electronics work to our advantage—

Mr. John O'Toole: They would probably ban them; I think they want to ban them.

Mr. Steve Clark: Maybe they will. But I believe that there's a grave mistake in this bill by not including Panorama, by not taking what Dr. King calls a critical point to be added to the bill.

In my own community, as I said, in Leeds–Grenville, we didn't experience the issues that they had in the GTA. We didn't have the problems. In fact, there's a story in one of the local papers, when I did the research—it was actually written by my wife before she left the paper, when she was the health reporter, so it's nice that I get to quote from Deanna's story today—not that she cares.

In Leeds and Grenville they did have some problems with lineups at first. They did have, as many areas did, a higher number of young children, people in poorer health and expectant mothers in the first two days of the immunization. In our jurisdiction, the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit revamped its system. What we did was we started a numbering system which allowed for a greater number of people to be served in each clinic. I remember my wife and I going to the clinic that was held at the Brockville Memorial centre. Using that numbering system, we got in and out very quickly. They mobilized as many nurses as they could; they had some retired nurses working. In fact, my wife was immunized by a retired nurse—very nice. I had a younger nurse, and I got the sense that she wasn't necessarily a Progressive Conservative supporter, because she stuck me pretty good. I guess I should realize that when I'm going to a clinic I shouldn't necessarily open up and let them know what I do for a living, because it was—

Mr. Peter Shurman: What is it you do for a living?

Mr. Steve Clark: What is it that I do for a living? That's right; good idea.

The total in our jurisdiction—I wanted to give you some of the percentages to give you a flavour how successful the program was: We had a total of almost 55,000 residents, including a large number of children, get the vaccination, out of a population of 170,000. That's not just my riding; that's part of the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington's riding as well, because we share that. So in three months' worth of clinics

we had two people with H1N1 who passed away; a total of 120 cases were confirmed; and 41 people had to be hospitalized. But again, as I said earlier, from our experience with the ice storm we had a lot of co-operation between municipalities, community organizations, volunteer agencies, school boards and the police. In the end, 32% of the population were immunized, and the cost totalled \$828,000.

We used quite a lot of phone information, which again goes back to my discussion on—Mr. Prue, I'll just hold it up quickly. We used a lot of technology. The website had between 6,000 and 8,000 hits per day. I know that when I was in the municipal sector, we drove people to that website all the way along.

We put in place many things that we've got in place here. As many of you know, as you come into the galleries, you've got a hand sanitizer, those automatic dispensers that are all around. I notice that the one up on the fourth floor coming into the public gallery is empty, so we need to have a little more diligence in making sure those are filled.

Many municipalities, many public sector agencies, many community groups took the information that health units gave them and put it into practice. They put the notices up in their community centres. They worked together, group to group. I'm proud that we didn't have those same issues, and I can respect that there were a number of issues on other levels, things that Dr. King talked about, those different levels of service in different communities.

So I hope that as we move forward in the second reading debate and going through into committee, that we'll consider the electronic side of it, the things that Dr. King said weren't included—the critical point, like Panorama. I know that our deputy leader on this side of the House spoke in her hour lead about the same concern. I know other members in this House have expressed the same concern as those members.

As we move forward, I hope that we will have second reading. I wanted to give some of my own comments about eastern Ontario because I think the ice storm was a very real opportunity for us to mobilize. I think emergency preparedness, working with the health unit, is very important. Many people think that this is something that's already in place. But I hope, as we move forward, we'll listen on the electronic imaging and records side.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Let's talk about these damned BlackBerrys and these other electronic devices.

Mr. Steve Clark: I like them.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have no doubt that the member likes them. It's obvious that a few other people here like them because, rather than listening to or participating in the debate, they've got their hands down at their laps, looking at Lord knows what on their BlackBerrys. You know, for the life of me, it doesn't do anything to add to the debate or the discourse in here; it detracts from it. These are toys, and I know darned well because I've

looked over enough shoulders to know darned well that it's not people doing business; it's people playing thumb volleyball, if you will, with these damned BlackBerrys that have no business in a Legislature, the focus of which should be on debate.

Lord knows there's little enough of that that goes on in here. When you have a member like this member, the member from Leeds–Grenville, who, to his credit, after a relatively short period of time here, demonstrates an ability to get up on his feet and carry a 20-minute commentary on a bill like this without frequent reference to notes, never mind reading the darned speech, people should be listening to him.

I did. I found his comments informative and interesting. People who were playing with their BlackBerrys weren't doing that. People who were playing with their BlackBerrys were doing anything but listening to the member for Leeds–Grenville. We've got a long-standing tradition, though chairs have been reasonably lax about it—reasonably, not unreasonably so—of not referring profusely or at length to notes. In other words, people aren't supposed to read speeches. That's designed to achieve a number of goals. Some of them are traditional; all of them valid.

BlackBerrys do not add to the discourse here in the chamber, or—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments and questions?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I am going to comment on what the member from Leeds–Grenville said. I actually would like to thank him for his remarks, and I do agree with the member from Welland that they were quite informative, because I agree with the point that the member was making about what the public thinks.

0920

In fact, two of the things that are in Bill 141, the public believes already happen. The first is the power for the chief medical officer of health to take over public facilities in times of a health emergency. I think the public tends to assume that the chief medical officer of health already has that. In fact, the only thing the chief medical officer of health has is the very narrow power to take over facilities specifically to create isolation wards. But we know from the H1N1 experience that there's a broader need than that. Perhaps it's an immunization centre; perhaps it's an urgent treatment centre where we can direct people with something like H1N1 to go, rather than to the standard emergency room.

The other thing that people tend to assume is that because the chief medical officer of health is called "chief," she has the power to issue directives to the other medical officers of health. That's simply not true. The way the legislation is currently structured, each local one is an independent operator, and as we saw with both SARS and H1N1, there's a need for the chief medical officer of health in a province-wide situation to provide some coordinating directives. So thank you for pointing that out.

With respect to Panorama, it's a huge frustration, and it's the frustration of trying to get 10 provinces all on the same page. We share your frustration.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's been a pleasure to listen to the member, in the brief time he has been here, from Leeds–Grenville. But the experience that he spoke of is quite relevant to the discussion here on this Health Protection and Promotion Act.

I'm always amazed that there is a former medical officer of health here from Oak Ridges–Markham, I believe it is, who was a medical officer of health for York region, I believe—a wonderful person, from everything I've heard. Why isn't she the Minister of Health, one would ask? She would be the logical one. Why isn't she taking the lead on this? She knows of what she speaks.

Nonetheless, he mentioned the Panorama thing, and this is the problem I find, really. The money that's coming from Ottawa for health care for the wait time strategy is never mentioned, nor have they ever thanked Stephen Harper for that. One thing: Panorama is a national program and it feeds into Canada Health Info-way, which is the infrastructure for an integrated health information system nationally. In Ontario we spend a billion dollars on consultants at eHealth. The wasted money is tragic. Is health care any better under Premier McGuinty?

Look at the first three pages in your clippings today, about retirement homes facing stricter rules. It goes on to say, "France Gélinas (Nickel Belt) said the proposed rules sound as though Ontario is creating a 'parallel for-profit' long-term care system." I think she's on to something. I'm not making this up. Another one: "Hospital Bed Found for GTA Man." This is a person stranded in the United States for days on end, a 67-year-old with heart issues. They finally, after pressure from the Star—here's another one, a Star investigation: "Pay \$1,800 a Day or Get Out" of the hospital, an elderly woman was told. "A social worker at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre told Cornacchia her mother could be billed \$1,800 a day...." Now, that question was raised last week—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments and questions.

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Leeds–Grenville and I would like to tell you that I understood everything he was trying to say, but every time he spoke, he kept making use of his prop. I must admit I found it rather disconcerting because (a) we're not supposed to use props in this place, and (b) he kept talking about the need to constantly go to the website. I have to agree with my colleague from Welland. We have had this debate many times in this House and we have had this debate many times in committee about whether or not BlackBerrys and other devices should be used in this House.

It has always been the position of this House, of the Speaker, that they ought not to be here. So I'm wonder-

ing; perhaps he can tell us in his rebuttal why he finds it necessary to bring such a device, contrary to the rules and procedures of the House. Now, I'm not naive. I can look around and see at least three or four members using their BlackBerrys as I am speaking. Again, I wonder: Is this what we are supposed to be doing here? We are supposed to be listening to each other's speeches. We are supposed to be listening to what people have to say. We are supposed to be giving some sober thought to the bills that are before us.

I think the time has come when all members of the House should do away with these toys, as my friend from Welland said, in the House and that they should be doing what we are sent here to do; that is, to listen to each other, to speak to each other and to make rules and regulations for the people of Ontario, giving real thought to it and not being sidetracked by some toy in our possession.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Leeds–Grenville has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank the member for Welland, the member for Guelph, the member for Durham and the member for Beaches–East York.

Interjection: Would you like a BlackBerry?

Mr. Steve Clark: I've got a BlackBerry. I've got one in my pocket.

I just want to thank you very much. I wanted to give a few comments from my own municipal experience relative to what we faced during the H1N1 issue, but I did want to highlight not just Dr. King's recommendation that the critical piece that's not in this bill is the fact that we don't have an electronic immunization record—and I wanted to do it in conjunction with some of the electronic things that have been in this House.

Mr. John O'Toole: eHealth was a waste of money.

Mr. Steve Clark: We've talked about the billion-dollar boondoggle of eHealth and how much money was wasted from front-line health care.

The Premier has mused about how he feels that a BlackBerry would be a very useful tool for a young person in a school, yet, as my New Democrat friends talk about it, it's not something that we're allowed to use here, which is crazy. To again go back to my municipal career, the BlackBerry that I had, for my New Democratic friends, also had a two-way radio, so I could call the firefighters on the scene or the public works crew that was dealing with an issue. I found it was a very useful electronic tool.

If I'm to leave anything in this debate this morning, other than a lack of caffeine in my brain, it's to emphasize Dr. King's recommendations that if we are going to move forward with this bill, we should seriously consider putting some emphasis on the immunization records—the things that aren't included in Bill 141.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I should indicate that the New Democrats are quite prepared to see this bill receive second reading and then go on to committee.

Our health critic, the member for Nickel Belt, has been very clear about the concerns that she has on behalf of the NDP; that is, that the provisions in section 3 of the bill are in some respects the War Measures Act of medical officers of health in that they allow the Ontario chief medical officer of health, the provincial medical officer of health, to override local or regional medical officers of health. Ms. Gélinas, the member for Nickel Belt and the NDP health critic, has expressed concern that that may not always be a wise direction, a wise course, a wise route to take, because what it does is it denies the unique nature of so many regional matters in terms of the ability of a regional medical officer of health to rally his or her health community to respond to an issue; understanding the issue from a regional or local level; and the fact that even in a pandemic, even in a provincial or national or international crisis, there could well be regional peculiarities, idiosyncrasies or specific characteristics that would make it preferable that local medical officers of health design the response to the particular issue.

So our health critic, the member for Nickel Belt, is very much eager to see this bill go to committee. Should the bill go to a second reading vote today, New Democrats will be using our powers under the rules, under the standing orders, to force the bill to committee, because it would be interesting and very important to hear from medical officers of health as to whether or not the concern about this War Measures Act-style provision is widespread or whether it's restricted to one or two medical officers of health, regional ones, and whether or not it can be accommodated.

0930

There was some reference made in the course of this morning's debate to the notorious Liberal eHealth scandal, the one that took out George Smitherman and also undoubtedly played the largest role in defeating him for his mayoralty bid, and I notice that the herpetetic Sarah Kramer has reappeared. "Herpetetic" is as appropriate an adjective as one could find to describe Ms. Kramer, because she keeps coming back, however unwanted she is. I find that here we are; she's discovered again. Sarah Kramer has a new job in California, 3,000 miles away. She's risen from the ashes of scandal. It wasn't enough to do in George Smitherman; she's not, I guess—what's his name?—Jerry Brown, another revived or resurrected phoenix-like politician, without his rock-and-roll mistress this time.

Laughter.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, she was. He was doing fine in his day.

So now she's going to do a number on poor phoenix-like Jerry Brown. When I read that in this morning's paper—where's the member for Leeds–Grenville and his technology when you need him? Don't these people have Google? Somehow, Sarah Kramer—and there's no suggestion she's using a pseudonym. There's no suggestion that she's had a nose job and is wearing those glasses with the big nose and the bushy moustache, like the Groucho Marx stuff, to disguise herself. There's no

suggestion that she's impersonating somebody else. She hasn't stolen Premier McGuinty's identity; she isn't parading as a McGuinty—although of course they're closely connected.

Don't those people have Google? Google Sarah Kramer—that's Kramer with a "K"—and you have reams and reams and reams of dope on this woman; bad dope. Hell's bells: runaway spending by consultants, a \$317,000 severance package and \$1 billion blown in the Smitherman eHealth scandal, and Kramer was the operator; she drove the getaway car. She was, for all intents and purposes and in many respects, the brains behind the operation. You'd think—what's that old line about, "Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me"? I've heard, "Fool me three times"—there's an answer to that one that I can't recall at the moment. I find it remarkable that this woman can—how did she get into the States? You would think—my colleague from Beaches–East York used to be an immigration officer. Perhaps when he has 20 minutes to address this matter he could comment on this. Heck, I go over to Niagara Falls, New York, or Buffalo and I've got to show them my passport and tell them why I'm going there and what I do for a living. I'm just in my 15-year-old pickup truck and dressed simply. I haven't got the crown jewels with me in a leather satchel. Ms. Kramer should be carrying, in view of how much severance she got, \$317,000—

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Buy a new car. Support Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Ms. Pupatello, see, doesn't have the confidence in the North American auto industry that I do. I drive a Chevy S-10 pickup. I bought it in 1994. It's got hundreds of thousands of clicks on it now, and she wants me to buy a new one. I say no. I'm proud of my General Motors product, because it's good for 300,000 or 400,000 kilometres. My Chevy pickup is a testament to the quality of manufacturing—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask the member to keep his remarks relevant to the bill under discussion.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker.

My Chevy S-10 was built right here in Canada and the United States, bits and pieces and parts—good junk. But I suspect that the transmission plant, as it used to exist in St. Catharines—except we revived that plant as well.

So here we are with, as I say, Sarah Kramer. During the course of the revelations around the Smitherman Liberal eHealth scandal, it was revealed that Kramer gave a speech that cost \$25,000 to write. In other words, here she is, high-priced help, and she's paying some hanger-on 25 Gs to write a speech. How long is a speech? Well, here, speeches can go on forever, but as we all know, in the context that she was likely to give it, the usual speech is, oh, 20 minutes long. There are any number of first-year community college or university students who would have no trouble drafting it. There's a whole pile of skilled people working for substandard wages as support staff—at least in the Liberal and Tory

ranks, because our staff are unionized, the NDP staff—who write these speeches. They write them for \$25,000 a year.

So there's Ms. Kramer giving \$25,000 speeches that she's paying for on the taxpayers' tab and giving out \$16 million in contracts without competitive bidding: \$16 million of taxpayers' money. That's huge. People go to jail for far less; at least they ought to. Wow. Sixteen million dollars in contracts is what Ms. Kramer granted without competitive bidding.

I don't know what's going on with folks in California. The governor had a reputation for some peculiar ingestions back in his day. Maybe he's back on the pipe; I don't know. But the fact that Ms. Kramer could find herself a job anywhere in the world other than—well, heck, if you had a Tim Hortons or McDonald's franchise, you wouldn't hire her. Lord knows, if you can't trust her with \$16 million, how can you trust her with chump change?

So that's that. I wanted to raise that and just comment on it, especially in the context of it being raised, as you heard, in the course of the debate here this morning.

I have some sympathy with the argument of the member for Nickel Belt around the provisions in section 3 of this bill, these amendments to the Health Protection and Promotion Act. Of course, the member for Nickel Belt comes from the very unique real-world experience of northern Ontario, where a region is huge. A regional medical officer of health has responsibility for geographic turf that's larger than many countries in the world.

It was interesting because this is the same member for Nickel Belt who, yesterday, was tearing a strip off the sinister Liberals for their attack on working women and men by virtue of their—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Don't apologize, Ms. Albanese; it's okay—by virtue of their attack on working women and men in the bill that prohibits TTC workers from exercising their right to withdraw their labour.

The member for Nickel Belt, again, yesterday was saying to these folks here on the other side, on the government side, that they don't get it. Somehow they think that the province of Ontario begins and ends at the intersection of Yonge and Bloor. Well, I know better than that because, you see, I come from down Welland riding. I come from communities like Wainfleet and Port Colborne and Welland and Thorold and Pelham and St. Catharines and Merritton and Crowland—old Crowland, now part of Welland.

0940

Heck, my colleague for Beaches–East York is a Torontonionian, in the sense of a greater Torontonionian, but he knows a heck of a lot better than to suggest that the province of Ontario begins and ends at the intersection of Yonge and Bloor; he knows that darned well. And he also knows that a Toronto-focused model can't necessarily be applied cookie-cutter style to other parts of Ontario, especially when you witness the vast, vast differences in lifestyle, culture and distances alone—

distances alone—and climate, dealing with an issue in the north, in the peak—in the real north.

When I was a kid, I used to think—we never went on vacations, because we were just a working-class family, but there were other young kids whom I went to school with, and their families would go on vacation. I'd say, "Where are you going?" and they'd say, "We're going up north." That meant places like Bracebridge or Huntsville or Peterborough. So for the longest time I thought that was the north. I'd never been there. I wasn't there until I was a teenager. But I thought Huntsville must be the north. Well, I soon learned that, heck, even North Bay is only just the beginning of the north—and I like North Bay, by the way. North Bay is a very fascinating town, with its history and its location on the lake.

But you go to the real north—not this little cottager north, but up to the Timmins–James Bay riding or the Kenora–Rainy River riding—and you go to the north of those ridings, you go along the James Bay–Hudson Bay coast, and you're in a different country, never mind the province of Ontario. The sensibilities and sensitivities of Torontonians simply have no relationship whatsoever to the reality of living in those communities, those isolated communities, those impoverished communities, those barren communities, those communities where people struggle on a daily basis with issues that people in Toronto can't even begin to imagine. As a matter of fact, when you talk about health crises, surely there's the unrecognized—at least by southerners—health crises of those small communities in northern Ontario that relate to the despair of young people, that relate to addictions in supposed dry communities, where the toxin of choice then becomes glue or aerosols or those types of solvent-sniffing ingestion.

This is just dramatic, horrifying stuff, yet we see so little reference made to it by downtown Toronto medical-officer-of-health types, and a failure to understand that their provincial responsibility, be it of the medical officer of health or of the government of the province of Ontario, extends beyond Bracebridge or Huntsville—very nice parts of the world as well, but certainly not even beginning to be representative of what constitutes the vastness of Ontario.

I have no idea, and I leave it to the NDP health critic, the member from Nickel Belt, to determine, as a member of the committee's subcommittee, how many people would elect to appear before the committee. There could in fact be modest interest or marginal interest in this bill at committee, and if that's the case, then so be it. But the bill should proceed to committee. The committee should be allowed to set its own agenda, based on the amount of interest or demand there is for appearances before the committee. And then, whether it takes a little bit of time or a little longer time, it should be referring the bill back to the House and then we'll respond in due course, based on what has been learned at committee and what, if any, amendments have been put forward either by the government or the two opposition parties, and the extent to which they have been accepted and the extent to which

the bill has been modified or improved or made acceptable.

So let's make it very, very clear that when the NDP supports this bill on second reading, it's in principle only. We want to be very, very clear—and it's in the interest of getting the bill to committee, because of course it's pretty difficult to say, "Well, we want the bill to go to committee but we're not going to support the bill in principle for the purpose of getting it to committee." So we want to be very clear that we're supporting it in principle, with the goal in mind of getting it to committee. Our support on second reading does not dictate or in any way confirm or warn that there will be similar support on third reading, when the bill is put forward here in the House for its third and final reading. Not by a long shot.

One of the remarkable things—and we've all witnessed here the period, the era of emergency czars. I remember that Julian Fantino was the flavour of the month there for a while. He was the province's emergency czar for a few moments, and then he was the commissioner of the OPP. Then, of course, he became Greg Sorbara's best ex-friend when—

Laughter.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, the two were like this, right?

Mr. Toby Barrett: With friends like that.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yes; it was like, "Hey." They were tight. As a matter of fact, there was some pillow talk, because we learned that Mr. Sorbara, the member for Vaughan, had been trying to seduce Mr. Fantino—

Mr. Toby Barrett: Ugh.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Perish the thought, Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Perish the thought.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, wait a minute; he's yours now, Mr. Barrett. Don't disparage Fantino. Quite frankly, you're welcome to him. We learned that the member—

Mr. Toby Barrett: Your riding is welcome to him.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Barrett notes.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Put that in Hansard.

Mr. Peter Kormos: And it is.

The member for Vaughan was seducing Mr. Fantino, but then learned that Mr. Fantino was two-timing the Liberals. Mr. Fantino was stepping out on them with the Tories.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: He's a swinger, is that what you're saying?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Ms. Pupatello notes.

So here we've got this bizarre scenario of a mature man who obviously is still feeling his oats. The imagination is just running rampant now as to the potential images that I can describe. Thank goodness we're nearing the end of this, because Mr. Fantino is on his own. He's on his own now. But who knows?

Just as we wrap up, when we look at all this cuckolding that's been going on—Liberals and Tories—let's look at it this way: The Liberals got Sarah Thomson; the Tories got Rocco Rossi. In tennis, they call that love-

love, don't they? I don't think either of them are ahead, by any stretch of the imagination.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Somewhere in that 20 minutes there was an issue raised that had to do with Bill 141, so I will confine my comments to that.

The member talked about, in section 3, the proposed power of the chief medical officer of health to issue directives, and raised a concern that this would be one-size-fits-all. I want to assure him that that is absolutely not the case. First of all, the bill makes it quite clear that directives can be issued to any or all boards. That means that, in fact, if a health emergency affects a narrow area or just a part of the province, you can issue the directive in just that part of the province.

But the member has raised the issue of whether a reasonable response in the north may be different than a reasonable response in the GTA. Well, the chief medical officer of health, Dr. King, fully recognizes that a reasonable response might be different in different parts of the province. There is nothing in the bill that says she has to tell everybody to do the exact same thing. If you think about H1N1, where there were priority populations, you might look at the north and say, "But in the north, which is immense, you're going into a community and you're just going to vaccinate on that one day." Well, of course you're going to vaccinate everybody in that small community who you can get out. You're going to target the people who are high-priority, but you're not going to say, "Well, in Toronto we're only giving it to this kind of people this week," so the rest of the people in that northern community can't have it. That would be idiocy.

We understand that within the concept of coordination there may be different approaches fine-tuned for different areas of the province. That's—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

0950

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to comment on the speech by the member from Welland on Bill 141, which is the Health Protection and Promotion Amendment Act, 2010. Certainly, the member from Welland was entertaining, particularly with his tennis comments. He did go on at length and at times mentioned the bill, and he did actually refer to the north. I did want to bring that into my couple of minutes of comments, because he specifically mentioned Huntsville. We have a page from Huntsville right now, Sadie Honderich, and her parents, Jamie Honderich and Pam Carnochan, are here in the members' gallery today. I'm not sure whether he meant to refer to them, but I'd like to welcome them to Queen's Park today and I look forward to meeting them in a couple of minutes.

Bill 141 is a response to the H1N1 outbreak and it's acting on the recommendations of the chief medical officer of health, Dr. King, and the lessons learned from that outbreak. Our party will be supporting, in principle,

the bill, as the member from Welland suggested, so that it will go to committee and can be further improved.

But just going back to his comments about the north, he talked about how the north is different. Of course, the OGRA/ROMA conference is going on right now. North of Huntsville we have some municipalities, and when I was there last night at a reception, one of the issues they wanted to talk to me about was health care, particularly in the Burk's Falls area, and how they feel they aren't getting the primary care that they need. That was one of the issues brought up just last night.

Going further north, often you will hear, if you travel around the north, that they don't like the fact that the decision-making happens in Toronto. They feel it's Toronto-centred decision-making that doesn't recognize the differences in the north.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently, as I always do, to the member from Welland. It takes me back to one of my very first weeks here as a brand new MPP, having just been elected in a by-election. I was told to come up and speak for an hour to a bill. After about 55 minutes, I ran out of things to say and I sat down. The member from Welland wisely told me there, "You could have filled up an extra five minutes. You could have said almost anything." Well, I listened to him today and he did.

This was absolutely amazing to me, because what he wanted to convey, I honestly believe, is that there may be some difficulty with section 3 of the bill. That's what he wanted to convey. He wanted to say that medical officers of health in disparate places around this province often have to deal with very different issues and ought to be listened to very carefully for local preference. I think that's what he was trying to say. But in and amongst all of those, he wove such an interesting speech. He talked about Ms. Kramer and what she's doing down at UCLA. He talked about his S-10 Chevy and how he still likes to drive it and how he can still get parts made in Ontario. He talked about Julian Fantino, the newly minted MP from Vaughan. And he closed off the entire speech talking about that great tennis duo Rossi and Thomson.

So I want to commend him. He made what might have been a rather boring topic into a very interesting speech, and he did the whole thing without a BlackBerry.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: As well, I listened to the member from Welland speaking, and I remember when I got elected in 2003. I was sitting on that side and sitting close to the member from Welland. He gave me the same advice and told me what I'm supposed to do when I stand up, how I can speak and not use notes and talk about many different things to keep the topic interesting and keep people listening.

I listened to him today for the last 20 minutes, and I believe he spoke almost 80% about everything. He was shooting in different directions: against the Conservatives, the Liberals, many different parts of the province of

Ontario, many different leaders, different jobs, different things. I guess maybe he kept it interesting for the last 20 minutes, but in the end I believe the member spoke about some very important things, like this bill, which I believe his party and himself are going to support in principle on one condition: that the bill goes to the committee to listen to many different stakeholders from across the province of Ontario.

I want to assure the member, as we always do on this side of the House when we introduce a bill and pass it at first and second reading, that we send it to the committee because we're always interested to listen to many different stakeholders from across the province of Ontario so they can give us an idea of how we can strengthen our ability to support Bill 141, which I believe is a very important bill for all of us in the province of Ontario, especially in emergency times.

As you know, when we had those emergency times a few months back, different health units across the province of Ontario acted differently. That's why I believe the chief medical officer should get some kind of supportive power to be able to oversee all the activities across the province, including the north, the south and the east.

My colleague the parliamentary assistant for the Minister of Health mentioned something very important: The chief medical officer should oversee everything that goes on in the province of Ontario, including the north.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Welland has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm particularly interested in the comments made by the member for Guelph. Here she is monitoring the progress of this bill as a responsible PA, parliamentary assistant, and I respect that. She clearly is a person of faith. She made that clear in her comments in response to my modest contribution to this debate, a mere 20 minutes. She's a person of faith, and my faith was shattered years ago.

She responds by saying, "Well, of course it wouldn't happen that way." She suggests, perhaps, that I'm a cynic. She suggests that I'm mistrustful of this government, or governments in general. I say, in fact that's what she's suggesting, those are valid observations. We'll deal with this in the course of committee. Our member for Nickel Belt will ask the probing questions and she'll be drilling down and talking to people who are appearing, giving commentary on the bill to the committee, and we'll see how it unfolds.

I'm prepared to be labelled a cynic and mistrustful. I can live with that; I've got big enough shoulders to carry that burden. All I say is this: From time to time, a little more cynicism around here might be a little more useful. I don't pretend to know what goes on in the government caucus room but I do have a reasonably good idea—I read the Toronto Star, among other things—that while the cynicism may be disguised in the chamber, it certainly reigns from time to time in the government caucus room.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: You called for further debate. We're not getting a speech from the government side. I question that. This legislation is very important to debate before the reality of the arrival of the next epidemic, the next pandemic. There will be considerable discussion once the next pandemic arises, and for that reason it is so important for government members to continue the debate. There are some good speakers on the other side. They have access to information that we in the opposition and the third party may not be privy to, and I regret that the rotation didn't continue because this issue is very important. Disease prevention is very important. Health promotion is very important.

1000

The government recognized that, and in 2005 they created a Ministry of Health Promotion. They created a Minister of Health Promotion. I don't know what the involvement of that minister is in these amendments to the Health Protection and Promotion Act. I do see that the Minister of Health Promotion is not shepherding this piece of legislation, which is titled the Health Protection and Promotion Amendment Act. I question that. It seemed like a good idea at the time to set up a Ministry of Health Promotion. Maybe that one is going to go the way of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, something else that the government side—it seemed to be a good idea at the time but no longer exists as a separate ministry.

In my 20 minutes—in my 18 minutes now—I want to talk a little bit more about disease prevention and health promotion, health protection. First, I'll talk a bit about H1N1. Regrettably, in some quarters, that's referred to as "swine flu." The CBC has been referring to it as swine flu, and that had a devastating impact at the time on Canada's hog industry. We have to be very careful when we talk about things like swine flu—or bird flu, for that matter, the H5N1.

I want to talk a little bit about world population—the population of humans. I cannot even begin to guess what the world population of bacteria and viruses would be. There was reference to the War Measures Act. There is an ongoing war around the planet between human beings, other animals—whether it be monkey, swine—and, of course, viruses and bacteria. This particular piece of legislation will not win that war, but the reason we support it is because it will go somewhat toward better enabling us to either ameliorate some of the impacts or perhaps prevent some of the impacts.

It's very important in a city like Toronto. Toronto has been identified as a hot spot in the world. We have a very large airport and a population comprised of people—to the credit of Toronto—from all over the world. That makes us the hot spot for any pandemic that would occur or be generated in so much of the rest of the world.

In supporting this bill, it's very important that it goes to committee. I think it's important for all of us in this House to be better informed about a pandemic. It's not something we deal with on a day-to-day basis, and as I indicated, regrettably, people rapidly become informed

essentially after the fact, after it has occurred and, with respect to H1N1, after it arrives in a city like Toronto.

So the legislation, Bill 141, the Health Protection and Promotion Amendment Act, 2011, and amendments to that bill—as I understand, when the legislation was written, it echoed many of the recommendations of Ontario's chief medical officer of health, Dr. Arlene King, and much of the focus seems to be on the last war. I don't know whether that's a good idea or not, but it does focus on what occurred in 2009 with the advent of H1N1. Dr. King brought out a report that was titled *The H1N1 Pandemic—How Ontario Fared*.

By and large, Ontario got through it not too badly off compared to other parts of the world, but the fact remains—and hence this legislation—that changes need to be made in our public health system. We need to be better prepared for the next pandemic. There will be one; we don't debate that. By and large, as I said, I understand we got off relatively easy—some people did die. But we need to examine how better to improve the system, take those mistakes and, through legislation, in this case, and regulation, see if we can do a better job next time.

As the title suggests, this is a debate couched, much of it, in terms of disease prevention, in terms of health promotion. I made mention that this government has a Ministry of Health Promotion, set up in 2005. That minister's name isn't on this bill. Again, for whatever reason, that occurred.

Oftentimes, it's these smaller ministries like that that kind of get thrown up, and then on the rare occasion that this government would even talk about cutting spending, it's the small ministries that get nailed. There's never any talk about cutting wasteful spending. The wasteful spending we see—and this was mentioned again this morning—is with respect to the eHealth scandal. That was \$1 billion. I can't remember the budget of the Ministry of Health Promotion, but there is an area where this government—if they're going to talk about cutting spending, I suggest they start talking about cutting wasteful spending. Take a look at some of those big-budget wasteful items, rather than kind of a knee-jerk response and either cutting important areas like health promotion and disease prevention or ignoring the issue and, it appears to me, ignoring that particular ministry.

Health promotion is very important. Disease prevention is very important. It's a proactive approach, something we do not see, necessarily, in the health industry, the health ministry, the illness industry or the ill health industry. It's a proactive approach. It doesn't receive the funding that it deserves, in my opinion. The funding, as we know, goes to the reactive approach, the illness treatment approach. I'm not sure what share of the health budget public health units and public health receive. I think it used to be something around 1%, and this is the area we're talking about today.

Why is this kind of health promotion legislation so important? Well, it's getting out in front. It's a focus on keeping people well, bringing in measures that prevent morbidity and mortality in the first place, prevent dis-

eases from occurring. I think of the old analogy of the ambulance and the cliff. Ambulances, and that kind of a very necessary approach, are expensive. When cars go off a cliff, you have an ambulance that will haul people out at the bottom of the cliff, provide that early treatment and get them into the hospital system emergency departments. With respect to health promotion, the whole idea is to prevent vehicles from going over that cliff in the first place; put some money in at the top of the cliff.

Much of health promotion—and it's very hard to measure. It's hard to evaluate or to determine if you are getting any results. It's based on information; it's based on education and public education and counselling and lifestyle changes.

We think so much of the highly visible efforts: washing one's hands, for example, sneezing into one's sleeve, something that is very, very important when we're talking about an issue of the next national or world pandemic. It seems fairly simple. There have been a lot of successes with this approach. I spent 20 years in the business focusing more on alcohol and other drugs with respect to education and information. We think of the good work that has been done as well with respect to diet and exercise, the impact that that can have on certain diseases; diabetes, for example. But again, does it get the credit it deserves? I suggest that it doesn't. That's why it's so important to keep pushing legislation like this. It's preventive. You never know to what extent it's going to work.

1010

In advocating disease prevention or in advocating promotion of health, when you have success, perhaps through safety, through workplace programs, that means that perhaps someone did not break their arm. So there's somebody walking around today without a broken arm, but you cannot evaluate that. You cannot pinpoint the reason why that person took certain measures, perhaps in the workplace or in the home, based on an education program or an information program. It indicates that they did not have a fall and that they did not break their arm, but it doesn't get that kind of attention because it's something that didn't happen.

I suppose that the other important side of this is disease prevention, something that this legislation is, in part, crafted to accomplish—again, so many strategies and tactics in this field. Essentially, the goal to reduce risk or, at minimum, to identify the risk, to ameliorate the risk—much of that revolves around early detection and early diagnosis, a very rapid assessment, referrals, trying to be prepared and to hit the ground running, and even the early onset of treatment, which obviously has a preventive approach. I think of—well, we would all think of immunization.

I get a flu shot every year. That was a program that our government brought in. I guess this would be—what?—10 or 11 years ago. Vitamin supplements have a big impact, in my view, on whether one gets a cold or not. Cholesterol tests and screening for cancer and things

like this are all very, very important—not necessarily on the treatment side of these continuums.

We have amendments here with the legislation—disease-prevention and health promotion-type legislation—to strengthen our public health system in advance of the next pandemic. It has taken us a couple of years to get to this point. Fortunately, we have not had a pandemic. I should knock on wood. I'm assuming we're going to get through this winter without any problems. This winter is not over. But everyone here realizes that it's not a question of whether there's going to be another pandemic or not; it's a question of when it will occur.

Since the early 1970s—and I know that our critic for health promotion, Christine Elliott, talked a bit about this—we've seen the emergence of something like 30 previously unknown diseases again associated with our old friends bacteria and viruses. These diseases wreaked havoc on our health care system, obviously, but also made a lot of people sick and killed people.

In 1977, there was the arrival of two different pandemics: Ebola and legionnaires' disease. We never heard about these things before. In 1989, there was hepatitis C; in 1996, a variant—and I can't pronounce this: Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease. H5N1: H5 is the avian flu, the bird flu. That had a devastating impact on British Columbia's poultry industry. H5N1 was in 1997. And, of course, H1N1: I hate to give it the other moniker, swine flu, but that's probably the most recent example of an—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Excuse me. We have reached the time when we recess, and I'd like to—

Mr. Toby Barrett: I'll sit down.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Okay, good.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): This House stands recessed until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jim Brownell: It's my pleasure to welcome my sister Dorothy, her husband and my brother-in-law, Ross, and my niece Brittney Gellately to the Legislature today. Welcome.

Mr. Michael Prue: On behalf of page Michael Church Carson, I'd like to introduce his mother, Elizabeth Church, his father, Neill Carson, and his grandparents, Mac and Barbra Carson. They're here today to watch the Legislature and, of course, to watch Michael.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to formally recognize page Sadie Honderich's parents, Jamie Honderich and Pam Carnochan from Huntsville, in the Legislature here today.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'd like to welcome to the Legislative Assembly today three members from the Stone Mills township council in my riding: Clarence Kennedy, Todd Steele and Eric Smith.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further introductions?

From my riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London, I'd like to welcome Paul Van Vaerenbergh and Scott Woolley, who are here for the OGRA good roads conference. They're seated in the Speaker's gallery. Gentlemen, welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Tim Hudak: The question is to the Minister of Energy. In a speech to the Rural Ontario Municipal Association yesterday, Premier McGuinty sadly missed his chance to show respect to Ontario families and Ontario municipal leaders by restoring the local decision-making abilities that he stripped away under the Green Energy Act.

I'm speaking at ROMA this afternoon. When it comes to your industrial wind farms forced on unwilling communities, I want to report back to the municipal leaders. Do you share the Premier's view that mayors and wardens who stand up for local residents are nothing more than a bunch of NIMBYs?

Hon. Brad Duguid: First off, the renewable energy process that these projects go through makes it absolutely mandatory for municipalities and communities to be fully consulted. That obligation is a condition of approval.

But I do appreciate the fact that the ROMA/OGRA conference is going on today. The Leader of the Opposition is trying to masquerade himself as a friend of municipalities, but they remember. They remember his role in a cabinet that downloaded on municipalities shamelessly. They'll never forget the damage that you did to their communities. I hope in your speech later today that you come clean with municipal leaders and apologize for the role you played in supporting the largest download in the history of this province. Apologize to those leaders today when you get them—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just say to the honourable members on the opposition side that I'm sure your leader would like to hear the answer so that could be part of his response, and don't shout him down.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Sadly, Premier McGuinty has changed, and you've changed, too, Minister. After eight years in office, you've simply lost touch with what's happening in communities across our province.

Before he was first elected in 2003, Premier McGuinty said he would consult municipalities about policies that affect them, but then he used his Green Energy Act to strip away their local powers. And to throw salt in the wound, when it comes to industrial wind farms, he now calls them a bunch of NIMBYs. You see them as a bunch

of NIMBYs; I see them as leaders standing up for local families in the riding who are forced to pay your bills.

Minister, will you do the right thing? Will you restore the local decision-making authority when it comes to the industrial wind farms that you're forcing into unwilling communities from corner to corner to corner across our great province?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. Government members, please don't encourage the opposition.

Minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Once again, ROMA and OGRA are holding their conference today, and it's quite obvious that the Leader of the Opposition thinks he can pull one over on them by masquerading as a friend of municipalities. No matter how hard this Leader of the Opposition tries, he can run from his past, but he can't hide.

The Leader of the Opposition sat in the cabinet that downloaded costs to municipalities for public health, Ontario Works, ODSP, social housing, land ambulances, the Ontario drug plan, roads and highways, and court security. The result was the largest download in the history of this province, making our communities all but unsustainable. Then he paid them the ultimate disrespect by forcing unwanted amalgamations on those very same municipalities.

When you get the chance to speak to those municipal leaders today, apologize—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier McGuinty has changed—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a second. Minister of Agriculture.

Members, we have a number of guests here today who want to hear question period. The Speaker wants to hear the questions and the answers and is finding it extremely difficult with some of the noise from both sides of the House.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier McGuinty has changed, and more and more people are catching on to that fact, Minister. Some 75 municipalities and counting have now passed resolutions objecting to your policy of enforcing industrial wind farms into these communities—75 municipalities and counting—but you believe that you know best. We side with the locally elected officials and the people that they represent who want to see a moratorium in our province.

Here's the kicker: Premier McGuinty has put in a Liberal seat-saver program. He exempted your riding in Scarborough from having these projects forced upon it. You have one rule for Liberal cabinet ministers and another rule for everywhere else. Minister, scrap your seat-saver program—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We've already responded to that question many times.

What I and our municipal colleagues want to know is, will the Leader of the Opposition confirm that he will share his energy plan today with municipal leaders, or is he afraid to share it with those very same municipal leaders, just like he's afraid to share it with Ontario families? Or is the PC campaign secretary's comment true: that you won't even share your plan with your own party members at your convention coming up in April? I was shocked to hear your PC campaign secretary say to your party members, "If you're knocking on doors after May 1, you're going to have an idea of what we stand for."

You've been in opposition for almost eight years. You've been leader for over 20 months. You've got to be kidding me: After all that time, you still have no idea what you stand for?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the honourable member from Nepean that we don't make reference to the attendance of members.

New question.

ARBITRATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Attorney General. Attorney General, your arbitration system is badly broken, and Ontario families are getting stuck with the bills. In Thunder Bay, for example, the arbitrated deal they reached with fire services on February 8 took seven years to reach, and cash-strapped municipalities say they simply don't have the ability to pay for your arbitrators' out-of-touch wage increases.

What is the Attorney General prepared to do to fix an arbitration system that is badly broken and driving up costs for cash-strapped Ontario families?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: To the Minister of Labour.

1040

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question from across the way. As we know, collective bargaining agreements are the best way to move forward; 99% of the time they've been agreed to. For those that had essential service designations, 80% of the time we've had agreement. When it comes to arbitration, we recognize the concerns, we're open to listening as to what we can do going forward, but we still believe that those are the best agreements, and those cities recognize that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The sad reality, Minister, is that arbitrators are thumbing their noses at the provincial government, they're thumbing their noses at municipalities and they're thumbing their noses at Ontario families who have to pay the bill at the end of the day. The problem is that you've created an incentive for people to get away from local bargaining and to line up in a long line for provincial arbitrators, who are handing out agreements

that are out of touch with the ability of Ontario families to pay those bills.

Minister, this system is wrong. You continue to dither. You continue to delay. You have not wrestled this to the ground. What are you prepared to do to fix an arbitration system that is badly broken and doesn't respect the fact that families have to pay the bills?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let's remind everyone that this is the same system that was in place when they were there as well. In the last 10 years, 6,000 settlements have occurred without having to go to arbitration, and we encourage municipalities and all parties engaged in the collective bargaining arrangements to do just that. We will continue to listen and we will continue to be available.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, I guess people appreciate the fact that you listen and will be available, but with all due respect, Ontario families want you to act, to make a decision and to fix a broken arbitration system that is driving bills through the roof for families already hit with skyrocketing hydro bills and the HST. They want change in this province and they want a fix for this arbitration mess you've created.

Minister, you know one of the problems is that smaller communities have to pay the bills for settlements that are derived from those in the largest, most affluent communities. You see smaller communities facing an arbitration process that unfairly treats them as being more affluent and ignores local economic growth and ability to pay. An Ontario PC government will fix a broken arbitration system to respect the fact that families pay the bills. Why won't you do that, Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Arbitration is one of the tools in the collective bargaining process that is used as a last resort. We still believe that agreements behind closed doors are best, and our government encourages parties to make every effort to resolve their disputes at the bargaining table. Our mediators will also always be available. But what we didn't do—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

There are times when members interject and I attempt to call them to order, but they are interjecting so loudly that they don't hear me. I just remind all members to try and tone things down so we that can hear both the questions and the answers.

Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We've been very successful at this, and our record speaks for itself, a record, by the way, which—we will not go back to the way they did, and that was laying off their nurses, calling them hula hoops, or the sweeping cuts that they made, or firing meat inspectors. The labour unrest that existed in the past was unacceptable. We're proud of our record. We're proud of the fact that we maintain labour peace for competitive reasons, for economic reasons and for the well-being of all of our citizens.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. In June 2010, the government released a technical paper examining the impact of the HST. It said the HST on everything from home heating to haircuts would cost consumers about \$4.7 billion more and would be a wash in the long run. Why, then, does a government document obtained through the freedom of information process show that the HST will actually cost consumers \$6.8 billion and leave consumers billions and billions of dollars behind?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Our tax plan for jobs and growth will create 600,000 net new jobs over the next 10 years. Now, the leader of the third party wants to pick out numbers from public documents. All of that information is readily available, publicly available.

The reality is, when one adds up the tax cuts we've provided for individuals and families, including the lowest personal income tax rate on the first \$37,000, which that member and her party voted against, 93% of Ontarians are paying less in taxes to create better jobs for the future. That's what leadership's all about.

We need to know where that member and her party stand.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Quite on the contrary, there's actually a \$2-billion difference between what the government said about the HST behind closed doors and what they told people right before their unpopular tax kicked in. Can the Acting Premier explain to people why there is such a difference?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The explanation is this: The leader of the third party is misusing numbers and trying to pretend that they're secret. In fact, we have published numbers repeatedly.

The leader of the NDP doesn't want to acknowledge the fact that she has changed her position. Last year they were going to get rid of the HST; now they're going to fix it.

We shouldn't be surprised because that party—I like to think of them as the “never done pandering” party, the NDP—does not want to create jobs in the future, doesn't want a better tax system for our businesses and families, doesn't want to create new jobs in the north. They want more taxes, fewer jobs and a less bright future.

That's not what we're about. We stand against them. We stand for a fair tax system for working Ontario families, and that is exactly what we have delivered—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, the only numbers I'm bringing forward in this chamber are the ones that this government kept behind closed doors and didn't want to reveal to the public.

To the public, the McGuinty Liberals claimed that the HST would, in fact, be a wash, but when the Premier and his ministers were behind closed doors, they talked openly about the fact that the HST would cost \$1,500 per year

per household. For families struggling to pay the bills, that's a huge difference.

Why were the McGuinty Liberals so afraid of being honest with Ontario families about the HST and its impact?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The numbers are public. They're there for everyone to see. They've been updated on a quarterly basis.

I would refer her to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and work done by a chap named Hugh Mackenzie, who I know that member is very familiar with. He said that, overall—because unlike the leader of the third party, he looks at the personal tax cut, which she voted against; he looked at the Ontario child benefit, which she voted against; he looked at the one-time payments, which she voted against; he looked at the benefits over time to all Ontarians.

And so I have to ask the leader of the third party once again, on the HST: Will it stay or will it go? Just tell the truth. Just tell Ontarians what you really stand for, and stand with Ken Lewenza and Sid Ryan to protect public services for a better future for Ontario.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Acting Premier. The Minister of Finance likes to bluster—loudly, I might add—about his tax cuts and his tax credits, but the same government document shows that even after those things are taken into account, consumers are left paying as much as \$4.4 billion more. If he forgets the document, I can send it over by way of a page.

Why can't this government be straight up with families and tell them just how much their tax shift is costing them?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, I want to be careful and respect the chair and this House in the language I use, but there is an incomplete and inaccurate picture being played by the leader of the third party. She selects numbers—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I don't know why the Premier is taking the week off.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): This is a final warning for the member from Nepean–Carleton. I've warned her once—this is the second time—about making references to attendance.

Minister?

1050

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The estimates were published first in 2009. They've been updated on a quarterly basis moving forward, accurately. They have been analyzed by a whole gamut of outsiders, including the Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Again, will it stay or will it go? Last year, the leader of the third party said that she would get rid of the HST. Do you know what the NDP in Nova Scotia did?

Interjection: They raised it.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They raised the HST. The leader of the third party says, “Cut taxes,” yet her predecessor wrote me a letter, saying, “Raise the old provincial sales tax.”

We reject that tired old rhetoric of no jobs—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Minister of Finance assumes that businesses are going to pass on \$4.4 billion in savings to consumers. Families don’t believe that oil and gas companies, banks and utilities are going to cough up their savings and pass them over, and neither do New Democrats. Why is the minister trying to pull a fast one on Ontario families?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The numbers are clear and published. Ontario families will be ahead of the game; 93% will pay less in overall taxes.

I challenge the leader of the third party again: Are you going to get rid of the HST? It’s a very simple question, it’s a very simple proposition, but she won’t answer it.

I’d just remind her of what people like Ken Lewenza and Sid Ryan have said about the importance of protecting our health care, about the importance of building a better education system for a brighter future for our children. That party stands against jobs, it stands against a better future, it stands against growth in the economy, and that’s why Ontarians will turn to Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party for a progressive alternative for a better future—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I just remind the finance minister about the use of names. He should be using titles.

Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The finance minister refuses to acknowledge that they were looking at one set of numbers privately, behind closed doors, and a totally different set of numbers was what they allowed out to the public.

Household budgets, meanwhile, are being hit very, very hard every day. The price of electricity is set to double in this province. The price of filling up your car with gas went up 20% in just one year. And if you have a parent waiting for long-term care in this province, you can get dinged for hundreds of dollars a day in costs.

Time and time again, this government has shown that they are not on the side of Ontario families, so why would anybody at all believe their claims about the HST?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member and her party have no credibility on the HST. Let me remind her of what the head of the Ontario Federation of Labour said. He complained “that her rhetoric undermines public support for” those funds “that fund social programs.” Ken Lewenza of the CAW reminded the leader of the third party, “Andrea, the harmonized sales tax ... cannot be an issue from the progressive side.... We do not want every Ontarian to think” this is bad. Why? Because we’re cutting taxes for families.

She can use and misuse and unquote statistics from documents that we’ve made public—and I’m proud that

we’ve made those documents public, something that her government never did when they were in office. It’s about a better future, more jobs. That’s what we’re about; that’s what they’re against. Ontarians will vote for that every time.

WIND TURBINES

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, 75 communities and counting proposed resolutions objecting to the Premier’s industrial wind turbines being forced on them. Since Premier McGuinty missed his opportunity to tell local decision-makers that he would restore the power stripped away by the Green Energy Act, will you?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We’ve responded to this question many times, but I think what is of interest is that, frankly, when we think of when that party is going to come out with their plan, their caucus is in a total, absolute state of confusion.

Let me go over this with you, Mr. Speaker: The member for Simcoe–Grey said back in October, “We’re close to putting out our platform.” The member for Thornhill said—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Minister of Economic Development. Minister of Community Safety. Attorney General, focus on the floor, not the media gallery, please. Member from Renfrew. Member from Durham, and Renfrew again.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: As I was saying, it’s a total state of confusion over there. The member for Simcoe–Grey said in October, “We’re close to putting out a party platform.” Then the member for Thornhill said sometime in early 2011. Well, it’s early 2011 and nothing.

The member for Nepean–Carleton said, “Our platform will be coming out in March.” Guess what? It’s March. They’re still not sharing their plan. Then the member for Lanark said, “I guess I’ll let it out of the bag. We’ll be launching our platform in April.”

They don’t want to let families know what their plans are, but their leader doesn’t even want to let his own caucus know what their plans are.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Well, it’s obvious that the minister doesn’t have an answer or will not answer the question.

Minister, here are some of the municipalities that propose resolutions objecting to the Premier forcing his industrial wind turbines: the townships of Adelaide Metcalfe, Warwick, Dawn-Euphemia and North Middlesex, Huron-Kinloss, Bruce county and Huron East, Asphodel-Norwood and Cavan-Monaghan, Kawartha Lakes, North Perth, Mapleton and Wellington North, Ajax and Pickering, Brantford and Prince Edward County. Their Liberal MPPs did not stand up to the Premier and neither have you, so I will. When will the Premier dump his industrial

turbines on them against their objections? Or is it something you only do in PC ridings?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Those members get up and dump on wind power and those kinds of things when they're here, but when they are in their own ridings they're joining me when we're announcing renewable energy jobs right across this province, whether we're in Windsor announcing 700 jobs; Tilsonburg, 900 jobs; Don Mills, at Celestica, 300 jobs; Satcom, in the member's own riding where she joined me in announcing 300 jobs; Fort Erie, 225 jobs; 500 jobs in Guelph; 100 jobs in Mississauga; 50 to 60 jobs in Woodbridge; 500 jobs in London; 150 jobs in Cambridge; 200 jobs in Oakville; 300 jobs in Hamilton; 200 jobs in Mississauga; 100 jobs in—I could go on; 60 jobs in Sault Ste. Marie. We're creating jobs right across this province.

DIABETES

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Later today, the Canadian Diabetes Association will hold a media event with the health minister. Both will highlight the multimillion-dollar cost of diabetes on our health care system. Both will also highlight that nearly six million Canadians live with the condition known as pre-diabetes. Fifty percent of people with pre-diabetes will develop type 2 diabetes.

My question to the Minister of Community and Social Services: Why is she ignoring her own health minister and eliminating pre-diabetes from the revised special diet allowance program?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: That's a very good question. I want to commend the Minister of Health for putting forward the strategy on diabetes. We know that diabetes is very prevalent for Ontarians and especially for our members in the north. It's very important to make sure that they have the treatment, the test and the education. That's why we've developed this wonderful strategy.

With regard to the special diet: You know that we have spent a lot of money; we have a lot of people who are on special diets. We know that we need to review the special diet, and it's redirected to the two commissioners when they review social assistance to give us advice on what we—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

1100

Mr. Michael Prue: On April 1, this minister will eliminate that entire program that the Minister of Health is going out to talk about today. That is exactly what you're going to do.

We know that diabetes rates are growing exponentially. We know the cost to our health care system will only continue to grow if we don't invest in prevention. The diabetes association and the Minister of Health have asked the finance committee to keep pre-diabetes as a funded condition in the revised special diet allowance so

that those who are at risk can eat healthier foods in order to prevent type 2 diabetes.

The Minister of Health recognizes the importance. How can this minister foolishly bar Ontarians with pre-diabetes from accessing a special diet and nutritious food?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very pleased to talk about what we're doing on diabetes. There is no question that the more than one million people in this province who are suffering from diabetes have to get the help they need to prevent their disease from progressing, if at all possible.

Let me take a moment to talk about some of the things we have done. We've created 204 diabetes education teams right across this province—in family health teams, in community health centres, in hospitals—helping patients manage their disease more effectively. We're the first province to fund insulin pumps for children with diabetes, and we've now expanded that to adults with type 1 diabetes. We have a very aggressive diabetes strategy. It's \$740 million, and it includes public education, expanded services, a diabetes registry, a number of different initiatives—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question today is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, the member from Simcoe–Grey was recently in my riding of Peterborough warning my constituents that our government was turning the debt retirement charge, or DRC, into a permanent tax grab. The member for the official opposition even called for a forensic audit of the DRC, which he says should be paid off by now and removed for all—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to take this opportunity to warn the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and the member from Cambridge. I'm not impressed. You know about the use of props in this House. The Speaker is not naive enough to not have had some suspicion that something was up when you see the cameras rolling in for question period and introductions—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Laughing at it is not helpful.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Finance.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Member from Renfrew. Minister of Economic Development, that's not helpful either. Minister of Infrastructure.

I'm going to make this comment regarding the stunt that took place here. It's important—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It was a stunt, and it's very important that we have allowed the opportunity for the media to be here sitting in the gallery behind me, this gallery here. If stunts like this are going to persist, I'm going to be entering into discussions with the media gallery and we're not going to allow the cameras in—because if I had just stood, that would not have been on television. We're all going to see this on the news tonight, courtesy of these two honourable members.

What you need to be conscious of is the impact of actions like that on the whole of this House.

Member from Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, the member from Simcoe–Grey was recently in my riding of Peterborough, warning my constituents that our government was turning the debt retirement charge, or DRC, into a permanent tax grab. The member from the official opposition even called for a forensic audit of the DRC, which he says should be paid off by now and removed from all electricity bills. He warned that our government is not being transparent with Ontarians.

My constituents have often asked me about the DRC and why we have to pay it. To the minister: What can I tell my constituents about the debt retirement charge and the opposition's claim that this is a permanent tax grab?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I want to provide a little history on the debt retirement charge. The debt retirement charge was added to every Ontarian's electricity bill in 2002 by the Harris-Hudak government. That was part of a failed restructuring of the electricity sector in 1999. What's really interesting is that the failed restructuring—they created an unfunded liability of \$19.4 billion. To make matters worse, from 1999 to 2003, the Harris-Hudak government actually added to the unfunded liability—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: When you fudge the books—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Simcoe–Grey, that is not parliamentary. Would you please withdraw the comment.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Auditor General has said and, I point out, signed off on the fact that the Harris-Hudak government added an unfunded liability. They added \$1 billion after putting the charge on everyone's bill.

Another thing the official opposition doesn't want the constituents in Peterborough to know is that the PC government set it at \$7.8 billion by overestimating the value of future contracts. They misled in terms of not setting—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Member from Durham.

I'd just ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the minister for the explanation. I'm surprised that the member from Simcoe–Grey, who was energy minister when the stranded debt was created, doesn't seem to have his facts straight. That said, the previous Conservative government is no stranger to unusual math. They're the same government that hid a \$5.6-billion deficit from Ontarians.

Minister, it's clear to me who's responsible for the fact that my constituents have to pay the DRC on their hydro bills, but our government has now been in power for over seven years. To the minister: What has our government done to tackle the hydro debt, and how much longer will my constituents have to pay it?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: When we took over government, we found an unfunded liability of \$20 billion. In fact, for four years, they charged the charge and didn't apply it to the debt; it went up. This government, on the other hand, has paid that down by \$6 billion. Every nickel that has been raised while we've been in government has gone to the debt retirement charge.

We're cleaning up the mess of the unfunded liability. We're cleaning up the additional cost they put on every ratepayer's bill and we are submitting it every year to the auditor, who signs off on it. They can say what they want; the facts speak for themselves. They're signed off by the auditor.

We paid down the debt; you added to it. We're building a stronger electricity system for a better future for all Ontarians.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members, please come to order.

New question.

LIQUOR LICENSING

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Attorney General: The Attorney General showed he's as out of touch with Ontario families as his friend Premier McGuinty. When asked to explain the timing of your proposed changes to provincial liquor laws, you said Ontario families were "ready for more freedom." Minister, this was no slip of the tongue; it's an attitude. Later that same day you said that it's the "type of freedom that I think the people of Ontario are ready for."

1110

Attorney General, what makes you think Ontario families need you to decide if and when they're ready for more freedom?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I was pleased to introduce the proposals for some changes to the liquor licence laws. What we're proposing is to give individuals and municipalities the choice. If they want to use the new

options, they can use them. If they don't want to use them, they don't have to use them. That's what freedom is about: It's about an option, an opportunity.

Do you know what's interesting? That the honourable critic from the Leader of the Opposition's party was there. He was so overjoyed that he was literally dancing at the proposals. You need to get together over there. You need to figure out the message. Free the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: First we have the nanny Premier and now we have the nanny general in the province of Ontario. In the morning the nanny Premier showed how out of touch he was—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): A final warning to the member from Lanark.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: That morning the nanny Premier showed just how out of touch he has become by saying that the changes were coming because “we're just kind of growing up a little bit as Ontarians.” In the afternoon you showed how out of touch you were when you said families are ready for more freedom.

The Ontario PCs will treat people as the adults they are and neighbours to be respected—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I take from the line of questioning that the Leader of the Opposition is against any changes to the liquor laws in the province of Ontario. I take from his question that he does not believe Ontarians are able to walk around with an alcoholic drink at a festival. He's going to vote against those. I take from those that he doesn't want any changes to the enforcement system that have been called upon by those who want to make sure that we have the strongest enforcement in Ontario. He's going to vote against that. I take that he doesn't want tour operators to be able to provide fully inclusive packaged holidays. The Leader of the Opposition says no. He says no to choice for Ontarians. He says no to local option. He says no to municipalities. All he offers them is a buck a beer, and they're going to need a lot of those with—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CANCER PREVENTION

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Promotion de la santé. Yesterday, the American Academy of Pediatrics released a study that called for a ban on artificial tanning for youth. The article reads that “governments should work towards passing legislation to ban minors' access to tanning salons.” Ontario could have been a leader by acting on my private member's bill, but it's never too late to do good, is it? When will the minister enact legislation banning youth from using tanning beds?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I would say, first of all, that our government is committed to the health of Ontario's children. I also want to say that through Health Canada's Radiation Emitting Devices Act, the federal government plays a lead role on this issue. We support Health Canada's guidelines, which recommend that children under the age of 16 do not use tanning beds.

We continue to work with our 36 public health units to promote policies that raise awareness of the risks associated with using tanning beds. We also realize and recommend to parents to monitor their kids and to know that they have an important role to play by educating their children about the effects of ultraviolet rays as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, I would say that it is old news that voluntary regulation for that industry does not work. This is why the cancer society, the Ontario Medical Association, the Canadian Dermatology Association and now the American Academy of Pediatrics and ALPHA are all asking your ministry to act. It is not up to the federal government and it is not up to parents. It is your responsibility, and I see that this minister is going to drag her heels on this important issue.

We're talking about a known carcinogen. Artificial tanning is just as risky as tobacco. Using tanning beds increases your risk of skin cancer by 75%. We keep saying we can beat and prevent cancer. When will Ontario join the growing list of jurisdictions and take action on this important public health issue?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Our government has done more to prevent cancer than any other government and has invested money in cancer prevention initiatives. As I said before, we support Health Canada's guideline recommending that children under 16 years of age do not use tanning beds. We continue to work with our 36 public health units.

With respect to the member's bill, the time to discuss that is during the time allocated in the Legislature for debate.

We will continue to raise awareness of this issue and we will continue to educate individuals and parents about the dangers associated with the use of tanning beds.

DISCLOSURE OF TOXINS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is for—I'll take it to the Acting Premier, for supplementary reasons.

Acting Premier, we find out that the use of Agent Orange is expanding, more so in the province of Ontario. Recently, we found out that it's been used to clear corridors for Ontario Hydro, that Agent Orange was used at that particular time. Can you explain? Do you have any details as to how it was used and the impacts that it has for those individuals using Agent Orange on Ontario Hydro lines?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm happy to answer this question. I want to just start with indicating how concerned I

am about this issue. Since learning about it, certainly I've been committed to obtaining all the facts and sharing this information in an open and transparent fashion.

We now know that herbicide 2,4,5-T, which was approved by Health Canada at the time, was used during a 30-year period in Ontario during the 1950s, the 1960s and the 1970s by the then Department of Lands and Forests, the Ministry of Transportation, and Hydro One's predecessor, Ontario Hydro. I'm also aware that it was used by private companies during the period, including the agricultural sector, on non-crop lands such as fence-rows, and by municipalities for weed control. We continue to look into whether or not it was used by other organizations.

I want to thank the former Tembec employee who came and brought this issue to my ministry's attention. I had a chance to speak with this individual over the telephone a week ago, and I—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: The question goes back—I received the information from Jack Hedman. He was a teenager who actually worked on it and was sprayed directly with Agent Orange. He was told at that time that it was actually so safe that they could drink it.

The difficulty is gaining the information, and the minister expressed that she's looking further into finding other organizations. Minister, can you disclose this information so that all of the province can find out which organizations were utilizing Agent Orange, as well as the other major players in the province of Ontario who have used it, so that these people can find out how they are going to be impacted?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I appreciate the question. I too am interested in providing accountability and transparency on this issue.

I have two priorities. The first is to identify anybody who may have been exposed to the herbicide back in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and possibly the 1980s, and then to work with health experts to fully understand the impacts that the herbicide spray will have on their health.

That's why we've created an independent fact-finding panel—we're in the process of putting that group together—that will have a mandate of gathering more information on this issue and making it available to the people of Ontario. I've also assembled a herbicide spraying program project team in MNR that will work to coordinate the information across ministries.

1120

Yesterday, I wrote a letter to the federal Minister of Health asking for their assistance in coordinating a government-wide response to this issue. I think it behooves them, considering that they approved this herbicide that is being used across Canada and by a number of organizations—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. First Nations leaders across the north warned the McGuinty Liberals that the Far North Act was flawed from the very beginning. It didn't respect their ability to make decisions about the future, they said. Martin Falls First Nation will be restricting access to the Ring of Fire after significant exploration work was done on their traditional territory without any involvement at all from them.

After refusing to listen to concerns of northern communities over the Far North Act, are the McGuinty Liberals surprised at all that there are real problems here?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I know that my colleague the Minister of Northern Development and Mines is working very closely with Martin Falls on specific issues.

My colleague, myself and the Minister of Natural Resources were at an economic conference with Nishnawbe Aski Nation just last week in Thunder Bay—a three-day conference. You know what we heard? What we heard were the plans that are actually proceeding.

From Chief Hardisty of Moose Cree, the Lower Matagami is proceeding. It will be employing hundreds of people from First Nations. We heard from other communities that are working very closely with businesses to provide real economic opportunities in the north. We heard about different communities that are engaged in planning to make sure that the planning and economic development that proceeds is where they would like and benefits all in the community. There is a lot of very positive development going on—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Perhaps the Attorney General should go over to ROMA and participate in the panel that's happening about the Ring of Fire right now and hear from Stan Beardy some of his opinions.

The Ring of Fire is a huge opportunity for the north and First Nations who live there, but good jobs and sustainable development won't come to the north if northerners don't have a voice. That is the fundamental problem with this legislation. First Nations leaders want to make sure that their community shares in the prosperity their land creates.

Why didn't the McGuinty government listen to First Nations' concerns from the very, very beginning of this process instead of trying to impose a solution on them from here at Queen's Park?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: In fact, we were all with Grand Chief Beardy just last week at the economic conference. It was the one that he was chairing, effectively.

There is a lot of very positive development going on with Nishnawbe Aski Nation constituent chiefs and members. We are constantly working with businesses and other groups that wish to develop, to make sure that

the partnerships with First Nations, with communities, are very strong and benefit the people of First Nations.

It is something that the opposition party would not know, including the member from Renfrew. It is something that the third party isn't particularly familiar with. They just like to criticize. But we're working very hard, and the examples are flowing now.

The work is now under way. Whether it's the Victor diamond mine, whether it's the Lower Mattagami project or countless other projects, they're under way, and people are finding employment. The benefits of development are flowing to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CHRONIC CEREBROSPINAL VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY

Hon. Aileen Carroll, P.C.: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, for those living with the effects of a chronic disease like multiple sclerosis, daily tasks such as walking down the stairs can be challenging. And for those affected, as well as for their family and friends, living with this chronic disease is both physically and emotionally debilitating.

Although there currently is no conclusive evidence to support the procedure, there is demand for CCSVI, or chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, treatment for MS. I understand that, as a result, many Ontarians are choosing to travel out of the country to receive the treatment.

Will the minister please advise the House what the government is doing to help Ontarians who do decide to travel out of the country for CCSVI?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thanks to the member opposite for her advocacy on this and other issues.

I know I speak for all members of this Legislature when I say how happy we would all be if there were treatments found to reverse the effects of multiple sclerosis. There is increased awareness of CCSVI for MS, but at this time, the procedure is experimental, and its efficacy must be proven before it becomes an insured service. That's why Ontario is not advocating for CCSVI.

However, I do want patients who choose to go out-of-country for CCSVI to receive the very best care upon their return to Ontario. That's why, earlier today, I asked leading MS experts to provide advice on how best to provide care for these patients when they come back to Ontario. Their first order of business will be to assemble—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Hon. Aileen Carroll, P.C.: I know that this will be well received by Ontarians who do choose the CCSVI treatment. Even though the science to date has not indicated the efficacy of this procedure, we do indeed know that people are choosing to have the procedure out-of-country.

With the increased coverage and awareness of the CCSVI procedure, there have been calls for this service to become insured under OHIP. Can you clarify what the government is doing to move toward insuring CCSVI?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As we all know, we fund procedures only where evidence indicates their benefit.

Last year, my ministry asked OHTAC, the Ontario Health Technology Advisory Committee, to review the current evidence on CCSVI. They concluded that, currently, evidence does not support clinical trials. However, they do continue to monitor new evidence and will provide their recommendations if more evidence becomes available. Much more evidence demonstrating the efficacy of CCSVI is required before it becomes clear that clinical trials are the next step.

However, the development of a national registry by the federal government would help to create a full picture of the MS population and treatments they are receiving. We are urging the federal government and other provinces to move forward with this initiative, and I will assure you that Ontario will—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

STOCK EXCHANGE

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Last week, the Minister of Finance asked the Legislature to strike a Select Committee on the Proposed Transaction of the TMX Group and the London Stock Exchange Group. The purpose of the committee, according to the minister's motion, is to receive and consider all recommendations so that an unbiased, informed report can be tabled in the Legislature for its consideration.

On Friday, my colleague the member for Newmarket–Aurora and I delivered a letter to the minister asking the finance minister to refrain from making any further negative comments on the proposed transaction until the committee had completed its work, this to ensure that the work of the committee is not further prejudiced by the statements.

Will the minister assure this House that his statements to date are not already government policy, and will he commit to cease from making any further prejudicial comments on the matter?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I know that the party opposite doesn't want to state positions about where they stand, but let me say this: I've raised a number of important questions, and I thank the Leader of the Opposition for having said that those were important questions that he endorsed.

I will continue to ask questions. That's part of my job. I'm surprised you would want a finance minister not to ask questions, much less answer them—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final warning to the member from Renfrew.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I am glad that this government chose to appoint a committee, being ably chaired by my colleague the minister without portfolio. I look forward to the recommendations of that committee, as well as the advice I'm receiving from the Ontario Securities Commission and the advice I've been receiving from a number of individuals, including the proponents, whom I met with for the second time this week.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: In addition to the finance minister making negative comments about the proposed merger, the government appointed another cabinet minister, as he's pointed out, to head this committee. This is the first time in 50 years that a cabinet minister has been appointed to lead a committee. That means we have the finance minister making negative comments about the work the committee is about to do; meanwhile, another member of the same cabinet is chairing the committee.

Will the Minister of Finance assure the House that the statements he is making are not also being made at the cabinet table to influence the chair of the committee?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What I can assure this House and the people of Ontario of is that this government will stand up for the best interests of Ontario and the best interests of Canada.

We will ask difficult questions. We will seek answers on a timely and important debate that's going to happen in this province and this country.

1130

We will take positions on important issues. We took a position on the HST that's been clear and consistent. We have laid out a plan for a better energy future. So, unlike the member opposite, I am not going to be constrained, nor is this government, in standing up for what's in the best interests of Ontario and Canada.

We have one of the most vibrant financial services sectors in the world. It's growing. We want to make sure that continues to grow. So, yes, I will stand up for Ontario. I wish you'd do the same darned thing. Shame on you.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Grandparents raising their grandchildren have been cut off temporary care assistance funding because the government altered the original intent of the temporary care assistance program. They know that "temporary" refers to custody and the parents' ability to take children from their grandparents into their own custody on very short notice.

My Bill 87, the Ontario Works Amendment Act (Care Assistance), 2010, would fix this problem. Will this minister ensure that grandparents cannot be cut off their funding, by amending her punitive definition and replacing the term "temporary" with the phrase "temporary or indefinite"?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me thank all those parents and family members for their commit-

ment to making sure that people who choose to care for these extended family members—I want to thank them for the work they are doing. We will continue to work with families to ensure they receive the support to help children in need.

Answering the question of the member opposite, this is part of the review. With the two commissioners that we have appointed, it's part of their review of social assistance; I'm asking them to review that. The eligibility rules have not changed. Again, I repeat, the eligibility rules have not changed. It is important to note that the number of children benefiting from TCA—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Well, the rules have changed, and you changed them a year ago. This government's refusal to make this correction forces grandparents through the appeal process, during which they receive no financial support. To add insult to injury, the McGuinty Liberals' own appointees to the Social Benefits Tribunal agree with the grandparents and have ordered the reinstatement of their temporary care assistance. They ordered them to reinstate them. So even your own group agree that you're wrong. Will this government finally fix its abusively wrong definition of the word "temporary"?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I am happy to see that the appeal process is working. That's why we have an appeal process.

Again, I'm saying that the eligibility rules were not changed. In fact, since 2003, about 37% more children are receiving TCA, and the amount of money spent on TCA has increased by about 50% since 2003. So the number of cases that existed in the program for 24 months before and after August 2008 has gone down.

I know that the member of the opposite party wants this benefit to be income-tested. I don't know if that's what the grandparents want, to have this benefit income-tested, so we will ask the commissioners, as part of the review of social assistance, to review this program.

SPORTS FUNDING

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion and Sport. As we all know, sport brings people together, builds communities and motivates people of all ages to stay active so that they can lead healthier and happier lives.

As the member from Brant, I can tell you that I'm very fortunate that we have a riding with many talented local, provincial, national and international level athletes. In fact, Zsolt Daranyi from Brantford won a gold medal in boxing just this week at the Canada Winter Games in Halifax. So I want to congratulate him.

We're very proud of all of our young men and women athletes. With the Vancouver Olympics, the Canada Games and other events, we've just experienced one of the most remarkable years in Ontario's and Canada's history, and seen on the world stage. Can the minister inform the House of what her ministry is doing to build

on these successes by supporting amateur athletes across the province of Ontario?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I thank the member from Brant for his question. Our government recognizes the positive impact and, indeed, the power of sports, and takes sport as a very serious matter. We are investing \$23 million a year in provincial sport and multisport organizations and other partners to promote participation and excellence in sport throughout Ontario.

We established the highly successful Quest for Gold program, which has provided \$53 million since 2006 in direct funding to high-performance athletes, and we remain committed to that program. Between 2003 and 2010, this government increased funding to amateur sport by 162%. Ontario's results at the Canada Games demonstrate that our plan for athletes is working. Ontario edged out Quebec as the top-scoring province, capturing the most—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Dave Levac: Athletes live for a challenge and they thrive on challenge. This means that they need somewhere to compete, somewhere to practise and somewhere to develop and push their skill levels.

Last summer, Ontario reaped the benefits of competition by hosting the 2010 World Junior Baseball Championship. Previously, it was the 2009 world hockey championships for the juniors. These events transformed their host communities into hubs of excitement and excellence, built community pride, brought tourism and investment, and inspired countless budding athletes. We need to see more of these types of world-stage events throughout Ontario.

Would the minister please tell the House what is being done to bring international sporting events like the world junior hockey and baseball championships to the province of Ontario?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I'm pleased to report that Ontario now has a world-class reputation for hosting international amateur sporting events. With financial support from our government, in the past four years we have hosted the FIFA U-20 World Cup of soccer, the Mobility Cup for sailors living with disabilities and the world junior hockey and baseball championships.

We're excited to be hosting the 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games, which will bring 250,000 tourists, 10,000 athletes and officials, 15,000 jobs and \$700 million worth of investment in sport infrastructure in the province.

The Hudak-Harris PCs treated sport as a frill. The NDP did not even mention it in their last election platform. The McGuinty government has put Ontario on the sporting map, and we continue to build on these successes. We congratulate all the athletes, all the coaches and everyone involved with the Canada Games.

Sport has the power to build community and to inspire our young people. We continue to support this province's athletic talents.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. Michael Prue: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It's been brought to my attention that I may have misspoken, and I wish to correct the record. I intended to say that the diabetes association has asked the finance committee to keep pre-diabetes as a funded condition etc. It's been brought to my attention that I also included the Minister of Health, and I ought not to have done so.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. That is a point of order. The member can correct his or her own record.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mr. Jim Wilson: Today I'm rising to ask the McGuinty government to keep its campaign promise not to close rural schools in this province. Families in Simcoe-Grey agree with the Premier's 2007 election commitment when he said, "Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we're not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them." It's sad that the families who trusted this Premier to keep his promise are now being dragged through an accommodation review process that the Liberal Party said would never happen under their watch. That's because they said they would keep rural schools open—full stop.

Clearly, Premier Dalton McGuinty has changed. He once believed that, "If a rural community loses a school, it's not the same as shutting one down in downtown Toronto where there's another one six blocks away." Premier McGuinty used to tell families that doing so would be akin to "robbing the community of an important component." But Premier Dalton McGuinty has changed. He's not the guy he used to be.

Families at Duntroon Central Public School have had to wage a battle to keep their community school open, despite the Premier's assurances that they wouldn't have to if they voted for him. So far, more than 570 people have signed the petition and more than 100 people have written letters to Premier Dalton McGuinty to save Duntroon Central. These families know that closing this small school would have a detrimental effect not just on the students, but on the viability of the community as a whole.

It's a sad day when small-town Ontario and the many hard-working agricultural families who help keep communities like Duntroon strong simply can't trust the word of the Premier of this province.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Phil McNeely: I visit many schools in my riding of Ottawa–Orléans and like to speak to the students involved in the environmental clubs and classes. I must say, the students and teachers have wonderful projects under way.

The students of Lester B. Pearson gave me a wonderful mural around the Copenhagen climate change conference; I proudly have it on my office wall. Our youth understand that climate change is a real and immediate problem, and they do their share to lower their carbon footprint.

Most climate change scientists agree that we must return to a CO₂ concentration—that's carbon dioxide—of 350 parts per million to maintain global warming to two degrees. We're now at 390 parts per million, and when Ontario closes our last coal electricity generation plant, the CO₂ concentration in our atmosphere will be over 400 parts per million. That will be in about May 2014.

No world government action is being taken to lower the CO₂, and Canada's actions have been to promote the production of greenhouse gases. Canada's CO₂ production continues to increase.

Ontario is a world leader in clean energy. James Hansen, a NASA scientist who has advised several US presidents on climate change, in his book *Storms of My Grandchildren* very clearly states that we must leave the hydrocarbons in the ground, close coal-fired generators and generally replace coal.

Ontario has reduced our coal generation from about 25% in 2003 to 10% in 2010. Ontarians support this province closing coal generation. Replacement of dirty coal has increased the cost of energy; however, the benefits to our health and to reducing greenhouse gases make these increases a good long-term investment for us and our children.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Randy Hillier: Every member in this House is getting complaints from their constituents regarding ever-increasing hydro rates. We have seen usage rates increase to pay for Dalton McGuinty's Green Energy Act. We have seen time-of-use prices driving rates up. The McGuinty Liberals brought in the HST, which increased prices further, and consumers still have to pay for the debt retirement charge.

I thought I would share with this House the latest way this government has found to gouge ratepayers. Bill and Marie Calberry of Hartington, which is in my riding, were recently advised that their home, which had been classified as residential high density for the last 15 years, has been redesignated as residential low density. I'm not sure where all the houses went to cause low density, but this means that Hydro can collect, on average, another 10% in delivery charges on top of the increases my constituents have already had to endure.

While the McGuinty Liberals continue to fool Ontario citizens with their campaign-styled energy pamphlets, the government has once again found a way to increase the cost of living on the backs of hard-working families. There seems to be no end to the ways which Premier McGuinty has found to squeeze every last nickel and dime out of Ontario hydro ratepayers.

ROBOTIC SURGERY

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge an important Canadian surgical first that was announced in my community, at the London Health Sciences Centre. On December 3, 2010, Dr. Anthony Nichols and Dr. Kevin Fung performed the first robotically-assisted laryngectomy, which removed a small portion of the voice box. The surgery was required to remove a cancerous lesion from the patient's larynx. By using a surgical robot equipped with a high-definition camera to assist in the surgery, the complexity of the procedure was reduced, the patient's recovery time was shortened, scarring on the throat and neck was minimized, and the patient's need for chemotherapy was eliminated.

LHST is a leading centre for health research and innovation and medical breakthroughs, and has a history of over 50 international and national surgical firsts. I would like to congratulate the hard-working surgical team that was involved in this surgery, and I applaud the ongoing work of the London Health Sciences Centre and their continuous excellence in providing outstanding health care in the province of Ontario in the London region.

RURAL AND NORTHERN SCHOOLS

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a statement to the House. It's about rural and northern schools, which are an important part of Ontario. Rural and northern schools are widely recognized for their high educational standards and learning experiences. The framework of rural and northern schools is different from large urban schools. Therefore, they deserve to be governed by a separate rural and northern school policy.

In 2007, during the election, Dalton McGuinty promised that he would keep rural and northern schools open when he declared, "Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we're not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them." At the same time, Mr. McGuinty found \$12 million to keep swimming pools open in Toronto, but he hasn't found any money in this big budget that he has to keep rural and northern schools open in Ontario. The people of my area are really concerned, and we want Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Education to support the citizens of rural and northern Ontario and suspend all accommodation reviews until the province develops a rural and northern policy that recognizes the values of these schools and their communities.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr. Howard Hampton: Recently, I was contacted by a woman from Atikokan who raises an issue that is important across northern Ontario: an issue of, first of all, hoping to get a family doctor, and second, hoping to be able to see a family doctor if in fact you have one. Her point to me is this: “Atikokan has a family health team that offers services in our clinic. I called the clinic on February 22, hoping to get an appointment with my family doctor. I was told the earliest I could get one is May 2—in nine weeks. Other people in the community who have also called the family health team have been told to wait 12 weeks or 15 weeks. This is unacceptable when you need to see a doctor much, much sooner.”

1510

Regrettably, the situation in Atikokan is not unusual. In community after community after community, many people don't have a family doctor. Those who are fortunate enough to have a family doctor find that they're waiting many weeks—in some cases, months on top of months—to see a family doctor. They ask the question: Is this acceptable in Ontario?

ABITIBIBOWATER

Mr. Bill Mauro: When we came to government in 2003, 1.3 million people in Ontario didn't have a family doctor. Today that number is down to about 300,000 to 400,000.

But I want to talk to you today about AbitibiBowater, an operation in my riding that I had the pleasure of being part of two great announcements about in the last year or so. The first was our 2010 budget announcement of a \$20-per-megawatt-hour reduction in energy prices for large industrials. That was coupled with a conservation initiative. Together, these two programs will provide around \$25 million in annual savings for the AbiBow mill in my riding, and they'll benefit other large industrials throughout the north.

But this isn't the only good news for this operation. Since they exited from creditor protection some time ago, we've seen a series of good-news announcements. In recent weeks, our government has begun to announce the recipients of the allocations from the competitive wood supply process. The AbiBow sawmill in Thunder Bay was one of the successful bidders. They received an allocation of over 200,000 cubic metres of wood, which will create an additional 50 jobs as well as sustain 160 more, and we're told there is the possibility of a capital expansion to accommodate this wood and these new jobs.

The good news for this facility keeps coming, and we remain hopeful that there will be a further good-news announcement when it comes to the cogen facility at the Thunder Bay mill. If this goes forward, it could provide Thunder Bay and the northwest with a \$50-million construction project and serve as another positive indicator that AbiBow's Thunder Bay operations are viable for the long term and moving full steam ahead.

ROD MCLEOD

Mr. Jim Brownell: I rise in the House today to congratulate Rod McLeod from my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, who recently received the Cornwall and Area Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year Award. The Citizen of the Year Award was created to recognize outstanding achievements by Cornwall-area individuals in the fields of commerce, community work or innovation.

Rod was honoured with the award for his numerous contributions to the community as an educator and dedicated hockey coach. Rod McLeod has been a leading innovator for special education in my riding for many years. He is a special consultant for the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario, and he initiated the program Alternative Learning for Exceptional Pupils. As a former teacher myself, I take great pride in recognizing outstanding educators like Rod, who support and provide confidence to students who face difficult challenges.

Rod is also a hockey enthusiast and dedicated coach. He is currently the president of Cornwall Girls Hockey Association and coaches a women's competitive A team as well as the Holy Trinity Catholic Secondary School's senior boys' team. His involvement in minor hockey landed him in an opportunity to assist Bobby Orr in creating a national program called Safe and Fun Hockey.

It is with great pleasure that I recognize the achievements of Rod McLeod and thank him for his outstanding contributions to the lives of so many in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I rise today to talk about the proposed mid-peninsula corridor, an issue of great concern to my constituents. The Leader of the Opposition has been in the news recently, stating that he would like to build a \$9.8-billion superhighway—likely a toll road—that would run from Fort Erie through the middle of the Niagara Peninsula, through my riding, and connect to the 400 highway system somewhere in Burlington. He's not sure of the route or the cost; he is only sure that he wants to get it done, and with limited public input.

I've heard from many constituents concerned that such a highway would pave through greenbelt-protected lands and the escarpment, as well as other environmentally sensitive lands. Farmers are concerned about the loss of farmland that such a highway would cause, not to mention the environmental impact of those vehicles passing through.

The Hamilton-Wentworth Federation of Agriculture has gone on record as being opposed to the superhighway. The residents of Burlington are also against the mid-pen. Former Burlington mayor Cam Jackson is quoted as saying, “The city believes that putting the mid-pen highway through the escarpment is the worst thing that could happen.”

With so many people against this \$9.8-billion super-highway, it seems odd that the Leader of the Opposition continues to support it. One can only wonder, after the Leader of the Opposition apparently doing so much public consultation, how he could be so out of touch with the desires of Ontarians.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I beg to inform the House that a change has been made to the order of proceedings for private members' public business. The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound has withdrawn his name from the list. Therefore, on March 10, two instead of three ballot items will be debated.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

UKRAINIAN HERITAGE DAY ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LE JOUR DU PATRIMOINE UKRAINIEN

Mr. Martiniuk moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 155, An Act to proclaim Ukrainian Heritage Day /
Projet de loi 155, Loi proclamant le Jour du patrimoine ukrainien.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I'm honoured to introduce this bill on behalf of myself with the support of my colleague from Oshawa, Jerry Ouellette, and my co-sponsors, my friend of many years, Donna Cansfield, the member for Etobicoke Centre and a Canadian of Ukrainian descent, and Cheri DiNovo, member for the riding of Parkdale-High Park, a riding in which my family resided for almost 20 years.

I originally introduced a similar bill for first reading on December 8, 2010, but it has since been necessary to amend some sections to better conform with the historical facts. This bill would see September 7 in each year proclaimed as Ukrainian Heritage Day, honouring the more than 336,000 Canadians of Ukrainian descent across Ontario. I thank Yvan Baker, the president of the Ukrainian Congress, Ontario Provincial Council, and its members for their invaluable assistance in the drafting of this bill. This bill, if passed on March 24, 2010, would be the first of its kind in Canada recognizing Ukrainian heritage.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: It's 2011.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I'm sorry. I meant 2011, if I may correct that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The record is corrected to 2011.

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition in support of Bill 100, paved shoulders on provincial highways. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

Of course I support this.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all Ontarians have the right to a safe home environment; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario works to reduce all barriers in place that prevent victims of domestic violence from fleeing abusive situations; and

"Whereas the Residential Tenancies Act does not take into consideration the special circumstances facing a tenant who is suffering from abuse; and

"Whereas those that live in fear of their personal safety and that of their children should not be financially penalized for the early termination of their residential leases;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 53, the Escaping Domestic Violence Act, 2010, be adopted so that victims of domestic violence be afforded a mechanism for the early termination of their lease to allow them to leave an abusive relationship and find a safe place for themselves and their children to call home."

I wholeheartedly approve this petition, endorse it and send it via page Tyler.

1520

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

“Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty government agree to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment, also known as liberation therapy, to fully explore its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians afflicted with multiple sclerosis.”

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I submit this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax (HST).”

I agree with the petition and I will sign it to that effect.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition that reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas all Ontarians have the right to a safe home environment; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario works to reduce all barriers in place that prevent victims of domestic violence from fleeing abusive situations; and

“Whereas the Residential Tenancies Act does not take into consideration the special circumstances facing a tenant who is suffering from abuse; and

“Whereas those that live in fear for their personal safety and that of their children should not be financially penalized for the early termination of their residential leases;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That Bill 53, the Escaping Domestic Violence Act, 2010, be adopted so that victims of domestic violence be afforded a mechanism for the early termination of their leases to allow them to leave an abusive relationship and find a safe place for themselves and their children to call home.”

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks’ table.

COYOTES

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas coyote predation is a growing problem in rural Ontario, especially on farms; and

“Whereas there are documented reports that coyotes are attacking people and pets and the attacks are getting more aggressive; and

“Whereas as many as 6,000 lambs and sheep alone are killed by coyotes on Ontario farms every year; and

“Whereas these losses are seriously impacting farmers’ incomes; and

“Whereas the current control measures authorized by the Ministry of Natural Resources under the municipal financial incentives for control of coyote predation program are cumbersome and impossible to adhere to;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ontario government minimize predator losses by implementing a province-wide coyote control program that includes a \$200 bounty for each coyote carcass and allow counties to implement their own proof-of-kill collection system.”

I’ve also signed this, and I’m going to give it to Simon.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition that reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Historical Society, founded in 1888, is a not-for-profit corporation, incorporated by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario April 1, 1899, with a mandate to identify, protect, preserve and promote Ontario’s history; and

“Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario’s cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

“Whereas the Legislature failed to enact Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, which would have prohibited the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the Cooley-Hatt Cemetery (circa 1786) is located in the Niagara Escarpment plan within Ontario’s greenbelt plan in Ancaster, city of Hamilton; and

“Whereas this is one of the earliest surviving pioneer cemeteries in Ontario, with approximately 99 burials, including at least one veteran of the War of 1812;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The government of Ontario must take whatever action is necessary to prevent the desecration of any part of this sacred burial ground for real estate development.”

I agree with this petition, have signed it and send it to the clerks’ table.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Jim Wilson: This is a petition on behalf of Simcoe county paramedics.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas several paramedics in Simcoe county had their pensions affected when paramedic services were transferred to the county of Simcoe, as their pensions were not transferred with them from” the hospitals of Ontario pension plan and the OPSEU trust pension plan “to OMERS, meaning they will receive significantly reduced pensions because their transfer did not recognize their years of credited service; and

“Whereas, when these paramedics started with their new employer, the county of Simcoe, their past pensionable years were not recognized because of existing pension legislation; and

“Whereas the government’s own Expert Commission on Pensions has recommended that government move swiftly to address this issue; and

“Whereas the government should recognize this issue as a technicality and not penalize hard-working paramedics;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That Premier McGuinty support Simcoe–Grey MPP Jim Wilson’s resolution that calls upon the government to address this issue immediately, and ensure that any legislation or regulation allows paramedics in Simcoe county who were affected by the divestment of paramedic services in the 1990s and beyond to transfer their pensions” from hospitals of Ontario pension plan and OPSEU trust to the OMERS pension plan.

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

RURAL AND NORTHERN SCHOOLS

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to save rural and northern schools in Ontario.

“Whereas rural and northern schools are an important part of Ontario; and

“Whereas rural and northern schools are widely recognized for their high educational standards and intimate learning experience; and

“Whereas the frameworks of rural and northern schools are different from large urban schools and therefore deserve to be governed by a separate rural and northern school policy; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural and northern schools open when he declared that, ‘Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we’re not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them’; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty found \$12 million to keep swimming pools open in Toronto schools but hasn’t found any money to keep rural and northern schools open in Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Education support the citizens of rural and northern Ontario and suspend all accommodation reviews until the province develops a rural and northern school policy that

recognizes the values of these schools in their communities.”

I have also signed this, and give it to Tyler.

POWER PLANT

Mrs. Julia Munro: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has cancelled the Oakville peaker plant, citing a decrease in need for power in that community, proposing to meet needs by better transmission, and despite the fact that the government may face a \$1-billion lawsuit due to the cancellation;

“Whereas the King township peaker plant is going forward, with the Ontario government having shut off debate about the plan at the OMB through regulation, after failing to provide a proper environmental assessment or community consultation;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To give the King township peaker plant and the local community the same consideration as residents of Oakville, and to decide on the future of the peaker plant on a non-partisan basis.”

I have affixed my signature to this and given it to page Simon.

ELMVALE DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Elmvale District High School is an important part of the community of Elmvale and surrounding area; and

“Whereas the school is widely recognized as having high educational requirements and well known for producing exceptional graduates who have gone on to work as professionals in health care, agriculture, community safety, the trades and many other fields that give back to the community; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that ‘Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we’re not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them’; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty found \$12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn’t found any money to keep an actual rural school open in Elmvale;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Minister of Education support the citizens of Elmvale and flow funding to the local school board so that Elmvale District High School can remain open to serve the vibrant community of Elmvale and surrounding area.”

I agree with the petition. I will sign it.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today from Rachel Watson, who lives in Strathroy, Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

“Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

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“Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

“Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Enact Bill 115, a private member’s bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery.”

I agree wholeheartedly with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Alexandra.

ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Bill Murdoch: A petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

“Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

“Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen’s Park by Newmarket–Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

““That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.””

I have signed this and give it to Julian.

HIGHWAY 26

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition concerning Highway 26 in my riding:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 was approved by MPP Jim Wilson and the previous PC government in 2000; and

“Whereas a number of horrific fatalities and accidents have occurred on the old stretch of Highway 26; and

“Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 is critical to economic development and job creation in Simcoe–Grey;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Liberal government stop the delay of the Highway 26 redevelopment and act immediately to ensure that the project is finished on schedule, to improve safety for area residents and provide economic development opportunities and job creation in Simcoe–Grey.”

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

GOVERNMENT’S RECORD

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition here to the Parliament of Ontario from Toby Barrett.

“Whereas Ontario families are struggling in an economic downturn to meet the demands of eco taxes, the HST, energy price hikes, wasteful spending and increased taxes;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“Initiate the process for legislation to allow Ontario residents to recall Dalton.”

I’ve signed this.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION
LABOUR DISPUTES RESOLUTION ACT,
2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LE RÈGLEMENT
DES CONFLITS DE TRAVAIL
À LA COMMISSION DE TRANSPORT
DE TORONTO

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 28, 2011, on the motion for second reading of Bill 150, An Act to provide for the resolution of labour disputes involving the Toronto Transit Commission / Projet de loi 150, Loi prévoyant le règlement des conflits de travail à la Commission de transport de Toronto.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I am delighted to stand up today and add my voice to the debate on Bill 150, the Toronto

Transit Commission Labour Disputes Resolution Act, 2011.

This is a very simple matter. It's a matter of ensuring that the people of Toronto are not held hostage by unions. That's what this is about. That's what the people of Toronto asked for. They sought this assistance in the October mayoralty election. Rob Ford was clear that he would seek it, so this should serve as no surprise to anyone.

If I can recall the three main planks that I heard Rob Ford campaign on, the first one was, "Stop the gravy train." The second was, "I'm going to build subways," and the third one is, "There will be no more TTC strikes. I will ask the province to pass this legislation."

That's what Rob Ford said; that's what he has followed through on so far. People voted for him overwhelmingly, and we can only consider that a plebiscite. Therefore, to his credit, the Premier has seen what Rob Ford succeeded in doing in that election and has allowed government legislation to be placed before us. The people wanted it; the McGuinty government is granting it; our party is supporting it. The Working Families Coalition might not like this—note to Premier.

Let me take you back to April 2008. In April 2008, we were called into special session on a Sunday here in this Legislature to consider back-to-work legislation to send TTC workers who had gone on strike overnight on the Friday preceding, on a wildcat basis, and had caused great grief to a number of people in the city of Toronto—this was the first time that I actually came to this House and felt angry. That was six or seven months after I came here for the first time. My anger, as I said at the time, wasn't personal. It was an expression of what I was hearing on the streets of Toronto and particularly in my riding of Thornhill, which is, after all, on the northern border of Toronto and served largely by the TTC. The TTC people had walked out on a Friday night. They had stranded their riders without notice.

I'd like to quote from Hansard at that time. This was from myself; this is what I said: "I live and work here in Toronto, and I use the TTC myself.

"People are angry, and justifiably so. No one likes surprises. People want dependability, and, as the Premier has ably pointed out, people want courtesy. They have indeed extended courtesy this weekend one to another, but they want it in return.... People are angry at the amalgamated transit workers' union, they are angry at Mayor David Miller, they are angry at TTC Chair Adam Giambrone and, to an extent, they are angry at the McGuinty government. They are angry to the point where the words 'essential service' are being heard spoken all over this city this weekend. No one likes that, but it is what I've been hearing. Indeed, we, this Legislature, are declaring the TTC to be an essential service on a one-time basis this weekend, because people need the TTC. We need the TTC on a regular basis.

"Ask yourself whether you'd be feeling something akin to anger if you were the nurse who had left a hospital shift at midnight on Friday, expecting to get home,

and had not been able to do so; ask yourself if you'd been the youngster from my riding who went down to the Toronto entertainment district on Friday night and got out without the \$40 in pocket to get back to Thornhill absent the TTC."

Indeed, that is what happened. That's what I said at the time. I felt it then and I feel it now.

Obviously, there's a sentiment that runs deep in the citizenry of Toronto who feel the same way, or Mayor Ford wouldn't have been reflecting it when he was candidate Ford. He wouldn't have received that kind of a majority and that kind of support if he hadn't planned legislation like that. Again, this government has acceded to his request.

I did then, and I do now, speak for the constituency of Thornhill: 150,000 residents of that constituency, to a large extent very dependent on TTC in their daily lives. They live and they work here in Toronto. People want and deserve the dependability and accountability that I said they wanted that one night in 2008. They want it on a go-forward, ongoing basis. They have little choice: It's the TTC or it's your car or it's a cab or it's your feet. You might not have a car, you might not have money for the cab and your feet might have to carry you 20 or 30 kilometres, depending on what your disposition is in Toronto at any given time.

Even this Premier would agree; he has said that people deserve this. So we all must agree: Declaring the TTC an essential service must be the right thing to do. It is the desire and it is the need of the mayor and of the majority of this city, and it's not a "maybe."

Transit is an essential service. With poor infrastructure and Liberal delays on public works projects—I might cite the Yonge Street north extension from Finch; it comes to mind. Public transit is the lifeblood of a city, and we don't have the arteries to connect.

The Liberals have been pandering to unions since they were elected to government in 2003. Unions don't budge. They want the annual raise; they want the defined benefit pension plan. They support the Liberals to get it, and when asked to go slow, they say, "No way."

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Toronto municipal government has until recently been a talking piece for the union bosses. Then we had an election back on October 25. This bill is not—and I repeat, not—about setting blanket policies and outlawing all union collective bargaining; that's not what it's about. It's about ensuring that an essential service is afforded to the people of a city where that service is, indeed, essential; that's all it's about. Lest anybody say, "There goes Shurman. There goes the PC Party. They hate unions. We all know that," I'm a union member myself—have been for 40 years. I am not anti-union.

The NDP believes that this legislation will open the door to repeal the Trade Union Act. Don't believe that for one moment. What you should believe is that the NDP is funded largely by trade unions, so that's their message.

This is about making sure that that nurse who leaves her shift at midnight on Friday, expecting to get home, can get home. No matter what the dispute, she didn't cause it. It's about the young guy from Thornhill on a Friday night who counts on the TTC to get him home, not a \$40 cab ride that he either can't afford or hasn't even got the money in his pocket to pay for. Because he can't afford it, he needs the TTC.

Let's take a look at legal obligations to unions and talk a little bit about unions. This bill removes the restrictions placed on governments to bargain with the unions. Politicians have an obligation to account for public monies being spent. Politicians have to begin looking at something that has become a phrase of note in our world as it exists today.

Let's remember that the world we're talking about is a very different one than the one we looked at at the beginning of the mandate of this government—and I'm not talking about the first mandate; I'm talking about the one we're finishing this year: 2007. Things have changed.

What I'm talking about is the phrase, "Ability to pay." We're not going to be Wisconsin here in the province of Ontario, but that's about ability to pay. We're not going to be California here in Ontario, but that's about ability to pay. We have to be cognizant of the fact that, when we deal with unions or any workers, ability to pay plays a part.

We—and when I say "we," I speak for the taxpayers of my riding and, I believe, for taxpayers across the province of Ontario—are not an ATM that Dalton McGuinty or any other Premier of this province can go to any time he needs money. Union negotiations cannot dominate budgets, so this bill prevents needless spending in order to appease a small segment of the workforce. That's what it comes down to.

The thing that unions, at this point, are not getting and that they're going to have to understand is that there is a limited ability and that they are part of the population, too. The unions would have people believe that we don't show respect for their members; they're taxpayers, too. No, we get that, but it's a two-way street. Unlike, for example, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, ETFO, we support Mayor Ford's efforts to respect the taxpayers of Toronto by ensuring that the TTC operates in a fiscally responsible way, with stability and in the best interests of Ontarians.

I have a letter here from Sam Hammond, the president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario. He has written to all of us, I am assuming. This one is addressed to me, and I'm going to read this letter into the record.

"I am writing to you on behalf of the 76,000 members of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario to let you know our opposition to Bill 150, An Act to provide for the resolution of labour disputes involving the Toronto Transit Commission. Bill 150 declares the TTC an essential service and strips the right to strike from

TTC workers, members of the Amalgamated Transit Union.

"We urge you oppose the bill at every reading in the Legislature.

"There is no doubt the government is introducing this bill at the request of Toronto Mayor Rob Ford. In so doing, the government is pandering to right-wing voters in Toronto and abandoning the workers of this province."

I'll read the rest of the letter, but I'm going to interject at this point. How is it possible that Mr. Hammond can make the point that this is pandering to the right-wing voters of Toronto? Everybody knows that the voters of Toronto have traditionally been left-wing, and here we have a mayor who is considered more right of centre and who has won an overwhelming majority because people got tired of that. They get tired of pandering.

Continuing the letter: "Bill 150 was not necessary. The president of the ATU had already indicated his union would not strike during the next round of bargaining. The city manager and the general manager of the TTC are both on record as opposing the 'essential service' designation.

"Educators in this province will not tolerate this intrusion into free collective bargaining. We stand with members of the ATU in opposing Bill 150.

"We cannot let the rights of workers be threatened because a mayor or a political party decides to ride out a troubled economy on the backs of working people. Working people did not cause the global recession; that was caused by the greed of a few. Undermining fundamental worker rights, rights enshrined in the ILO covenant signed by Canada, is not an appropriate response.

"Again, we urge you to oppose this bill."

Sorry, Mr. Hammond; I can't oppose this bill. I speak for people, and in their numbers, in large majority, they don't buy that logic. What they see in a letter like that is arrogant entitlement, that you don't get 3%, give or take, every year, and a defined benefit pension plan that is limited to 30% of this province while 70% of the workers in this province have no entitlement whatsoever of that sort. They don't have a defined benefit pension plan. They probably, in most cases, don't have any pension plan at all, save and except for their RSPs. They have frozen salaries or they've taken a cut in salary, and as we read from polls in the public milieu, over 30% of Ontario families still, to this day, worry every single day about whether or not they'll have a job going forward. That's the reality, and it's those people, sir—it's those people, I say to all unions that are of that belief—who have to foot the bill for that ongoing entitlement. And you're the same unions who wouldn't budge an inch when Dalton McGuinty made a rather, I might say, mealy-mouthed attempt to get you to cut back a little bit and take one for the team like the rest of us are doing.

So I think that Ontarians—and we've seen it in the Toronto election: Torontonians have about had it up to here with that nonsense. Nobody's doing anything on the backs of workers. We believe that what we're looking at here, and this letter personifies it, is essentially a group of

people who see themselves as the new elite: “Don’t you take away our entitlements. We’re entitled to our entitlements.” No. No. All of us had to take a hit, and you’re going to have to take a bit of a hit too.

That’s where I relate it back to ability to pay, and you’d better think about this closely, because perhaps you will say the Progressive Conservative Party has a particular stance that you don’t like and has historically had that. Well, guess what? Over there is the Liberal Party. They brought in this legislation, and it’s organizations like the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario that are putting money into the Working Families Coalition, which supports that government over there. So this is, one could conclude from that, not a Conservative perspective, it’s a political perspective, because the landscape in this world has changed. That’s what you’re going to have to start saying to your members. I say that to unions.

Why do they think they are the only group of hard-working Ontarians? There’s always an “us” and a “you,” a “we” and a “they.” I can tell you—and there’s not a complaint to be ascribed to this—that I and every other person in this room have had a frozen salary for three years. No complaint. We did that. I and every other person in this room contribute to an RSP. That’s our pension. People think there’s some kind of a lifelong pension that’s attached to being a member of this Legislature; not so. So we’re not talking out of two sides of our mouth here. We live the words we say. Why would union members, then, in the public sector particularly, believe that they are entitled to large pensions, increases in huge benefit packages, and that the rest of us aren’t?

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There’s a need to understand that, essentially, what we’re saying is there’s no more money. The reason why you’re seeing the upheaval in the United States at the state Legislature level—which I don’t envision coming to our country because we have a different view of the world—is that they basically came to a conclusion and said, “We haven’t got any more ability to pay.” We use that term in discussing this; we use that term in labour contracts. But in these situations, like the one you’re seeing in Wisconsin, like you’re hearing out of New Jersey and out of California, what you’re hearing is, “We can’t do it.” You’re seeing towns in the United States where they’re cutting police forces in half and leaving people in danger because they just don’t have the ability to pay.

There is, as so many people have said in one level of government or another, only one taxpayer, and that taxpayer has been tapped out. There is a pie—call that the household income—that comes into every house. There’s a little, tiny piece for a vacation, maybe, and a little, tiny piece for savings; a large piece that goes for food and shelter and clothing, possibly school expenses, the family car and insurance; and then there’s no more pie. The only way to go to get more pie is if you go back to the taxpayers and push those magic buttons on the taxpayer

ATM that I talked about before. The taxpayer ATM is empty.

As was seen during the changes made to the Regulated Health Professions Act, when doctors and nurses were deemed essential services, the membership was supportive of this change. We would ask that unions start to understand that they’re going to have to take their place with the rest of us and see it the same way.

There’s precedent. Other jurisdictions have passed the kind of legislation that we’re considering today. New York state would be an example. Essential services have to be taken for what they are: essential services.

In closing, let me say, continuing to use the example of the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario, because I think that—I don’t mean to single them out, other than the fact that Mr. Hammond wrote the letter, but his organization, as new members of the Working Families Coalition, and other unions in that organization, other unions generally, believe this: They want us to believe that the rights of workers are somehow threatened by this legislation. We believe that if this bill is not passed, it’s the rights of taxpayers, it’s the rights of Ontarians that will be threatened. What this legislation serves to do is to protect the good of the many.

All we have to do is remember what happened when the TTC decided to shut down without warning. All we have to do is remember how we dealt with that on that particular day. The government called us back, we all came in, we sat here for half an hour and we sent them back to work. Why? Because there was an admission—not so tacit—that this was an essential service. Now the government has put before us government legislation in response to a city request because we concur with the government and we concur with the city that that, indeed, is what it is. When you shut down an essential service, how can that be considered just and fair?

This bill is not about greed, it is not about unions; it is about doing the right thing for the hard-working families of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The essential problem with the TTC and transit in Toronto relates to decisions made in the 1990s to cut funding for public transit, to dramatically reduce operating subsidies and capital supports, a decision that was not reversed by this government. It has led to a history of underinvestment, an aging of an asset. That underinvestment, that aging, has caused huge dislocation for the people of Toronto.

This government had committed to investing in a large-scale way in the TTC. I was there when the Premier made his MoveOntario announcement. But in the end, this government cut \$4 billion from Transit City—said it was deferred, but cut, in reality, \$4 billion from Transit City—and are now pandering to Rob Ford and his plan to deep-six a system of rapid transit in the city of Toronto.

If this government believes that in fact transit is an essential and critical service, then why isn’t it putting money into transit that is needed to make it operate prop-

erly and efficiently, with due consideration for those who need that system?

This bill is a diversion from the fundamental failing of this government to put the money into transit, the investment into transit, that large cities need, not just for Toronto but for Ottawa, Hamilton, London, Windsor. Across this province transit is underfunded, and that causes problems with sprawl, with congestion. This government is trying to turn people's attention away from the critical issue of proper transit funding.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: So there goes the member for Thornhill saying he's not anti-union.

Now, the member and his colleagues support declaring the TTC an essential service, so I suggest to them that perhaps, instead of chewing up the Legislature's time, he and his colleagues might consider just passing on their time and letting the opponents talk themselves out so that we can vote on this bill and just move on.

I have some personal concerns about this bill and I have to admit that. I believe that if the city of Toronto, which operates the TTC, had not asked for this exact legislation, then we'd be debating something else today. But Toronto has a new mayor who seems to believe that it is him against them, and the unions are them—never mind that the TTC union had flat-out stated its intention to resolve its upcoming contract negotiations without a strike. Toronto's mayor may want to pander to right-wing voters, and he has a mandate to do so. Ontario, like it or not, does have a duty to do what a duly elected Toronto city council asks it to do concerning issues where jurisdiction is shared. So the member for Thornhill gets his rant and Toronto's mayor asks for Wisconsin-style, right-wing, union-busting legislation.

I may have to stand up and vote for something I don't like, but at least I'll know there is a review clause. Perhaps cooler heads in a future time will negotiate an agreement fairer to the taxpayer, to the citizens of Ontario and to the members of the Amalgamated Transit Union.

Employers usually get the unions they deserve. Personally, I hope this bill is not forever.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's a pleasure to make some comments on the speech—the very direct speech, I might add—from the member from Thornhill on Bill 150, which is An Act to provide for the resolution of labour disputes involving the Toronto Transit Commission. Certainly, it's pretty clear where the member from Thornhill stands on it. He's supporting the bill, as our party is. I think we had an election in the city of Toronto where it was one of the key planks of the mayor who won an overwhelming majority.

The member from Thornhill also talked about the disparity we're seeing between those in the public-sector, mainly unionized workforce, as compared to those who are not. I would simply say that this government has been

irresponsible in the past number of years in light of the realities of the fiscal situation in the province of Ontario and around the world, where we had this big recession in 2008. Yet despite that, the government went on to sign contracts with 3% to 5% increases in pay despite the fact that the government's in a big financial hole.

We'll be supporting this. I think we need to face the reality that, as the member from Thornhill pointed out, the family pie is used up and that families who are paying the bills need to be respected and need to see some relief. We're supporting this bill so that those who depend on the TTC will, in fact, be able to count on it—millions of people around the city of Toronto—when they need to use that service.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: At the outset, I, with some caution, respectfully welcome the support of our Conservative colleagues the MPPs from Thornhill as well as Parry Sound–Muskoka with reference to Bill 150. If I might for a moment paraphrase Michael Corleone, who said keep your friends close but, perhaps, your Conservatives even closer.

Having said that, I do think the MPP from Thornhill quite rightly cited the importance of the TTC not only locally to his own riding of Thornhill but, of course, broadly. We've spoken already in this House about the incredible importance of the social, economic, environmental and health and well-being that is really dependent on the TTC. We've talked about, for example, the extraordinary ridership on a daily basis, something on the order of 1.5 million rides per day. We've made reference already to the economic impact: Estimates are that about \$50 million in economic activity is lost due to TTC strikes.

I appreciate as well the support of the Conservative Party and, by the way, the NDP on that fateful Sunday, as the MPP from Thornhill quite rightly cited, when we as the government, as stewards of the public good, convened an emergency session and extracted, elicited, sought and got agreement from all parties. I believe it was a more or less unanimous decision that day to legislate the TTC back. I think that's really a hint of foreshadowing, if you will, of the idea that the TTC is ultimately an essential service for the city and the province of Ontario.

There is a number of other issues, for example regarding some of the clauses of arbitration, some of the nuances there. Perhaps I'll have an opportunity to speak to those later on. I do welcome the support, however it's phrased in fire and brimstone, from the Conservatives.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Thornhill has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'd like to thank the members for Toronto–Danforth, Mississauga–Streetsville, Parry Sound–Muskoka and Etobicoke North for their comments.

In the case of the member for Toronto–Danforth, he says that the TTC’s problems are really about 1990s decisions concerning an aging asset of infrastructure. I would respectfully point out that that has got very little to do with TTC wages, what they look like. It’s not particularly germane, though he may be right; I don’t disagree. The transit needs funding, but it needs a new funding formula.

The member from Mississauga–Streetsville always seems to stand up and comment when I make presentations to this Legislature: Why don’t you just sit down, take responsibility for your own government for once, and don’t preach to me? At least I know who I am.

As far as my friend from Parry Sound–Muskoka, he restates that we had an election result here in Toronto which I talked about at length. He restated the issue of the disparity between public sector unions and the rest of us, to which he’s quite entitled and correct.

I thank very much my friend from Etobicoke North for also nodding in the direction of the fabric of this city and what the TTC means with regard to holding it together.

I did refer to the Working Families Coalition during the course of my debate. I want to point out, for those people who are watching on television, that the Working Families Coalition is an association of unions, of public sector unions, that want to keep their entitlements. They want to, at all costs, keep their entitlements, and see the way to doing that as keeping the Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty in power. There are millions and millions of dollars, and ultimately they go back to your taxes, that have been collected as union dues that are going into television commercials trying to tell you that that’s the only government to support.

That government, at least, has finally seen the light with this legislation as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. David Zimmer: I am looking forward to speaking to this issue. The role of unions in our broader society has been of interest to me for many, many years. My approach to this is, perhaps, going to be a little different because I want to start off by saying that, in fact, I believe in unions, and I support the union movement.

I think a little bit of history is in order. The union movement really took off in the 1930s, and it took off in the 1930s for some very, very good reasons. There were very difficult and extreme conditions. The unions in North America and the UK—and in the UK even earlier, in the 1920s, around the turn of the century—helped workers to organize. They helped workers get better working conditions, better wages and better lives for their families. They made a major contribution to improving life generally across the board for all of those societies in which they became active.

That’s the tradition that we have, and that’s something that I believe in strongly. However, there’s a qualification there, and that qualification, in my view, is this: Unions, governments, private sector companies—really

all the institutions in our society have to comport themselves in the public interest.

This morning in the *Globe and Mail*, I read a column by the journalist Margaret Wente. She spoke at some length on this issue. Indeed, the points that she made I read about yesterday in some of the American financial papers having to do with the situation in Wisconsin and others. I want to quote a sentence that she used in her column because I think it puts this whole thing in context about why this legislation is essential, why we have to move forward with legislation that makes the TTC an essential service and effectively takes away the right to strike.

This was what she said in the column this morning: “The dynamic between public-sector unions and government is completely different from the one between private-sector unions and business.” That’s an essential point that we’ve got to keep in mind here.

The private sector unions—the unions at GM, the unions at the XYZ manufacturing company and so on—their relationship, their negotiation, their tension, if you will, their creative tension is between the private sector union and the owners and shareholders of the business. That really is a private relationship.

Now we look at public sector unions. Their relationship or tension or interaction is between the public sector union and government or an agency of government or an institution set up by government. For purposes of the debate today, the Toronto Transit Commission is a public utility. It’s an agency of government, if you will. The distinction between the two, private sector unions versus owners and shareholders in the private relationship and public sector unions versus a government or an agency of government—the principal responsibility in that second relationship is the public interest. Both the unions and, in this case, the TTC, when they’re developing the dynamics of that relationship, have always got to keep in mind the public interest.

What is the public interest here that needs protecting? I say that the public interest that needs protecting here is really the ability of the TTC to provide uninterrupted service at all times for all of the people in the GTA who need to get around, keep their jobs, get their children to school, and keep the local GTA economy on a strong footing.

In that regard, we should keep in mind some of the facts surrounding the TTC. For instance, 1.5 million people every business day use the TTC. It’s somewhat lower on the weekends. The TTC is the third-largest transit system in North America. New York City is first, and then Mexico. The 1.5 million people that use the TTC every business day, that total, is equal to the number of people who live in London, Hamilton, Kitchener, Windsor and Sudbury combined.

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There’s the student who takes the bus to get to school; the single mom who doesn’t have a car but needs to get to work and provide for her kids. There are thousands of riders who can’t afford the time and money to drive and

park downtown. There are the many who know that fewer cars on the road is better for our environment, better for our health. There are the young people who use transit at night in order to get home safely from the downtown entertainment areas. There are the tourists that come to Toronto and depend on access to transit in order to get around, to visit the city and get a sense of the flavour of Toronto. There are all of those needs that, in my judgment, constitute the public interest, and that public interest ought not to be subjected to the to-and-fros of a strike situation or a negotiation that is likely to lead to a strike situation.

Those are some of the facts that I say create a strong public interest that needs protecting. I come back to my earlier point about the distinction between private sector unions and private sector entities, businesses—the owners of the businesses and the shareholders of the business—and the public service unions, whose relationship retention is with government or agencies or arms of the government such as the TTC.

Interestingly enough, obviously, the city of Toronto recognizes that as a public interest. We in this Legislature only have to think back—I think it has been two occasions since I've been here, since 2003—to where that tension between the TTC and the public service union governing the employees of the TTC union broke down, a strike situation developed, and we in this Legislature, all parties, recognizing that the public interest needed to be protected, acted quickly. We acted within a matter of a day or days to restore public transit, to continue to protect that public interest.

There is a widespread sense from really all members of this Legislature, because on each of those occasions, if memory serves me correctly, all parties voted together. It was a unanimous vote to protect the public interest by ordering the TTC workers back to work. So, obviously, as a matter of logic, we recognize protecting the ability and the right, if you will, of the people of the GTA, and in particular Toronto, to use the TTC. We recognize that as a public interest, and we've recognized it in the past as a public interest.

The city of Toronto has come to the same conclusion. The city of Toronto, through a vote—the new city of Toronto council and the new mayor—in effect has said that there is a public interest that needs protecting here. The public interest is the right of the people of the city of Toronto and the GTA to access public transit for all of the reasons that I said before: the single mother trying to get her kids to school, the employee trying to get himself or herself to work, the senior citizen trying to get to medical appointments etc. This isn't just a matter of hundreds or thousands of people; this is 1.5 million people a day, the third-largest public transit system in North America after New York City and Mexico City. So the city of Toronto, which has a council and a mayor who were elected by the people of the city of Toronto, has recognized that the public wants that public interest protected.

If that bargaining relationship between the union and the TTC breaks down, the public interest will suffer, in the sense that the public transportation system is shut down and all of those 1.5 million people are out there, stuck. They can't carry on with the things that they have to carry on with in their day-to-day lives to protect their families, to earn their livelihoods and so on.

The province, as the senior level of government relative to the city of Toronto and the only government body that can bring in legislation to answer the request of the city of Toronto to protect that public interest, has acquiesced, has recognized that, yes, on the recommendation of the city of Toronto, we are prepared to do what we have to do to protect the public interest. We take it a step further and we say, "Because we're prepared to do as you want"—that is, eliminate the right to strike in the public interest—"we, too, are recognizing that the public interest needs protection, and we, as a province, are prepared to do our piece in conjunction with the city of Toronto to recognize that public interest."

Let me say a few words about the legislation itself. First of all, let me say something about essential services, because the rationale for eliminating the right to strike in a relationship between a public sector union and government or an agency of government is that an essential service has to be protected. The obvious examples—and we all accept these examples, and we've governed ourselves for years and years. Strikes and lockouts have been limited or prohibited, many in a number of public services.

In Ontario, we've got three general approaches to how we protect an essential service. For the purposes of my comments, I'm saying that my premise is that the right to keep the TTC operating and providing public transportation services is an essential service.

In the past, police, fire and hospital services were subject to a blanket prohibition on work stoppages. That makes sense. You can't have the police on strike because, obviously, all sorts of bad things could happen. You can't have the firemen on strike because, obviously, all sorts of bad things can happen. And you can't have hospital services on strike because all kinds of bad things could happen if they were. Those bad things are things that happen to people who need and require police protection and regulation, who need the protection of fire departments and who need hospital services.

A second approach is that legislation governing ambulance workers and some other crown employees allows for strikes and lockouts to occur, subject to certain aspects of the services subject to public service agreements. Police, fire, hospitals: Essential service applies across the board. Other public services, unions and their relationship with the government agencies: There are certain defined types of work within that relationship that are subject to essential services.

Effectively, the third approach is that when a public service union goes on strike, and the Legislature decides in its wisdom that there's an essential service that needs protection, we come back to this Legislature and, on an

ad hoc basis, on an individual strike and so on, legislate them back to work.

I think there's no doubt that a sound argument has been made, can be made, will continue to be made that public transportation in a jurisdiction like Toronto and the GTA is an essential service. I've covered the reasons why I say that's the case, and I think there is broad public support out there for the idea that public transportation in a jurisdiction like Toronto is an essential service.

An important aspect of the legislation is the role of an arbitrator, because when the government takes away a public service union's right to strike in order to advance its interests or settle tension between it and its employer, there has to be something else in place. What else is in place of the right to strike here?

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Well, it's arbitrated awards. The legislation contemplates that the bargaining relationship between the public service union and the TTC will continue, the union will continue to exist, and all the other rights of the union will be there except the right to strike. They will continue in their bargaining relationship, they may reach an agreement, and the agreement will be in place for the term of the agreement—a few years usually. All of the usual things in the agreement will be set out, and that will govern their relationship.

But in the event that they can't come to an agreement about the terms of the relationship between the public sector union and the TTC, then an arbitrator is appointed. The arbitrator steps in, listens to what the union has to say, listens to what the employer has to say, and settles a number of questions: the terms and conditions of the work, the wages and so forth and so on. That decision of the arbitrator is binding on both parties: the union and the employer.

The legislation is unique in that it sets out some parameters for the role of the arbitrator, the function of the arbitrator. In issuing the award—that is, the settlement to govern this employer-employee relationship—the arbitrator has to take into consideration—let me just go through a number of factors here: the employer's ability to pay in light of its fiscal situation; the extent to which services may have to be reduced, in light of the decision or award, if current funding and taxation levels are not increased; the economic situation in Ontario and the city of Toronto; a comparison, as between the employees and other comparable employees in the public and private sectors, of the terms and conditions of employment and the nature of the work performed; the employer's ability to attract and retain qualified employees; and the purposes of the Public Sector Dispute Resolution Act.

Any idea that this legislation has set up a regime whereby we're eliminating the right to strike and giving the arbitrator the right to decide the agreement, the deal between the employer and the employees, is an overstatement, because as I just outlined, there are a number of constraints. There is a context in which the arbitrator has to present his award. He has to generally keep in mind the employer's ability to pay, he has to keep in

mind the economic situation in Ontario and in the city of Toronto, and he has to keep in mind what other comparable employees are getting paid and so on. The point here is that the arbitrator's award has to be in the context of what our societal expectations are of various other employer-employee relationships. That's a good thing.

So we have the best of both worlds here. We have a world now, if this legislation is passed, in which strikes at TTC are not permitted, the public interest is protected, and the people of Toronto and the GTA can get on with their lives without having the anxiety of not being able to get around in the event of a strike. In terms of the city and the employer and the employees, we have the fairness of an arbitrator's award, and we have set out the parameters or the context in which the arbitrator is to approach a decision. That is a solution that protects the public interest.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I listened with interest to my friend from Willowdale, who made a number of good points. I want to pick out one suggestion that he made about the right of people to use the system to go and earn their livelihood, and I couldn't agree more. It brought to mind a time, probably most of 20 years ago, when I owned and operated a then-small business in downtown Toronto. It was a 7/24 business, and it depended on clerical staff who had to use the TTC to get to and from work—almost entirely 100% of them. As well, it happened simultaneously with a postal strike.

I had no cash flow coming in, and because it was so heavily clerical, we went hand to mouth on the money. We had workers who couldn't get to work without having mass transportation, the TTC. The only way to keep my doors open was to spend my day travelling to and from the homes of my employees, picking them up and delivering them—that's what I did—and also, in between, going to pick up cheques so that we could keep the doors open.

I don't think that my situation was singular. I had the right to earn a livelihood, all of those people who worked with me had the right to their livelihood, and it was public sector unions that were holding them to ransom, through no fault of their own whatsoever. That's what we're talking about today. I speak with experience on this, and I applaud the member for recognizing that.

I have one other comment for my friend from Willowdale, and also for the Liberal side. You seem somewhat ill at ease with this legislation, my friends, and seem to be working pretty hard to justify it. Don't. There's a reason why your government brought it in. There's a reason why you're going to stand up and vote for it. There's a reason why we're here, agreeing with you that this is a good idea: because it really is in the public interest.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I listened to my friend from Willowdale make his comments, and I don't agree with him. I'm going to leave it at that, because I like him too much to expose the—

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Now, there's a first.

Mr. Peter Kormos: No, he means well. He's got a good intellect and he did his best, weaving and bobbing on this one. As a lawyer, I'm sure he's done that in front of many a judge, and like most lawyers know, you don't win them all. This was another one of those days for my dear colleague from Willowdale.

But having said that, this has all become rather moot, because I've been served with a notice of motion for a time allocation on this bill, Bill 150. We have now reached the 6.5-hour second reading debate time, where, pursuant to this government's standing orders—the ones they designed for themselves—they can call a time allocation motion. I suspect they will. I don't know whether they'll let my colleagues from Kenora–Rainy River or Mr. Tabuns here from Toronto–Danforth speak to it or not, but it remains that second reading is, in all effect, wrapped up.

There will be two short days of committee hearings: Wednesday, March 9, and Monday, March 21. On March 23, there will be a truncated day of clause-by-clause consideration; at 5 o'clock, it's all wrapped up, all motions deemed to have been put. They will be voted on—and then a mere one hour allocated for third reading.

Not only do we have one of the most dramatic reversals of long and hard-earned labour rights in this province being rammed through the Legislature; we have a government that's not even got the gumption to defend its own position.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comment?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a pleasure to follow the very thoughtful discourse by my colleague from Willowdale, whose expertise, certainly in legal affairs, transcends this. I hope people paid attention to his very well-measured, carefully-reasoned comments, because they fairly reflect the comments of a lot of people who are affected by the TTC and whether a labour dispute does or doesn't happen.

In passing comment on the member's discourse, I point out that, being from the 905 belt, we too are affected by a TTC labour dispute. One of the things that definitely affects us is that, if you've got to get into the city of Toronto, a TTC labour dispute means that you run into instant gridlock. Not merely at the Etobicoke Creek or up at the northern border or down at the eastern border, but all over the GTA, traffic just comes to a complete halt.

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Whether or not I think this is the best way or the only way, it still remains that this is the way that a duly elected city council in the city of Toronto has asked us to share the jurisdiction over the Toronto Transit Commission, which I accept. Of course, any labour discussions or bargaining issues have to happen between the

city of Toronto and the Toronto Transit Commission and its unions. While we in the Legislature have been asked to pass this particular piece of legislation, ultimately its jurisdiction, its enforcement and—as I said a little bit earlier, employers tend to get the unions that they deserve—the climate of labour relations will rest between the city, the TTC and the unions.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Bill 150 is obviously causing the Liberal government significant unease. They see that there's significant agreement within this House on passing this bill, but what do they do today? They've filed a time allocation motion on something that there's significant agreement in the House on. Why do they want to do this? Of course, they want to do this to suffocate discussion and debate on this bill. They want to suffocate the discussion on the amendments after second reading. This Liberal government is being completely disingenuous with the people of Ontario and the people of Toronto with this bill. We can see what's happening here. They're only allocating one hour of debate for third reading: one hour of debate.

Why would this Liberal government want to hide from the people of Ontario? Why do they want to hide? The government House leader wants to hide from the people of Ontario what their real intentions are, what they're really trying to achieve with this bill, and I think this Liberal government must begin to act honestly and come clean with the people of Ontario.

This time allocation motion is nothing but a slap to their supporters, nothing but a slap to the people of Ontario, nothing but a slap to the members of this Legislative Assembly, and it's just indicative of the contempt that this Liberal Party has for democracy.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Willowdale has two minutes to respond.

Mr. David Zimmer: Just let me respond to the criticism about the time allocation. The fact of the matter is that we are going to have public hearings. Today is March 1. The current collective agreement expires on March 31. Time is of the essence here. We're going to have public hearings, we're going to have further debate, and we're going to get this legislation behind us so that, come the end of this month, the end of March, the parties can start to think about how they're going to govern their relationship. Hopefully, the parties will be able to sort out their relationship in this next month without the assistance of an arbitrator, which would be available sometime after March 31 if they can't.

Since 2003, we've legislated the TTC back to work twice. There's broad public support in Toronto, in the broader GTA. The public support that this has is quite clear. We're going to move effectively on this. If this legislation passes, the way the parameters are established for the work of the arbitrator, it's going to be fair for the city of Toronto, it's going to be fair for the employees and it's going to be fair for the public. When you take

that all into account, the public interest is best protected with this—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings to announce that there has been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will, therefore, be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader indicates otherwise.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: We have no further debate.
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour say “aye.”

All those opposed say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until Wednesday at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1636.

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Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
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Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
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Group and the London Stock Exchange Group / Comité
spécial sur la transaction proposée entre le Groupe TMX et le
London Stock Exchange Group**

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