



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)**

Thursday 3 March 2011

Jeudi 3 mars 2011

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
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

Thursday 3 March 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 3 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 Islamic prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 2, 2011, on the motion for allocation of time 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 Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't sure at this point who was supposed to be up, but if it is me—I see I have 10 minutes.

I spoke on the last occasion about the TTC workers, about taking away the right to strike, about arbitration, about the costs to the city of Toronto and also the cost to the unionized workers, who will, from this point on, although they're likely to get more money through arbitration, find many of the key aspects of their job that were negotiated in the past will not be negotiated in the same kind of way. Most of the breakthrough legislation around things, most importantly like health and safety, have not been arbitral awards, because an arbitrator is there to try to make sure that fairness is done in terms of wages, but they do not often rock the boat when it comes to new concepts, new ideas or new rights for workers. Those are hard won, and usually only through conciliation with the right to strike. So it was a sad day when the government imposed this closure.

I've been around here for nearly 10 years, and in those 10 years I've seen a lot of closure motions. I know why governments do them. Governments do them for a variety of reasons, but fundamentally they do them, first of all, because they're tired of the debate and they don't want to hear any more debate on the issue, or they think they're getting beaten up in the debate and they simply want it to go away. The second reason they do it, on occasion, is because there is a timetable; there is an agenda that has to be met. In this particular case, I happen to think it's both of them. I think the government is starting to get beaten up by many people and groups

who have served them in the past. I think some of the unions are starting to get pretty angry, looking at this.

I know that this Liberal government is feeding towards that Ford frenzy in Toronto; I know that. I think they're afraid of the Ford nation. I listened to that last night, this whole thing about the Ford nation coming down on the Liberal government and on McGuinty if the government doesn't do exactly his bidding. I don't know whether people over there are afraid of that; I don't know. I think they probably are. I think they're afraid of a whole bunch of things around this new administration and what they're asking for. I think, too, this is a government that very often just does things by polls. They look at the polls—and my friend here from Brantford, the instant expert on Toronto, says, "Oh, wow, we read a poll that 70% of the people want to take away the rights." So that makes him an expert on Toronto. I think that's why the government is doing it, too.

I think this government is going to be beaten up over time on this issue—perhaps not today and perhaps not by the people of Toronto, but they are going to be beaten up by many of the people they like to stand here and say they represent and listen to. Because in fact this is not happening at all. Part of their whole rush here is that they don't want to hear the other parts of the arguments; they don't want to hear what—I think ordinary, rational people, given time to think about it, maybe would have second thoughts. So, "Let's go headlong and do whatever Mayor Ford says. Let's do whatever the media has trumped up. Let's take away these rights. Let's do it in a hurry and let's do it now."

That brings me to the second half of why they're doing it: They have an arbitrary deadline; they've set it for themselves. They've decided, "We have to do this before the contract that the TTC workers have is up." They have to do it right away because on April 1 they'll be without a contract. Heaven knows what they're going to do.

This government didn't listen at all to what the union has said. The union is asking merely—they know the cards are probably already dealt. They know that the betting is taking place. They know that their hand is probably not the winning one. And they know that something is going to happen. But they also know that their membership wants an opportunity to be heard. They also know that in order for things to happen or for them to be listened to, they have to take away the right to strike, at least in this round of negotiation. They put forward, I think, a very sensible proposition to this government which was totally ignored. They said, "In this round of bargaining we will not strike. We will not."

Please take your time and do this right. Whatever you're going to do, listen to all the parties involved and please do it right. This government isn't interested in that. This government invoked closure even though the debate was almost wound down; it was almost gone. All of the New Democratic Party members, who obviously were not going to support the bill, had already spoken. I don't know what you thought was going to happen. But you were so bound and determined to meet that artificial deadline that you've set for yourselves that you invoked closure on something that didn't have to have closure at all.

So here we go: In a few minutes we're going to be all finished and the government's going to do what they want. There's going to be a day or two of hearings and they're going to be really done quickly. And then, some time before that magic April 1 date, the government will be back in this House with another closure motion shutting it down. Third reading will be half an hour or an hour. Whatever the debate's going to be, it will be almost non-existent; the government's going to do it.

Then I can see the Premier waving this around, inviting Mayor Ford, "Come on up to Queen's Park. Have I got a treat for you. Please don't unleash the Ford nation on me. I've done exactly what you said. I've bowed to your every wish. Not only have I bowed to your wish for subways when obviously Transit City makes much more sense; I have now bowed to your wish on the TTC. What else can I do, Mayor Ford? How else can I help you so that you don't unleash your nation upon me? How about letting you sell off all the Ontario Housing, Toronto city housing to the highest bidder. Can I do that for you, Mayor Ford? Please, can I do that for you?" Or how about, I don't know, the hundred things that he's asking for.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: He wants \$150 million.

Mr. Michael Prue: Oh yeah, he wants \$150 million. "Please, Mayor Ford, wait for the budget. We'll see whether we can come up with that money."

I don't know; for all these years I thought the Ontario government stood for something. For all these years, I thought they stood for the people of the province of Ontario and, yes, for the people who live in Ontario's and Canada's largest city. But I see that much of what is done around here is done for political expediency. Much of what is done around here is so that this government can find itself, it hopes, on the right side of votes come election day.

0910

There are, of course, going to be winners: those who want to change our society enormously; those who want us to go down the path of becoming Wisconsin. And then there are going to be losers: those workers, like the TTC workers, who are going to lose the rights they have and, I think, the rights they want for a safer and more decent place to work. This government is playing right into those hands and is doing it, I think, because there is a real, palpable fear out there of what the residents of Toronto are going to do with this government in the next

election. They are bowing to pressures they ought not to bow to. They are giving up on friends, or people who used to be their friends, in order to embrace people who are very strange bedfellows indeed.

In the minute or so I have left, I just say this is another sad day in this Legislature. I think that almost every time there has been a closure motion in the 10 years I have been here, we have spoken against closure because it is not in the democratic interests of the people we serve. To cut off debate when debate becomes uncomfortable, to cut off debate when you have a secret agenda or an agenda that obviously makes no sense, like this one, is a sad day for democracy. For all those Liberals who cheer on closure motions because, I guess, they're just tired of it, well, I think they will have other options come October 7 this year. They won't have to listen to it anymore, because so many of them will not be here.

You know, that's the way it is, and I guess it's with a very heavy heart that I watch this take place. But I know full well that in the fullness of time, whether it takes a week or a month or a year, people and saner things will prevail, ideas will come back and those workers who are being done such a disservice here in Toronto will have their day too, perhaps all thanks to the Ford nation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? Further debate?

Seeing none, on March 2, Ms. Smith moved government notice of motion 54. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will defer this vote until deferred votes, after question period.

Vote deferred.

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 March 1, 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 Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? Further debate?

Seeing none, on December 8, 2010, Ms. Matthews moved second reading of Bill 141, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Amendment Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will defer this vote until deferred votes, after question period.

Second reading vote deferred.

STRONG COMMUNITIES THROUGH
AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 FAVORISANT
DES COLLECTIVITÉS FORTES
GRÂCE AU LOGEMENT ABORDABLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 22, 2011, on the motion for second reading of Bill 140, An Act to enact the Housing Services Act, 2011, repeal the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 140, Loi édictant la Loi de 2011 sur les services de logement, abrogeant la Loi de 2000 sur la réforme du logement social et apportant des modifications corrélatives et autres à d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure for me to have just a few moments to speak about Bill 140, An Act to enact the Housing Services Act, 2011, repeal the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts. I only had a couple of minutes to speak to it on one of the hits during second reading debate, and I really wanted to put a few comments on the record this morning as it relates to my riding of Leeds–Grenville.

Our riding has had a lot of debate with housing over the last little bit, through the united counties of Leeds and Grenville. Most of our existing units are over 50 years old, and 30% of them—30%—were built before 1946. We've got a tremendously old housing stock, one that is in desperate need of repair, and the county has had very, very poor luck in getting funding from the McGuinty government. They're very frustrated. I know that many of the county councillors have expressed dismay, both the ones who were elected last October and the county council prior to that. They've made a number of funding requests. I believe in their last funding request they asked for in excess of 200 units, and basically, I think the first time they got nothing and the second time they received a handful.

There were two actual projects that the united counties of Leeds and Grenville did as part of their master plan. They looked at a number of applications that were in throughout the entire riding and they prioritized two projects: one in North Grenville that was on the site of the Kemptville District Hospital, and the other in downtown Brockville, from a corporation called Wall Street Village. Two very good projects that, when the ranking was finished, were equal—dead equal—in terms of points. The county opted not to prioritize them because they didn't want to choose between the two. Both were very significant projects that required a lot of funding from the province, and as a result, they didn't get the money.

I can remember, because the anniversary of my election is tomorrow, that one of the first things that I did when I got here—I got sworn in on March 22. We convened a meeting with the people from the Kemptville District Hospital; the CEO, Colin Goodfellow; and a representative from the Ministry of Housing, because we realized then that the initial Canada-Ontario affordable housing agreement—sometimes units get turned back. Sometimes, for whatever reason, the funding allocation doesn't get used and the numbers come back to the ministry.

We were trying to develop a strategy on being ready in case units became available, but we couldn't get much assistance from the government. That's why I feel so strongly about Bill 140 and the efforts that they're putting on local service managers—in my case, the united counties of Leeds and Grenville. Obviously during question period you don't have that opportunity to get detail, so I opted to use the tools that were available to me and I filed some order paper questions, very specific questions to help us develop our strategy in Leeds–Grenville to deal with the government.

I'll just indulge the members, because I think it's very pertinent to Bill 140's discussion. Some of the order paper questions I did—I asked the Minister of Municipal Affairs to “provide the name of municipality and dollar allocation and number of units for the Canada-Ontario affordable housing program round 2 funding initial allocation.” And just again, indulge me, because once I read the five and tell you the answer it'll become clear.

The second question: I asked the minister to “provide details of the Canada-Ontario affordable housing program round 2 funding initial allocation projects that have received an extension on their commitment.” I wanted to find out who had been given that extension.

Thirdly: the funding details for round 2 funding to give me an idea of funding reallocation for projects in round 2 that could not proceed; to provide reallocation details of round 1 funding; and finally, to provide the name of municipality and the dollar allocation and number of units for that initial round 1.

0920

All I wanted to do was to find out, basically, the background; to provide the county with a strategy on how to proceed for these two top-ranked affordable housing projects; to find out what happened in round 1 and what happened in round 2. Very specific questions, very open questions; there weren't any curveballs there and there wasn't any trick that I was trying to play with the ministry. I was just trying to find cold, hard facts so that we could deal with our aging affordable housing stock in my riding and be able to tell some very progressive people who wanted to provide that housing mix how to proceed.

Here is the answer that I got to those very specific questions, and this is from Minister Bartolucci, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. His response: “On June 9, 2009, our government signed an affordable housing agreement with the federal government to deliver new housing to Ontarians. Through this agreement

we are investing \$622 million and the federal government is matching the sum, for a combined total of \$1.2 billion for housing. This investment will create 4,500 new units of affordable housing and repair well over 50,000 units of social housing across the province. We are working with federal and municipal partners to announce these projects in the near future.”

Can you imagine what looks I got when I showed this response to those two housing groups? They couldn't believe it. They couldn't believe that the province of Ontario would answer an MPP's questions—specific questions for them to develop a strategy on trying to get funding, trying to be open, trying to work with the government to make this work, and they get this from the minister? It's disgraceful. It's a joke. These people have worked for years to provide this in good faith, based on this federal-provincial partnership. When I told them about the minister's statement about his Bill 140 and when I sent them, through the county, details, I was just again—I think it was one of the members for the third party, the member for Parkdale–High Park, who, when she had her 10-minute address, talked about the fact that the clock is ticking on this term of the Legislative Assembly. We all know that we have an election in October, and I think if we're going to do something on this file, we need to have a little co-operation.

When I table some order paper questions, the thing that frustrates me the most is the fact that when I get bonehead answers, like I got to those very specific questions, there's no area of appeal. There's no late show I can call. There's no appeal board that I can go to to get those questions answered. Those are the answers I get and that's it.

But I'll tell you, when it comes to this file, when it comes to our housing stock in our riding of Leeds–Grenville, we need some help and we need some co-operation. We don't need a pat, two-paragraph answer that tells me something that I already know. That doesn't help county council. That doesn't help those community groups that want to provide a project to deal with the affordable housing need in my riding of Leeds–Grenville. Again, 30% of the stock was built prior to 1946. Applying for units and getting no response, trying to develop a strategy to deal with the government, and getting stupid answers to some very specific questions, isn't going to foster that co-operation.

Mr. Dave Levac: Calling them stupid is?

Mr. Steve Clark: Well, they are. They're stupid answers.

All I remember is, we've got a strategy. We've already, in our community, done what was part of this bill, and that's providing priorities, but we need some help.

So, in closing, I appreciated the fact that I asked for a couple of minutes today just to, again, express the frustration of our county members, of our service provider and of those two projects, one in North Grenville and one in Brockville, who find it extremely difficult when they don't know how some of these projects were funded; when they know that there are units that are returned that

could be put to use in other communities. How are they going to mount a message that's going to get a response from this government?

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for letting me provide a few local examples.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was very interesting to listen to the member from Leeds–Grenville as he shared some of the struggles that people in his riding are facing when it comes to affordable housing. Those are struggles that could be repeated, I would say, in most of the ridings across this province.

The bill does take a few good steps, but it is mainly what is not in the bill that is causing all of us problems. The need for affordable housing is present across every community in Ontario, and I will speak in more depth about my own communities and how the lack of affordable housing is causing some real hardship for a lot of people, a lot of families and entire communities. Yet we don't see any of this in the bill, so there continues to be this huge need out there with no real plan to bring solutions to meet those needs. The member from Leeds–Grenville gave us examples of this.

This is a typical bill where there are some really good, small steps that will clear up some of the paperwork issues that have been a nightmare for a long time; they will probably get addressed with this bill. But the fundamental right of people to affordable housing is not being addressed, although during the huge consultation that was done on poverty, it came up as the number one issue throughout the province, that affordable housing had to be addressed. In every forum that you go to, you hear about affordable housing, yet we will let this opportunity go by with nothing done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to respond to the comments from the member opposite on Bill 140 and to lend my support to the bill, which, if passed, will provide Ontarians with access to a system that puts people first and will set a strong foundation for a more efficient, accessible system for those who need it.

I think we need to put this in the context that, since 2003, our government has invested more than \$2.5 billion in non-profit housing, in addition to the \$430 million which is provided annually for other forms of housing supports.

One of the things that I'm really excited about right now in my community is the St. Joseph's foundation, adjacent to St. Joe's hospital, is building affordable housing units for seniors. This is going to be a great development because a lot of the day programming for seniors is located at St. Joe's, so they'll have affordable housing next door to where the programming is.

The legislation, though, will also provide some flexibility in the way that program money is used as it arrives from the province. That means that people in Toronto can use it in one way, people in Leeds–Grenville can use it in

another, and people in Nickel Belt or Timmins can use it in another way—whatever makes the most sense locally.

A couple of things that people in my community are very pleased about in the bill are that rent geared to income will now be a once-a-year calculation, not a continuous recalculation, and also the requirement to have municipalities allow one-off affordable units in single-family residential—good things in this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the speech by the member from Leeds–Grenville on Bill 140, the Housing Services Act, 2011.

I think the member made some good points. In particular, he was talking for a while there about order paper questions that were coming on the issue of affordable housing from community groups in his riding trying to get some very specific information that he was going to pass on to these groups and how the response from the government to his specific questions was not very helpful. I would simply say that seems to be what this government is doing.

For those who aren't familiar, as MPPs we can table questions, which we give to the table here in the Legislature, and then there's a time frame whereby the appropriate minister has to respond to the question. But if they're going to give answers that don't really provide any information, it's really not very helpful.

0930

Last year I held an affordable housing roundtable, a consultation meeting, in Parry Sound. In my riding, Parry Sound has probably the greatest need for affordable housing. We had many individuals and groups who came out to participate in that. I have since then passed on their thoughts and recommendations to the government, so I hope the government is listening to the input they're getting.

This bill is a small step. Our party will be supporting the bill, I think, as debate winds down. But it would be nice if the government would take opposition order paper questions seriously and actually make some sort of attempt to provide information which can then be passed on to our constituents.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened again to the member from Leeds–Grenville.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes, I was going to say that he didn't use his BlackBerry, and he spoke so eloquently without it.

He said something that I think every member in this House ought to listen to, particularly those who are not in cabinet. He talked about the frustration that he has, and I'm sure all non-cabinet members have, in trying to get answers, answers to very simple—sometimes not so simple and technical—questions, ones that are not politically motivated, simply trying to find out things about their

community, about government programs; and then getting back no answers or, as he put it, bonehead answers to very simple, very straightforward, very non-political questions.

He quite rightly pointed out that there is no help. There's nothing that you can do when you get an answer, or a non-answer, like he gets. There is no appeal, and as he said, there's not even a late show. There's nothing that can be done.

Now, we in this House, particularly on the opposition side, know that when you ask a question in question period of a minister or of the Premier, they're often not going to answer it. They're going to skirt around the issue and say whatever they want, but they're not going to directly deal with the issue that you are bringing forward. I was at a reception last night and met a Liberal staffer and talked about that, and she was very blunt and very bold. She said, "We never intend to answer your questions. Don't you know that yet after 10 years?" I said, "Well, yes, I do." But it was the first time I'd ever heard someone from the Liberal Party actually explain it that way.

Please, when he's asking a non-technical question, please find it in your hearts to answer them. We all have a job to do here: to represent our constituents.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Leeds–Grenville has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'd like to take the opportunity to thank the members for Nickel Belt, Guelph, Parry Sound–Muskoka and Beaches–East York for their questions and comments,

And I apologize: I was a bit over the top today. I was blowing off some steam a bit, but there was a lot of frustration. As I said before, in my riding, in our communities, the local service provider has over 1,130 units that they own or fund, in addition to 113 rent supplements. The two projects that were requested, the 80-unit seniors' building in Kemptville and the 80-unit building for disabled persons in Brockville—again, there was some frustration. We had received no money one year; we were asking for \$29 million. We ended up, of the 323 units that we asked for, getting 14. We got 12 units in Elgin and a two-unit in Kemptville. So you have to appreciate that we're extremely frustrated.

I saw some figures a year ago, just after my election, and our waiting list in housing fluctuates between 350 and 600. That's significant, when you look at 600 people as a high on the waiting list when there's only 1,130 units that the county is involved in. Again, we were trying to develop a strategy, we were trying to develop a partnership, but we needed the base information from the government. We needed that information so that we could provide a strategy back to them so we could participate.

Time is running out on this session of the Legislative Assembly, and when you put a bill like this, I think you have to be prepared to provide not just the normal fluff answers like the ones I received to my order paper questions. I think people deserve better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I'm now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been more than six and one 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: Mr. Speaker, we would like the debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Is there further debate? The honourable member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to start by quoting from a book, *Persistent Poverty: Voices from the Margins*, which basically says that in Ontario, right here, right now, 1.3 million households are precariously housed; that is, they pay more than 30% of their total income on housing—1.3 million households. That's a lot of people.

There are 120,000 families that live in overcrowded housing. If any of you ever care to come to northern Ontario and go into any of our First Nations communities, you will see what overcrowding is all about and you will see what sleeping in shifts is all about.

We also have 80,000 Ontarians who live in sub-standard housing that requires major repair. We're not talking about changing the colour of the porch here. We're talking about windows and doors and a roof that doesn't leak and mould in the bathroom etc.

We have over 140,000 households that are on waiting lists for affordable housing. That's worth repeating: 140,000 households are on affordable housing wait-lists in Ontario. That's throughout Ontario. It doesn't matter where you go, there are wait-lists for supportive housing. This number increased from 2009 to 2010. It increased by 10%.

Housing insecurity is rising partly because the cost of energy keeps soaring and people can't make ends meet. Rent has also increased faster than inflation, while the income of tenants has stagnated or declined. Half of tenants do not have enough income to pay for housing and other necessities such as food, medicine, transportation or education.

The author of *Persistent Poverty* spoke to hundreds of people from across Ontario struggling with poverty and insecure housing. I'll give you one example. His name is Jacob. He's a young man from Toronto who said at a recent community meeting, "A bachelor apartment costs \$600 or maybe \$700 a month in Parkdale. Rooming houses are terrible. People steal your food, mess up the bathroom, get drunk and bring their friends home. My socks and underwear were stolen from the laundry. How do I pay a high rent on my ODSP cheque of \$1,092 per month? It could be worse if I were on OW at \$585 a month. What am I supposed to do? Am I supposed to steal?" Those are some of the comments that we've heard.

0940

There's a real need for action on affordable housing, yet we see a bill that takes a few tiny steps that are wel-

comed by all but that miss the whole picture. How can we be bringing forward a bill that deals squarely with supportive housing and miss the most important issue of them all: the fact that we need more affordable housing, or we need a way to support people so they don't need affordable housing and can pay their own rent? But this is completely missing from the bill. We're talking about an issue that is really pertinent, right here, right now, to millions of people in Ontario, yet we're missing the boat.

We're not talking to them about what's most important to those 140,000 households on waiting lists: They want affordable housing. Those people who can barely pay their rent and their utility costs want help with decent pay and decent jobs so that they can pay their own rent and they don't need supportive housing. But we're not seeing any of that in the bill. We're seeing a few small good steps, but we're missing the elephant in the room. How can we do this?

Not so long ago, three and a half years ago, I was the executive director of the community health centre in Sudbury, and we ran a program. We were the lead agency for the Homelessness Network, which dealt with homeless people in Sudbury. We worked under a strategy called *Housing First*. That is, the people we dealt with, the great majority, from month to month—depending; between 85% and 90% of them—dealt with severe mental illness and addiction. They were people who were chronically homeless. They had developed coping abilities that made them really, really hard to house, and without a stock of supportive housing it became almost impossible to help them. Because you know what? If you want to do anything that would help people cope with their mental health and addiction issues, the first thing you have to do is house them, because when you don't know where you're going to sleep tonight it becomes all-consuming. All of your time, energy, effort and resources are going to be focused on this, never mind trying to get a hold of your addiction issue or starting on a path of recovery for your mental health issue. You need housing.

But in Sudbury, the wait-lists are just as long as everywhere else. Over 10,000—actually 12,000—people in Sudbury are waiting for supportive housing. Sudbury is not a big community, but it sure has a big wait-list for supportive housing. You add into this mix close to 450 people with severe mental health and addictions issues who are difficult to house, and you have a desperate situation for a lot of people.

I remember way back, maybe eight or nine years ago, we had a nurse at the community health centre—her name is Lorraine LeBlanc—who started to talk about homelessness in Sudbury and said that there were people sleeping outside. When I brought that forward to a forum of other health care providers, they all had a good laugh. It was January. It was minus 35 outside and I was talking about people sleeping outside. Well, she started going to what we call the soup kitchen. They had a little porch attached to the soup kitchen at the time. The place was not heated, so she froze in the winter, and there were lots of bugs in the summer, but she toughed it out and kept

going and kept saying, "There are people sleeping outside. It's minus 30. We have to do something."

The social planning council stepped in. They did a study and showed that between 350 and 500 people are homeless in Sudbury on any given night. It was minus 29 in Sudbury last night. I guarantee you there were people sleeping in the cemetery and there were people sleeping underneath the bridges, at minus 29. They don't do this by choice. They do this because there is a lack of affordable housing, and on the little money they get on OW or on ODSP, they have lost their housing. They have been kicked out and they're out at minus 25.

How could that be? This is Ontario. We're not talking about some Third World country, where—but are we? We're talking about a community in northern Ontario, like many other communities, where between 350 and 500 people are homeless. They sleep in the cemetery, they sleep under the bridge and in the entranceways of the banks, wherever they can find, because we have this elephant in the room called, "We need more supported housing," or "We need a way to lift people out of poverty so that they can afford housing." Here's a government that brings this bill that talks about some technicalities that we all agree need to be fixed but leaves that huge gap out there that leaves people homeless.

I and many of the colleagues in this room spent close to 18 months on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. We heard from 33 different communities, and 335 deputants came and told us their stories. Every single time we sat, in every single community we went to, we heard about the need for supported housing, the need for affordable housing. We saw the compounding effect it has on people who are trying to deal with mental health and addiction issues when they don't have access to housing. We wrote a report that was supported by all parties in this House. It was a cry for action on mental health and addiction with a specific recommendation targeted at affordable housing, because we know the links are there.

Yet we have a government right now that is putting forward a bill that talks about the right issues—it talks about supportive housing—but it takes the wrong path. It takes a few little steps that are good, but it doesn't address the core of the issue, which is, how do we make sure that access to safe and secure housing is considered a human right? Why don't we recognize that the lack of affordable housing in Ontario is an assault on the human rights of our citizens? When we see 350 to 500 people in Sudbury being homeless or near homeless, when we see people sleeping outside at minus 29 degrees—and it goes way colder than this in Sudbury and in all of northern Ontario—there's something drastically wrong. If this is not a call to action, what is a call to action then?

But there's no movement from the government. There's no clear plan that says, "Here's the number of new units that will be built each and every year. Here's how we will make sure that we follow through and that those new units are being built. Here's how we make sure that people with mental health and addiction or other

disabilities have enough to be able to afford the rent and also to buy food, clothing, a little bit of transportation and other necessities of life." But there's no movement. What an opportunity lost.

We also have in Sudbury what is called an ALC, alternate level of care, crisis. Our hospital, a brand new state-of-the-art hospital on one site—something that we have been waiting for, hmm, 16 years—finally came to be. The grand opening was done last spring, and we have the new Sudbury Regional Hospital. We should all be happy. We have state-of-the-art equipment throughout. The place is functional, it's well designed, it has top-notch staff. Yet they are bogged down with long waiting lists in the emergency room, cancelled surgeries, and the list goes on. Why? Well, partly because of affordable housing, partly because we have elderly people who run into trouble in their own homes who are admitted into the hospital and then they can't go back home. They sit in a hospital bed because there's nowhere else for them to go.

0950

We need affordable and supported housing in Sudbury. We have a task force put into place, headed by Dr. Zelan, and everybody agrees that we need more supported housing in Sudbury. We presently have—it's on the hospital website; anybody can go and see—200 people at the Sudbury Regional Hospital who are there awaiting proper care someplace else but there is nowhere to go, so those 200 people stay at the hospital causing the hospital many, many difficulties trying to operate as an acute care hospital.

There are only 300-some beds at Sudbury Regional Hospital. Take 200 of them and give them to people who don't need to be there and you can see how the problem will develop quite quickly. Well, they are dealing with challenges and they are having many, many difficulties. The solutions have been put out to the community care access centre, to the local health integration network, to the Ministry of Health, to the Ministry of Housing, but yet there's no action. I mean, the Minister of Housing is also the MPP from Sudbury. He knows what's going on in his own city. He knows the recommendation that everybody agrees to: That we need more supported and affordable housing. Yet there's no action.

There are groups. Tullio, from Capreol—a very charming town in the northeast end of my riding—has on the books an almost shovel-ready project for affordable and supported housing for Capreol within Capreol co-op housing. They have the track record; they have the banking ready; they know how to do housing. This is what they are. They are a housing co-op and they certainly have the support of our community. How come we cannot move forward? How come we're not able to get support from the government to move those units, to get them built, to get them filled? Because the wait-list certainly is there.

Here we are talking about a subject that is of great interest to hundreds of thousands of Ontarians, yet I feel like we're kind of paying lip service to this. We are doing little, wee changes that everybody will agree with, that

will make some of the paperwork of existing tenants a little bit easier, and we support this; there's nothing wrong with that. But we're missing the elephant in the room. We're missing the plan that will say, "We have a plan to make things better. We have a plan that shows that we listen to everybody who lives in poverty. We listened to the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions and their recommendation for people who are trying to deal. We listened to the Social Planning Council of Sudbury, who says housing first is the way to go; housing first is the strategy that should be followed. We listened to the leaders of the Sudbury health community, Dr. Zelan and his group from the local health integration network that looks at how we solve the ALC crisis that is causing so much difficulty for Sudbury Regional Hospital."

The solutions are clear and they all point in the same direction: We need affordable housing in Sudbury; we need supported housing in Sudbury. I know that it is the same in every other community. Yet we're talking about this subject but we're not going to do anything that addresses the major issues facing housing in Ontario: the fact that 1.3 million people are precariously housed and the fact that the wait-list stands at 140,000 for all of Ontario. We're not going to do anything about this. This is a real shame. It is more than an opportunity lost; it is almost cruel. How can it be that in my Ontario, right here, right now, such a basic human right, the right for housing—remember Maslow's hierarchy of needs? We're not talking about self-actualization here. We're talking about your basic needs: food and shelter. We are all human. We all have those basic needs for food and shelter. Otherwise, nothing else can happen. You cannot grow to your full potential. You cannot be a fully contributing member of our society. Hell, you can barely participate in society if you don't have your basic needs addressed.

And we have this bill, Bill 140—what a really good name if you ask me—the Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act. Now, doesn't that lead you to believe that we're going to address the housing crisis in Ontario, with a name like that? It sure led me to believe. I was happy when the title was unveiled. Then the happiness quickly faded away when I read the bill and realized that we are tinkering with some little issues that are important and that will make things a little bit better, but we're not addressing the main issue.

The main issue is those 1.3 million people previously housed, 120,000 families in overcrowded housing, 80,000 families in housing that—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to rise and respond to the member from Nickel Belt. I can certainly understand that there's a challenge facing us when 17,000 units were cancelled by the previous government. Of course we are in catch-up.

Having said that, we have invested \$2.5 billion into housing in this province since 2003. In particular, \$1.2

billion has gone into housing in terms of repairs and new units with our stimulus package.

But interestingly enough, while the member stands and waxes eloquent about this need, they voted against the package. They voted against new units, jobs and repairs for exactly the same people that they're concerned about, and the reason they voted against it was it was considered crumbs: \$1.2 billion was considered crumbs.

The other thing that we need to speak about is this homelessness issue. We've invested \$157 million to help combat homelessness just in 2009-10. That's an increase of 30% since 2003. We've spent more than \$89 million in provincial funding for emergency hostel services offered by municipalities, just in 2009-10. We've actually increased domicile hostel housing by 33% since 2003. In 2010-11, we're investing \$31.5 million to the consolidated homelessness prevention program, over \$35 million—again—for the domicile hostels and over \$2 million emergency funds, so add that to the \$1.2 billion with the federal government. In 2008-09, again, we put in \$32.6 million. The money is coming. We are working toward—we've got a strategy.

We know we need to work with the service managers. We know we need to find a less complicated way for them to be able to do their jobs. We sat and worked with them. They have helped us put together what we believe will be that long-term strategy for moving forward.

Obviously, the commitment is there on behalf of our government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Nickel Belt, as I always do. She brings a perspective that is unique to this place: She comes from a mining community that has boom-and-bust cycles and she has many First Nations people who live in and around her riding.

She talked about the human face of Sudbury. She talked about a woman who lived in the soup kitchen's unheated porch at 30 and 40 below zero for a winter and is happy that she has even that, because that woman knows that there are people sleeping under bridges and in the cemetery and who have worse conditions to live in than she does. The member has, eloquently and with some great passion and compassion, talked about the people of her riding and the people of Ontario.

I do have to say I was taken aback a little by the member from Etobicoke, who commented on this. She said that the NDP and this particular member had voted against a budget. Yes, we did. We vote against all budgets that don't do what they're supposed to do for the people of this province.

We also voted against a government that, in 2003, promised to build 20,000 units of affordable housing in its first three years in office and, eight years later, has yet to deliver 11,000. Eight years later, they haven't even met the commitment for the first three years. They're only halfway, eight years later.

1000

Did we vote against the budget? Sure we did. Did we do so for malicious reasons? No, we did it for the people who are on the waiting list, the people who are sleeping in the soup kitchens and the cemeteries and under bridges—something that this government does not care a whole lot about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments? The honourable member from—Chatham–Kent–Essex?

Mr. Pat Hoy: Correct, Speaker. I do propose that we change that to Chatham–Kent–Leamington someday, but we'll wait and see if that actually happens; I'm hopeful that it would. It would certainly make the people of Leamington very happy, including their mayor and council.

But to the points that are contained in Bill 140, if this was passed by the Legislature here, it would give Ontarians access to a system that puts people first. That's what we're hearing this morning from speakers: that we do recognize the people who are seeking long-term and affordable housing here in Ontario. That's what this bill would aim to do; it would put people first. It will also set a strong foundation for a more effective, accessible system for those who need it.

My colleague from Etobicoke Centre, Ms. Cansfield, mentioned a great number of figures in her remarks. I have a few as well, because this legislation builds upon the more than \$2.5 billion the McGuinty government has invested in non-profit housing since 2003—a very sizable investment, indeed—and the more than \$430 million our government has provided in housing and homelessness supports annually, also an important figure to recognize.

This legislation, if passed, will give municipalities the flexibility they have requested so that they can better allocate resources to meet local needs. We recognize that the needs of the GTA and Ottawa, for example, and the Far North—Timmins, another example—are not the same as what might be needed and required in Chatham–Kent–Leamington.

I support this bill, and I look forward to the debate and the actual vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Seeing none, the honourable member from Nickel Belt has two minutes for her response.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to make a comment in response to the member from Etobicoke Centre. She referred to the NDP voting against some of the investments that were coming for affordable housing. The problem with those investments is that they were bundled up in a budget that also included a \$2-billion giveaway to the richest corporations in Ontario. How, coming from Sudbury, can I ever do this? I have forestry companies all over my riding that are barely hanging on. They're not paying any taxes; they're not making any profits. They are barely staying alive. How is a \$2-billion tax cut to profitable corporations ever going to help the people of Nickel Belt? It escapes me completely. I don't see how

more profits for the banks and more profits for the insurance companies are going to help the people in Nickel Belt. I can't vote for this. It makes no sense whatsoever.

The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex and the member from Etobicoke Centre quoted a lot of numbers and, in and of itself, the investment looks impressive. But just to put those figures into a little bit of a comparison, Ontario spends \$64 per capita on affordable housing. We are the lowest in Canada, with the average being at \$115 per person of government investment into affordable housing. If we compare ourselves to Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan spends four times as much as we do here in Ontario. The numbers are not that impressive anymore, are they?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I realize my time will soon run out, probably in about five minutes, but I'll come back and say some more on the next date.

This is a huge issue in and around the city of Toronto, a place where I have lived almost my entire life. With the exception of one year in Ottawa and, a subsequent time, six months or so in Ottawa, I have always lived in this city.

I have seen poverty in all of its aspects, in many parts of the city, many communities, many neighbourhoods, many new Canadian groups, many First Nations. But in particular, I want to talk about my own riding of Beaches–East York.

People often ask me, “The Beach: Isn't that a rich place? Aren't the homes expensive there?” They sometimes marvel that a place like the Beach would vote consistently for NDP members in this Legislature. I have to inform them that, yes, although there are some very expensive and very nice homes in the Beach and in parts of East York, there are also ongoing pockets of poverty in many of our communities.

I'd like to talk about those places, like Crescent Town, Barrington and Lumsden. I'd like to talk about some of the rooming houses along Gerrard Street, Main Street and places where people don't have enough. Those are the communities that want and need a government to take action on housing and poverty issues. Those are the communities that, more often than not, are disappointed at the lack of government action affecting them and their daily lives.

Crescent Town in particular is a large high-rise development. It's a very large place. Some 10,000 or 11,000 people are crammed into six or seven major buildings. If you go through the halls of those buildings, you can hear any number of languages being spoken. You have new Canadians literally coming from all over the earth to live there.

They live there because the rents are cheap. They live there in spite of the fact that many of the homes have cockroaches, bedbugs and mice. They live there in spite of the fact that the elevators going up 20 and 30 floors often break down. They live there in spite of the fact that

the buildings are not in the kind of repair that you and I would deem to be acceptable.

They're not alone. There are other apartments, other buildings and other places where people live, where they too find themselves in poverty. They find themselves in overcrowded conditions. They are overcrowded because, with rents so high in Toronto, they often have to have more than one family living in an apartment unit, a house or a place that was not designed to accommodate that many people.

You go in and you see the consequences of that. It does cause the buildings to deteriorate at a faster rate. It does cause boilers that were designed to produce the hot water for a limited number of families not to be able to produce the hot water that is necessary when you have double or triple the number of people living in the buildings than they were designed to house. You see the result of the overcrowding with children not having sufficient opportunities or being in portables all around Crescent Town school. You see that. You see that in Thorncliffe, which isn't in my riding but is part of the former borough of East York. You see it in many, many places in this city.

These people all have one common need: They want to have more decent housing for themselves, for their families and particularly for their children. If they are new Canadians, they came here hoping for a better life, if not for themselves, then at least for their children. Living in overcrowded conditions, often in poverty, often without adequate employment: They find that to happen too often.

Housing is a fundamental right, I believe, of Canadians. Particularly because we live in such a cold and northern climate, we need to be adequately housed. It's not good enough to say that someone can have some kind of substandard housing. We are not living in a tropical place. We are living where the extremes of cold are going to have a terrible effect on the human condition. We need to have that kind of accommodation here, and the housing needs to be built.

We also, as a government, as a Legislature, should be fundamentally aware and, I suggest, ashamed of the fact that the waiting lists for housing continue to grow. As more and more people came to Ontario, particularly through immigration but also net migration from the other provinces over the last 20 years, the housing did not keep up with it.

1010

I am mindful. I was a mayor on that very sad occasion in 1995 when the government of Ontario changed and the new government came in and cancelled all of the building projects that were being undertaken at that time to build decent and affordable housing in Ontario, and particularly in East York. I remember going to places that had been earmarked for extra monies, places that were about to become co-operatives because the apartment buildings had been bought from landlords who didn't, frankly, give a damn. They were being bought; they were about to be changed; they were about to be turned into

good and decent housing, and all the money was yanked away; all of it was gone. Only those projects that were almost completed were allowed to continue, and the housing that we saw in our municipality evaporated. The opportunity for the families that were living in East York evaporated on that date.

I do remember, with some chagrin, going out as the mayor in the weeks and months and years that followed, as those places were completed because they were too far along to have been cancelled by the incoming government, and seeing the smiling faces of Conservatives and Conservative cabinet ministers shaking hands on the development of these projects. It was bizarre; it was absolutely bizarre to me. When a Liberal stands up and says, "This is what was inherited"—yes, it was inherited. But eight years after the Liberals formed government—eight years—what do we have? We have housing costs that have skyrocketed and we have literally no affordable units that have been built. Those that were stopped have not been resurrected. Those community and social and church groups that want to do something have not been given the opportunity. The 20,000 units that were promised in the first three years of a McGuinty government have never been built. Eight years after they took office, only 11,000 units have been built in all of Ontario. That is a pretty sad record by any standard at all.

The Housing Network of Ontario declaration has been endorsed by Habitat for Humanity, the Social Planning Network of Ontario, the Wellesley Institute and 450 other community and housing groups, and what they say we need is absolutely basic to what has to be done. They suggest, first, that we need bold targets and sustained funding, including a minimum of 10,000 affordable housing units a year. For us to build that many housing units in a year, we would have to be as bold and as brave as the province of Saskatchewan. That's what we would have to do. Instead of being last per capita, we would have to be tied for first. I think that's realistic and we should aim for it. If Saskatchewan can do it, surely Ontario can do it as well.

They suggest, secondly, that we have to have a clear measurement of progress, including specific targets and timelines for reducing affordable housing waiting lists. People who are on housing waiting lists all across this province wait for years for decent and affordable housing. Sometimes they die waiting for it. Sometimes when they apply because they have children at home and they need a unit with three or four bedrooms in it and put their name on the list, by the time their name comes to the top of the list—which in Toronto is 17 years, on average—those children are all grown up, they've all moved away and they're not there anymore, and therefore you're no longer eligible for that for which you applied, because you don't have the children still at home to occupy those units.

We need a real timeline on the list. People ought not to wait any more than a few months, or at most a year, before they get action for affordable housing. That's the kind of commitment a government needs to make. We

need action to improve housing affordability for low-income people, including a new monthly housing benefit; not just that your rent geared to income is calculated yearly, but that there be a monthly housing benefit and that it be affordable so that low-income people have that opportunity.

I can see I'm being signalled. Just one last point I'd like to make before I stop today, and that's a reformed housing legislation, including stronger rent control and inclusionary zoning at the municipal level. Those are the four tests. I'll deal with that later, when I stand back up on the next date.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I'd just remind the member that because we are past the six-and-a-half-hour mark—

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Seven hours.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): —or seven hours, we're into 10-minute rotations. So I probably gave you a couple of extra minutes there.

Mr. Michael Prue: But she got 20.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): That's fine.

Anyway, by the rules, it now being past 10:15 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30, at which time we will have question period.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Steve Clark: Once again it gives me great pleasure, on behalf of my Leeds–Grenville page, Tyler Millson, who's got a wonderful head of hair, unlike his MPP—I'd like to introduce some very special guests. His dad, Bart Millson, is in the gallery, and I'm very pleased to introduce his grandparents Bill and Nancy Millson. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. John Wilkinson: My good friend the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore and I are delighted to introduce some 32 farmers from Perth–Wellington, who have come to spend the day here in Toronto. They'll be visiting the minister's riding—the two of us—and having a wonderful day, bridging that rural-urban divide with a bridge of friendship.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'm very pleased to introduce the mother of our page from Kingston and the Islands, Erik Stein: Petra Stein, who is in the gallery here and who is the daughter of Felix and Alzira D'Sousa, good friends of mine in the Kingston area.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT CONTRACT

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. In the wake of the eHealth scandal, the Premier gave his sol-

emn commitment that he had put a stop to sole-sourcing government contracts. He didn't say, "Unless it's convenient"; he made a clear commitment that all future government contracts would be put to competitive public tender.

How does the Premier justify his government's approval of the recent multi-million dollar sole-source contract for the purchase of train cars for the air-rail link approved by the Metrolinx board as well as the Minister of Transportation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the member opposite has all the information on this file, because I have given him a letter that was written by Coulter Osborne, who laid out the details of the deal and who, in fact, said that it was a very reasonable choice for us to make.

The fact is that Metrolinx is exercising a contract option from the Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit contract in California, which was an open, competitive procurement process. I have said in the House before that all of the rules have been followed. It's not uncommon, as the former Minister of Transportation would know, in the transportation industry to join another procurement process to get the best price possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: We have a copy of that letter from Coulter Osborne. It confirms that Metrolinx did not issue a public tender. In fact, Mr. Osborne clearly states in his letter that it was the government's onerous time constraints on the project that made it impossible for Metrolinx to issue a public tender.

According to Mr. Osborne's letter, the treasury board and cabinet authorized the sole-sourcing of this contract by calling it "an expedited procurement process." Call it what you will; there was no competitive bid and there was no public tender issued by this government on this multi-million dollar contract.

The Premier and his cabinet may not care to know whether taxpayers are getting the best value for their dollar, but taxpayers do. Will he agree to order a public tender on this contract?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I first of all want to welcome the member opposite to the discussion of public transit, because they have been markedly absent from that discussion—for decades, really.

I just want to speak to the issue of the open procurement. Coulter Osborne, in his letter to Mr. Robert Siddall of Metrolinx, says, "Joining the SMART procurement"—which is the procurement that I just referenced—"in this way seems to me to have been a 'no risk decision' that enabled Metrolinx to take advantage of a larger similar vehicle procurement process in California that was open and competitive."

As I said before, it is not uncommon in the transportation industry, when there are large purchases being made, when there has been a procurement process in place, that another entity would tag onto that contract to get the best deal for the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: The fact is, it didn't need to be that way. Ontario could have done its own tender. The fact is that by imposing an artificial, unnecessary timeline on this project, this government essentially forced Metrolinx to abandon an open, competitive bid process. All Canadian content rules were ignored. It took cabinet to whitewash this sole-sourced deal by calling it an expedited procurement process. This, so that even Fairness Commissioner Coulter A. Osborne is compelled to bless an offensive deal as being fair and in the public interest.

Speaker, nothing is fair, nothing is in the public interest about a multi-million dollar company that excludes companies like Siemens from bidding on this contract.

Will the Premier insist on ensuring that this contract is put to a public tender so that Ontario taxpayers know they're getting the best deal possible?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think it's beneath even the member opposite to cast aspersions on the integrity of Coulter Osborne. I really think that that is absolutely outrageous.

Let me just continue to read from his recommendation on this: "In addition, the fact that there are no commercially available DMUs in production in North America militates in favour of acquiring DMUs under the umbrella of the SMART RFP...."

"In my view, joining the SMART RFP"—which is the deal that we engaged in—"in the manner generally described above was manifestly reasonable ... In the end, it will provide Metrolinx with FRA-compliant DMUs within a delivery time that meets Ontario's needs, and at a highly competitive price."

That is why we engaged in this. That is why Metrolinx worked with Sonoma. I think it is beneath the member opposite to question that.

POWER PLANT

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Energy. We just heard about a sole-sourced deal at Metrolinx. Now, it looks like you have another one up your sleeve.

On October 7, 2010, you backtracked, broke the contract with TransCanada and cancelled the Oakville power plant. When asked how much this would cost Ontario families, you said you would be pleased to share this information with the public. It's now been 148 days since you backtracked, made that commitment to share information, and you haven't told us anything.

How much are Ontario families going to pay on their hydro bills for you breaking this signed contract to save the seat of the member for Oakville, making him the first charter member of the McGuinty seat-saver club?

Hon. Brad Duguid: As I've said repeatedly and say often publicly and in this place, the OPA is still in discussions with TransCanada and those conversations are progressing well, which is good news. We're looking

forward to those consultations and discussions continuing until they reach a resolution.

There's nothing new about that. This is something that we've talked about and been upfront about from the very beginning. We're looking forward to those discussions continuing. We're looking forward to those discussions finding some form of resolution, and when they do, I'll be more than happy to share it with the member opposite, the people of Ontario and all members of this Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Page 34 of your long-term energy plan says the "procurement of a peaking natural gas-fired plant in the Kitchener-Waterloo-Cambridge area is still necessary."

One possible location for this project is land owned by TransCanada on Witmer Road in Cambridge. The CEO of your unelected, unaccountable Ontario Power Authority said that one of the discussions with TransCanada has to be about alternatives and that it could include the Kitchener-Waterloo-Cambridge project.

Will you confirm for the House and the people of Ontario today that you will issue a fully transparent, competitive RFP to procure this new power plant and ensure the best value for Ontario families who pay the bills?

1040

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member likes to enter into speculation about things that may or may not be happening. I'm going to talk about what we know. What we know is that we have a 20-year plan for energy that's going to provide a clean, reliable, healthy, renewable future for this province, build a healthier future for our kids and grandkids and create thousands of clean energy jobs.

What we don't know is why the member opposite and his leader are afraid to share their plan with Ontario families. We can speculate on that as well. Maybe it's because you don't support our clean energy benefit, which has taken 10% off the bills of Ontario families. Maybe it's because you don't support the thousands of clean energy jobs that we're creating right across this province. Maybe it's because you want to hammer Ontario farmers, as the member for Simcoe-Grey indicated earlier in the month, and take away that \$10,000 a month on average that those farmers are able to make off our microFIT—

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I didn't get an answer but I did get the minister confirming that he has so much trust in his own plan that he keeps tearing pages out of it day after day after day.

It's interesting to hear that the minister would not confirm that he would issue an RFP on this project. Ontario families have seen how much your sole-source deals have cost them before: eHealth, Samsung, Metrolinx, the Windsor Energy Centre, the LHINs, Casino Niagara, just to name a few.

When he was asked about the talks with TransCanada, the CEO of the OPA said, "I'm not going to rule out anything."

Minister, I ask you again: Will you today avoid repeating your sweetheart Samsung deal, rule out sole-sourcing this billion-dollar power plant to TransCanada alone and ensure the best values for families in this great province who pay the bills?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member likes, as he does, to chirp about our efforts to build a clean energy economy in this province, but why doesn't he want to talk about his own plan? I think it's pretty obvious that the PCs would scrap the Samsung initiative and kill \$7 billion of private sector investment, as well as the 16,000 Ontario jobs that go with it.

Why don't you be straight up with Ontario families and those workers about what you're going to do? What's in your plan? Speaker, they want to send a message to the entire world that Ontario is no longer open for business. Frankly, they're against foreign companies; they're against foreign investment; they've proven they're against foreign students. The only thing foreign they seemed to like was foreign, US-imported power, because they couldn't produce enough power to provide families and businesses across this province with the amount of generation that was required. Thank goodness those days are gone. I know Ontario families are going to see right through them and they're not going—

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

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. This week we've heard from people about their concerns. They see the cost of everything, from gasoline to home heating to getting proper medical care for their loved ones, get more expensive while their paycheques are staying the same. The Premier says he has to make their lives more expensive while handing out corporate tax giveaways worth over \$6 billion. Why does the Premier keep putting people last?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's always a pleasure to receive questions from my honourable colleague. One of the things I want to point out to my colleague is that it's true we have a plan in place to reduce the level of taxation on Ontario businesses. We think it's important that we be competitive, not just with businesses in other parts of the world but with businesses that are competing against us in other provinces in Canada.

In addition to that, I'll point out to my honourable colleague that as we move forward to reduce our level of taxation on our businesses, we've also made some tremendous progress in our schools and our health care. Test scores are up, graduation rates are up and Ontario students have cracked the top 10 globally in international testing. Not only are we measuring wait times in health care for the first time; we now have the shortest wait times in the country. So we can walk and chew gum at the same time. We can reduce corporate taxes, we can improve our schools and we can improve health care for

our families. We're working together on behalf of the economy and on behalf of our society.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In the past, the Premier has also been unequivocal. In fact, he slammed a former Premier for not caring about gasoline prices and urged him to get out of his chauffeur-driven car. He denounced a previous government's corporate tax cuts, saying that they would lead to closing hospitals and firing nurses. Eight years later, hospital budgets are frozen, ERs in Fort Erie and Port Colborne are closed, corporate tax rates are being slashed, and Premier McGuinty is the one in the chauffeur-driven car. After eight long years, has the Premier forgotten who sent him here and why?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would have gladly attended the NDP fundraiser at Barberian's last night but I couldn't afford the \$500; it was too much. Today's NDP moves in very expensive circles. It's not something they used to do. It's an unfortunate development.

Let me tell you a bit about some of the other things we've done to help Ontario families. Ninety-three per cent of Ontarians have received a permanent tax cut. Ninety thousand people no longer pay personal income tax in the province of Ontario. The average family with an \$80,000 income is seeing a 10% income tax cut; that's \$355 per year for mom and dad, this year and every year going forward. On top of that, there's our new children's activity tax credit: \$50 each year to help pay for sports or art and music classes. There are a number of other items which I look forward to speaking about in my final supplementary.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The fact remains that while banks and oil companies come out the big winners from the Premier's tax cuts, families are left with the \$6.8-billion bill, and they're paying more for everything from home heating to gas at the pump. Why are families missing from this Premier's equation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm not sure if that was a subject of conversation at that \$500-a-head fundraiser last night at Barberian's. Again, we would have liked to have gone but we can't afford those prices.

What I can say is that on so many different occasions when we worked hard on behalf of Ontario families, put in our \$12-billion tax reductions over the course of three years, whether it was the Ontario child benefit, whether it was our children's activity tax credit, whether it's full-day kindergarten, which is saving our families thousands of dollars annually in day care costs, this party stood opposed to those kinds of measures. They've opposed our interventions to stand up for Ontario families and help out with their household expenses.

We will continue to bring a balanced, thoughtful, responsible approach to governing. We understand that we need a strong economy to support a caring society, a caring society characterized in part by good schools and good health care, and we continue to make measurable progress in both those areas.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. The Premier's corporate tax cuts hand banks—banks—\$535 million, no strings attached. They're not obliged to create any jobs or make any new investments. Families are already stretched to the limit and they're footing the bills for that generosity. And when people ask for a break on their home heating bills, the Premier says he can't afford it.

Why can the Premier afford a tax break for banks while offering little to families who want quality health care and want a break from the growing cost of living?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, this is a part of old-style NDP politics: You attack businesses; you attack the corporate sector. It's an easy thing to do.

One of the fastest growing sectors in Ontario today is our financial services. We're close to nearly 300,000 jobs around the province because of the health and vitality of our financial services sector. On top of that, our brand has gone platinum globally as a result of its performance during a terrible economic recession. When she thinks it's quick and easy to attack financial services, I'd ask her to keep in mind that there are 300,000 Ontario moms and dads who are working in financial services, who bring home money to support their families on the basis of that connection with a very important industry of which we can all be very, very proud.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Families know that the McGuinty government's priorities are very obvious: a multi-billion corporate tax cut instead of a break on the heating bill, an unfair tax on gasoline and haircuts, while charging seniors waiting in hospitals \$1,800 a day. How can the Premier be surprised his popularity is sinking when he is so out of touch with the families across this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Just to remind my honourable colleague: The comprehensive tax reforms that we have put in place benefit families to the tune of \$12 billion over three years in comparison to \$3 billion for businesses over three years.

1050

I know my honourable colleague is adamantly opposed to our tax reforms, but I don't think she fully understands how important it is and how urgent it is that we take measures to strengthen this economy. We have been hit by a powerful economic recession. In many ways, our world has changed: We now have a high dollar, we have a weakened US trading partner, and we have a weakened European Union which is no longer driving growth in the global economy to the same extent that it used to.

We've got to do some things inside Ontario to make ourselves stronger so we can continue to support our schools and our hospitals. I haven't met a single grandmother, grandfather, mother or father who is not prepared to do what it takes to ensure that we secure a bright future for our kids.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The people of Ontario tell me that they want a Premier who listens. Instead, they have a Premier who ignores their voices and dodges the facts. The government can protect families from growing costs and improve the health care system, but the Premier just doesn't seem to give a damn anymore.

After eight long years in office, why does this Premier now stand for everything that he ran against?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Just to give you—

Interjection.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Always good to hear from my friend from the Ottawa Valley, but I think I want to speak to the NDP.

My honourable colleague, the leader of the NDP, forgets that when we brought forward one of the most progressive initiatives to help children in struggling working families in Ontario, the Ontario child benefit, they voted against that. That's benefiting Ontario children. In fact, it's benefiting 1.3 million Ontario children to the tune of \$1,100 every year. They voted against that.

We put forward a measure to take 90,000 low-income Ontarians off the income tax rolls; they stood against that.

We put in place our senior homeowners' property tax grant; it's \$500. It's helping 600,000 Ontario seniors; they voted against that.

At the end of the day, I look forward to being judged on our record in terms of what we're doing to help those people who are most vulnerable in Ontario.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

The backbone of Ontario's economy is our thousands of small businesses, most of them family-run businesses or small companies with only a few staff. Yet small business owners have to spend more and more hours away from their families meeting the demands of your government's red tape rule makers.

Minister, why won't you provide relief to the thousands of small and family-run businesses by cutting the burden of the rules and regulations you place on them that keep them from creating prosperity and jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: In fact, I applaud the member opposite for working for small business. What I would like to say is that while she may be tabling a private member's bill in the House related to the small business industries, we would ask the same member to be very supportive of the number of initiatives that this government has taken to support small business.

For example, the last budget introduced significant tax policy measures to help small business. So while this member purports to support small business, how could the member vote against a 20% decrease in the small business corporate income tax that is such a big help to business?

We appreciate that she would stand in the House in support of small business, but when the rubber hits the road—and small businesses watch us very carefully—when there are measures that are introduced to help small business, they expect the same kind of support from the members opposite, and so would we.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Your continuing failure to provide relief to small businesses owners and employees is because of your fundamental lack of respect for how hard they work and how important they are to our economy. That's why I introduced a small business bill of rights: to change the attitude of government towards small business.

Government needs to stop being a punitive regulator and start being a supporter of small businesses. Will you support my bill and help restore respect for small business in Ontario?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Again, I applaud the members opposite who might purport to support small business. Small businesses need to see support from all of us. They are the backbone of this economy.

I have to suggest, though, that the number of initiatives that we have been doing to support them have been voted against by that party, and I want to ask her why. Why, in this last economic update of October, when we offered that 10% relief directly to small business on those utility bills, did the member opposite vote against that initiative? We have to suggest that the Canadian Federation of Business, which I know the member opposite speaks to, was dramatically supportive of these initiatives. When we launched the Open for Business initiative across our government to work with all ministries and with all sectors of our economy, this is the same party that did not support that initiative, and we demand some consistency—

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

SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. The minister has admitted that there are problems providing intervener services to the deaf-blind community. CBC Radio and the Toronto Sun have exposed the problem. I have been working with the deaf-blind community to stop the ministry from making harmful cuts to services to people like Caitlin Ryan, from the Premier's own riding, and from Carl Ford, whose mother, Julia, is here in the gallery today.

Changes to the assessment tool will deny people with significant loss of vision and hearing the intervener services they so desperately need. Why is this minister holding the deaf-blind community hostage while she dithers on her plan?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, I want to say thank you to the parents of deaf-blind children for their advocacy. If we did not have these parents here, coming to see us and coming to talk to us about the needs of their kids, there would be no other person talking on their behalf. So I want to thank them for being here.

Unfortunately, there is false messaging going around, and the member of the opposite party continues to distribute these wrong messages. There is no cut in the budget of the deaf-blind. Since we came to power we have more than doubled that budget, and I'm very pleased to be saying that. Every year we have improved the budget; we have added money into the budget. We are out consulting on a model—

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

Mr. Michael Prue: The people in the gallery here today came for concrete answers, not thank-yous, and they did not hear this minister's litany of excuses. Carl Ford needs a commitment today. He wants to live his life. He wants to continue working in his community. Caitlin Ryan wants to finish her education and become a productive adult with much to offer this province. They won't be able to accomplish their goals if their support system is cut in half or if anything is done to change the intervener status. Why won't this minister reveal her plan today and assure the deaf-blind community that their services won't be slashed?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Further to an agreement with the human rights commission, we have to transform this intervener and interpreter service. The system that we have inherited was unfair, and we need to transform the system. On the contrary, we're not cutting any money from the budget. We are transforming the services so that they are fairer, more transparent and financially sustainable.

On this side of the House, we comply with the human rights commission when we signed an agreement with them, so that's what we are doing. We have parents involved, we have interveners involved and we have our stakeholders involved. What is out for consultation will not be implemented; it's out for consultation. We need the input, we are welcoming the input and we will continue to work with the community—

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

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, yesterday phase 3 of full-day kindergarten was announced. I'm very excited that this program is moving forward. I'm hearing from my constituents, who are also excited and looking forward to the day when it will be available in all Ontario schools. However, the opposition leader yesterday said that this was a promise that we were unable to keep, as the government had not supported the rollout of the program with new funds.

1100

Minister, my constituents deserve to know about the implementation of this program and how we will ensure that full-day kindergarten is rolled out in a responsible manner. What can I tell my constituents in response to this claim by the opposition leader? Are we sufficiently funding the full-day kindergarten program?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: That's an important question on a very important issue, an issue we are hearing a great deal of support for. The member can tell her constituents that we are taking a phased approach. Yesterday, we announced the financial dollars assigned to phase 3 schools. That's an amount of \$280 million to support schools and to add 900 new full-day kindergarten spaces. We will, at that phase, have accomplished providing spaces in 1,700 schools for families and parents who very much need this.

Now, I understand the opposition. They are not committed to this. They will not follow through with what parents are telling them they want. They are prepared to have have and have-not schools. We are committed to the full implementation—

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

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: This will be great news to take back to my riding, as I can inform my constituents that we are fully committed to this program and helping our youngest learners succeed and get the best start in life.

Minister, yesterday the Leader of the Opposition also said that he planned to halt the implementation of full-day kindergarten if he was elected Premier. Parents in my riding are concerned about this, as they are very excited to enrol their children in this program. Minister, could you please share with this House your views on why we are so committed to this program?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I understand; I'm getting the same kinds of calls in my constituency office. There's no question that parents want this program and educators want this program, and they are very concerned with the thinking on the other side of the House; that they don't understand why supporting our youngest learners is one of the best investments that we can make.

I have a quote here from the director of education in the Leader of the Opposition's own riding, who says, "It is very gratifying to see the priority the government is placing on giving children a good start in school. Research shows that when students enter grade 1 ready to learn, they are more confident and more likely to be successful in school."

That is why our government is making this commitment. Parents need to understand that we are the only party in this province who is absolutely committed to the full implementation, by 2014, of full-day kindergarten, using a model of a teacher—

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

RED TAPE REDUCTION

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. The government talks of its Open for Business strategy as if it helps business. We know that it is just a paper-pushing process inside government ministries.

But let's go back to the first promise you made when you announced Open for Business. You promised, "The

government will reduce the amount of regulation in Ontario by 25% in the next two years."

You made this promise on March 6, 2009. The two years are up on Sunday. Will you tell us how you will cut 25% of Ontario's regulations between today and Sunday?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'm delighted to talk about the tremendous work we're doing for Open for Business. We have launched a very exciting and frankly historic engagement between the private sector and the government, and we have done this by sectors.

The first sector was BILD and all of the developers that they represent, as they interact with a number of ministries all at the same time. Then we moved on to the manufacturing sector. We're working with the medical devices sector and we're working with the information and communications technologies sector, and when we bring them to the table we are hearing from them that they're excited to engage in a process where, for the first time in all of their interaction with governments over a number of years, including with those that purport to support business, in fact they've never had an opportunity to have deputies from all the ministries at the table at the same time. When we launch these initiatives, the Premier of the province is at that table.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Minister, you've been the Minister of Economic Development and Trade since June 2009, 20 months out of the two years since your government made the promise to cut regulations. Will you tell the thousands of small and family businesses in Ontario why you have failed to stand up and help them by cutting red tape? Why should any business person in Ontario believe any promise you make when you have abysmally failed to keep the first promise you made?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'm not sure what the opposition would call a failure. Is it removing 1,700 certificates of approval at the Ministry of the Environment, many that were kicking around in 1995, when her party was the government? What do you call a failure, the harmonization of regulations between Ontario and Quebec for the transportation industry, so that you can drive the same truck through Ontario and through Quebec when we're selling our products around this country and the world? What kind of success would this member like to hear? From the IT sector that is telling us that they are elated with the opportunity to wipe out these kinds of problematic areas in interacting with our government?

We are delivering on the priorities that they, as a sector, are giving to us, and we're doing it within a time frame that is working for the industry. Those are successes of Open for Business. I would encourage the member opposite to go to our website—

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

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. Minister, you come from northern Ontario, so you see the same

things as I: town after town in northern Ontario that has lost their only employer in the forest industry; the northern economy being devastated; people unemployed by the thousands across the north. Your response so far in seven years has been pretty inadequate at best.

Tomorrow, you're going to make this announcement in Sudbury about the growth plan. Tell me why anybody in northern Ontario should think that any plan you bring forward is going to be any different than what you did over the last seven years.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm delighted to have an opportunity to speak about our excitement at being able to release the growth plan, which is an economic vision for the next 25 years for northern Ontario, the second growth plan released in the province. A real priority of our government, obviously, is northern Ontario, and we are going to be looking at ways that we can guide investment decisions from southern Ontario, based on what northerners have told us.

This has been a three-year consultation period. We've talked to thousands of northerners. They've given their advice to us. Tomorrow, indeed, in Thunder Bay and Sudbury, we'll be releasing the details. We've got some very specific initiatives that we're excited about, which again, I believe, will reflect the northerners' view of how we can develop the north in a very exciting way.

We all know about the many opportunities that are developing there, whether it's through the wood supply competition to our new forest tenure modernization process or, indeed, our commitment to the Ring of Fire development. The long and the short is, this is an exciting day tomorrow in northern Ontario—

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, what you call “excitement,” I would call rage. People in northern Ontario are upset with you because you have not responded to the economic downturn in northern Ontario. The growth plan is not going to deal with the nub of the issue. You talked about the Ring of Fire. Cliffs Natural Resources has said that they're not going to build a refinery smelter in Timmins, in Sudbury, in Thunder Bay or Greenstone if we don't deal with the price of electricity. They're going to do it somewhere else.

I don't expect for you tomorrow, all of a sudden, to fall off the turnip truck and finally understand that you've got to do something about the electricity prices, so I ask you again: If you're not going to deal with what the real issues are in northern Ontario, why should northerners have any confidence in what you have to announce tomorrow?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We are responding in a very direct way. We have already, as a result of our discussion through the growth plan, brought forward incentives that are going to help the industries in the north. In terms of forestry and mining, our corporate tax breaks and the tax reforms that are put in place are bringing down costs and bringing more investment to northern Ontario. We are excited about that.

Our commitment to the Ring of Fire development and seeing a processing facility in the north is one that we feel very strongly about. We're in some very, very good discussions with Cliffs Natural Resources as well as other companies. We have made available to the forestry sector up to \$1 billion, and there are more incentives to come through the wood supply competition.

The long and the short is that we have responded in a very strong and aggressive way. We are seeing an upswing in the northern Ontario economy related to the mining development. Boy, I wish I had more time to talk about some of the extraordinary things that are happening—

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

1110

ELDER ABUSE

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is to the minister responsible for seniors. A recent story about elder abuse in the media has shocked many people living in my riding of Scarborough–Rouge River. The media reported that on February 23, paramedics found an elderly woman unconscious and suffering from frostbite in an uninsulated garage in a home in my riding. She has since been taken to hospital, where she remains in life-threatening condition after suffering a stroke.

A story like this has people asking what our government is doing to help protect seniors from elder abuse. Can the minister please tell this House what the government is doing to help protect seniors from elder abuse in my riding and other parts of the province?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I thank the member from Scarborough–Rouge River for that very important question. I can't speak on the specifics of this case, but I can tell you I believe that each and every one of us in this House finds any form of elder abuse despicable and very, very disturbing.

The safety and well-being of Ontario's seniors is a priority for me, as well as our government, and that's why I'd like to take the opportunity to tell people in Ontario what we're doing for elder abuse. One of the things we have been doing since 2003 is we've invested \$5.2 million to help in the prevention of elder abuse. We are one of the first governments to fund prevention of elder abuse. We're investing \$900,000 a year in ONPEA, which is the Ontario Network—

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

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Support for elder abuse prevention is good news for seniors in Ontario. But while this story has raised the profile on the prevalence of elder abuse in communities across Ontario, the fact remains that there has been a rise in the number of elder abuse stories and cases.

Recently, there have been stories reported in the media of seniors receiving calls from people claiming to be family and asking for money. All together, these stories

highlight a widespread problem of elder abuse that takes many forms, including fraud and scams against Ontario seniors.

March is Fraud Awareness Month, and I know for a fact that seniors want to learn more. Can the minister tell this House where seniors can find help and what initiatives were taken to inform seniors about elder abuse?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: The member is right: March is Fraud Awareness Month. But, again, I want to stress that any form of elder abuse is unacceptable, and we are doing everything we can to help. One of the things that's important is if anyone is a victim of elder abuse or knows of someone, I would encourage them to call the police immediately.

For protection when it comes to fraud, it's important to give out some information to our seniors on what we are doing. We have a province-wide Seniors Safety Line. It's available 24 hours, seven days a week in 154 languages. That number is 1-866-299-1011. We also have consumer tips on how to avoid fraud, and those can be found on ontario.ca—

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

RED TAPE REDUCTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Premier. Your government boasts about cutting red tape through your Open for Business, but I have here an internal document from OMAFRA which provides advice on how to hide regulations or burdens so they can report red tape reductions that don't actually exist. It recommends hiding burdens in definitions and forms because those don't count. It recommends things like changing "sheep and cattle" to "livestock" because that reduces two burdens to one: "If a regulation requires an annual report 'to be prepared' and 'submitted,' that counts as two burdens. However, if the requirement 'to be prepared' was removed, only one burden would remain."

Premier, have you so lost touch that you thought pulling the wool over people's eyes was more important than helping farmers and businesses in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'm not sure what paper you must be referring to or if you in fact drafted it up yourself. What I will tell you is that this week, our government launched Open for Business with the agriculture and food sector, and we did it in this very building. We brought representatives from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. It was a mixed bag of a number of people from different sectors of agriculture, and it was the first time all of these individuals were in the same room at the same time with all of the deputies that represent all of the various ministries that they interact with, whether that be the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Agriculture or the Ministry of the Environment—bringing them together.

What this organization did was table for us their top five priorities of where they want us to work to smooth

life for them as they interact with the government. It was a very lively debate—

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Minister, here is an example of how an internal document from the ministry recommends hiding burdens from farmers: "Rather than stating within a regulation that a stakeholder must submit his name, address and phone number (three requirements) simply state that the stakeholder must complete the form (one requirement). That form could then require the name, address and phone number." It also recommends using commission regulations because, apparently, they decided that those don't count towards the burden.

Clearly, Open for Business lets you boast about cutting red tape but does nothing to help farmers or agribusiness. Minister, do you really believe that farmers are that easily duped? Will you apologize and tell us how many of the burdens you claim to have reduced were actually a sham?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: If I may quote a great MPP in this House, Pat Hoy, you're supposed to turn the manure spreader on when you leave the building.

In fact, from the member opposite what I would like is a copy, if he's at all serious—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I'm going to ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment that she just made.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I withdraw.

Please do deliver, if you're at all serious, a copy of whatever it is you're reading from; it's not familiar material to me.

What is familiar material is the fact that what all the farmers are saying right now is that they think that you and your party would have an opportunity to rip up all of those feed-in-tariff contracts with our Green Energy Act that we've signed with them, which is a value, on average, to the farmer, of \$10,000. The number one concern today out there is that party ripping up those contracts, and they actually want an answer from this party. I will—

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

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Three years ago, right before an election, the McGuinty Liberals announced the construction of a new long-term-care home in Welland, with about 100 beds or so. But here we are, and construction hasn't started yet. There doesn't even seem to be a plan to get this home built.

Why did the Premier make a promise to Niagara area families that he had no intention whatsoever of keeping?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm happy to have the opportunity to talk about long-term-care homes and the improvements that we've been able to drive in the long-term-care-home sector.

We are adding capacity. I will check into the details of this particular case. What I can tell you is that we've now got almost 9,000 more beds open. That means 9,000 more people who are getting the care they need in long-term-care homes. We've got plans to add another 1,000 beds. Those plans are underway.

We have also worked very hard to rebuild and re-develop some of the older long-term-care homes that, frankly, do not meet today's higher standards. We're continuing to improve care in long-term-care homes. We're continuing to add new—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's not just broken long-term-care promises that frustrate Niagara families: Two local emergency rooms were closed, despite widespread opposition. Families across Niagara region are seeing their local health care needs erode, yet the minister says that the NHS, Niagara Health System, "is doing excellent work." That is out of touch. Many families have lost faith in the Niagara Health System, a feeling that, in fact, I understand.

Instead of more broken promises and out-of-touch remarks from this health minister, will the Premier take a step back, listen to Niagara's residents and support an independent investigation of the Niagara Health System?
1120

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Health care is getting better in Niagara; make no mistake about it. Because we measure, we can actually report the results for people. The rhetoric aside, let the numbers speak for themselves.

Just last week, the St. Catharines Standard ran an article saying that in nearly every category the Niagara Health System wait times were lower than the targets required for 90% of cases as set by the local health integration network. Let me share how health care is better for people now: The wait for hip replacement has been cut by 201 days; that's a 58% cut in wait time there. Knee replacement is down by 36%. The wait time for CT outpatient is down by 50%, and what's very exciting for the people in Niagara—

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

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Last week you announced 40 new renewable energy projects across Ontario. Among them were six solar installations in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock that together are going to produce 51 megawatts of clean electricity for Ontario's grid. Obviously, this is welcome news. It means job creation in my area, dollars into our local economy and helping Ontario get off dirty coal. These are exceptionally important things for my riding and for the province that a few opposition members have vehemently opposed. Given that, can the minister tell me that the government remains fully committed to seeing these projects move forward?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for raising what really is a very important question. We were very proud last week to announce those 40 new clean energy projects which will represent an investment of three billion private sector dollars in our economy and 7,000 Ontario jobs.

Yes, the government very firmly stands by the development of cleaner sources of energy for the province of Ontario and we certainly stand by our feed-in tariff program.

The member is right though: There are members of this House whose opposition to clean energy is sending a threatening and frankly insulting message, like the member for Simcoe-Grey, for example, when he said, "We're not going to sign any more of these feed-in tariff contracts. Those days will be gone. Whoever gets a contract now, enjoy it" while you can. That kind of arrogance may define those guys over there but it will not deter us from our responsibility of building a cleaner, more reliable—

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

Mr. Rick Johnson: Minister, I'll be sure to share the comments of the member of Simcoe-Grey with my constituents in Beaverton, Eldon, Lindsay and Kawartha Lakes, where these clean energy projects will be located, as well as with the many farmers in my riding who are taking part in the government's popular microFIT program.

Cleaning up our energy system is one of the most important things our generation can do for our kids and grandkids. It's a responsibility that no government could in good conscience ignore. Anyone can tell you that cleaner energy and renewing our electricity system has a cost that shows up on our bills. Can the minister tell us to what extent renewable energy affects that?

Hon. Brad Duguid: As I've said in the past, we've laid out a long-term energy plan that clearly illustrates how we will renew our energy system and how we'll move off of coal to cleaner sources of power.

The member talks about costs that show up on consumers' bills. I want to remind him and others as well of one cost that consumers often bring up with us, and that's the debt retirement charge, because it allows me to quote the member from Simcoe-Grey once again, who proudly reminded us yesterday, "I brought in the DRC, the debt retirement charge, when I was Minister of Energy."

While the member opposite is trying to explain to farmers why he wants to rip up their contracts, he may want to also remind them why he brought in that debt retirement charge, and in the years that they were in office, did not take a cent off our debt—

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

ANTI-CRIME LEGISLATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is to the Attorney General. The Attorney General is well aware that Ontario's current Pawnbrokers Act is severely outdated and unenforceable by police. This law is even older than the

Public Works Protection Act, dating back to 1906. It was written so long ago that it doesn't even include second-hand stores and virtual pawn shops that buy gold through the mail. This lack of effective modern legislation is making it easy for thieves to use pawnshops and second-hand stores to fence the goods they stole from innocent victims in break and enters.

Many of these criminals are taking full advantage of lax legislation. They become chronic property crime offenders who steal multiple times from multiple locations in one day simply because they can. Property crime offenders leave behind a trail of innocent victims who are psychologically, emotionally and financially devastated. Many victims lose precious family heirlooms that can never be replaced.

When will the Attorney General make fighting crime a priority and listen to police leaders who have been telling him that they desperately need new legislation to better protect potential victims of property crime?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We're actually doing what the member opposite and his government didn't do for eight years: We're taking a look at the Pawnbrokers Act and seeing how it can be modernized. We've been working very closely with the police chiefs and the associations, but we have also been working very closely with the Information and Privacy Commissioner. We're trying to come up with amendments that will provide for strengthened law enforcement without raising privacy concerns for all Ontarians.

That has proven to be a challenging line to walk. We will continue to. We will continue to do the work that the member opposite and his government failed for eight years to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: You've had seven and a half years and you're still failing.

The Attorney General made a commitment to the OACP at their 2008 annual general meeting that he would introduce new pawnbrokers legislation. To be effective, the legislation must include a centralized database and a standardized reporting system for the entire province to address the cross-jurisdictional nature of property crime. Under today's outdated legislation, it is almost impossible for police to help recover victims' stolen property. Current investigations are often derailed because an identification of items that is strong enough to proceed in court can't be made when only 15% of the items have serial numbers.

When will the Attorney General make fighting crime a priority and give police leaders much-needed investigative tools? When will he put victims first instead of protecting the identities of criminals?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We actually believe that we can both fight crime and protect the civil rights and civil liberties of Ontarians. That's what we've been working on with the police chiefs—there's a very good discussion going on—and with the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

It may be that the party opposite does not care about the input from the Information and Privacy Commission-

er. It may be that the party opposite would simply introduce amendments without worrying about the civil rights and the freedom of all Ontarians. It may be that they'll introduce amendments and not care what will be done with information gathered and whether the charter rights of Ontarians are actually protected. They'll have an opportunity, in their plan, which we know they have but won't reveal, to tell us whether they're prepared to dismantle the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner as one of their "eliminate the red tape"—

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

CURRICULUM

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Premier. Last spring, the government introduced a new health curriculum for Ontario students, but at the last minute, under duress, it cancelled changes to sex education. The government promised it would start a new round of consultations on updates to sex education. What is the status of those consultations, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: What we have done, first of all with respect to the curriculum that is out there, is that we have new physical and health education, save and except for the sex education piece. All of the good work that went into that document is now being implemented in our schools, save and except for the sex education curriculum, which continues to be what was in place in our schools.

We have a process in Ontario where we review our curriculum on a regular basis, and that was the process that was followed. People—parents especially—in Ontario made it very clear that the way that they were engaged around changes to curriculum did not meet their needs, and our Premier made a commitment that we were going to consider how we could do a better job of that. My ministry is taking a very careful look at how we've done it in the past and what some of the most effective ways are, going forward, that we can ensure that the issues of parents—

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Health and education groups in Ontario haven't heard a word about the consultations that were promised a year ago. Nothing has been done. There are no consultations.

Ontario children and youth need accurate information about sexually transmitted diseases, sexuality and early pregnancy to develop into healthy adults, but Ontario's sex education curriculum is outdated. It appears that this is the education Premier for everything except sex education. Why is the Premier afraid to talk about sex?

1130

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think it's important to clarify that we have sex education in our schools now. We have had it for many years, and that continues to be the case.

We have an improved physical health education curriculum in our schools. That did go forward.

We are looking at the process that we have to review curriculum. We review curriculum all the time.

What was evident with the sex education part of our curriculum was that we needed to do a better job. My ministry is working to understand what is the best way, given that we did have a consultation process that obviously was not adequate for parents. So we are looking at ways that we can do a better job of getting their feedback on a very important curriculum for students in our schools.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Minister of Research and Innovation. Ontario has always been good at turning money into research. To foster a culture of innovation that will lead to the creation of long-lasting, knowledge-based jobs for Ontario families means that we need to value-add research back into money.

Western Mississauga has always had the critical mass of world-class skills, proximity to major markets and first-rate infrastructure.

Though entrepreneurs may be good at the science, few are also skilled in the business of business. Entrepreneurs need help and advice from industry experts and access to capital to take their products to market in Ontario and around the world.

Minister, how is our province and your ministry helping forward-looking young companies in areas like Mississauga to succeed?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I know the question is coming from this side of the House because this ministry has never had a question from that side of the House. They don't know what the word "innovation" means.

It is fascinating to me, because we've launched the Ontario Network of Excellence in 14 communities. We don't only respect small business, we are enthusiastic supporters of them. You can now get capital, you can get access to talent and technology in almost every centre.

What's so remarkable about this program is this isn't being done by government bureaucrats. This is being done by the Guelph Chamber of Commerce. So all the money goes to people in Mississauga–Streetsville, home to my friend Her Worship Hazel McCallion.

The city of Mississauga is doing studies to leverage and invest and expand on our regional investment in the great community of Mississauga–Streetsville.

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Earlier today in response to a question from the member from Oxford, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, I believe, in her answer, contravened standing order 23(j): "Charges another member with uttering a deliberate falsehood." In her response, she accused the member of writing a paper himself that he

clearly received through the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

I would humbly ask that you review the Hansard of today when it is made available to you and then rule at a future date if the minister did in fact contravene standing order 23(j), and let the House know—and if so, that she would be given the opportunity at that time to withdraw that comment and apologize.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: On the same point of order, Speaker: I will withdraw if it is inaccurate. But if he would table the papers in the House, I would be happy to confirm that it is in fact documents supposedly that come from OMAFRA.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please stand and withdraw the comment: the unequivocal withdrawal of the comment, without any commentary.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I withdraw, but I would also like—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): An unequivocal withdrawal is sufficient.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. I would just remind members on both sides of the House that temperate language used in this chamber is most helpful to maintaining order and decorum in this place, and I would say that on both sides.

I would as well remind members of a number of standing orders. The honourable member just reminded members of standing order 23(j), but certainly I would remind them of 23(i). On both sides, many times members are imputing motives over different issues—being cognizant of that. I would certainly hope that all members would be respectful of standing order 20(b) in allowing a member to speak without being interrupted by another member. It would be useful for all sides.

The time for question period has ended.

VISITORS

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I would just like to welcome to the House Jane Falconer and Mike Harkins from the London Bridge Child Care Services. They work in a child care and might have some interesting observations on the conduct in this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would welcome those guests. It is not a point of order—we do have a time for introductions—but I think that those observations on the conduct of members of this House, I would say to the honourable member, go both ways, and don't be impugning motive against one side of the House.

I would very much encourage members at all times to be cognizant of our guests, not just from the daycare sector but certainly the numerous students who visit us from grade 5 and the students who are visiting us from grades 10 and 11. We all should be setting a very good example for those future leaders.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the motion for allocation of time on Bill 150, An Act to provide for the resolution of labour disputes involving the Toronto Transit Commission.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.
The division bells rang from 1137 to 1142.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please take their seats.

On March 2, Ms. Smith moved government notice of motion number 54. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

| | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Aggelonitis, Sophia | Duncan, Dwight | Moridi, Reza |
| Albanese, Laura | Dunlop, Garfield | Munro, Julia |
| Arnott, Ted | Elliott, Christine | Murray, Glen R. |
| Arthurs, Wayne | Fonseca, Peter | Pendergast, Leeanna |
| Bailey, Robert | Gerretsen, John | Phillips, Gerry |
| Balkissoon, Bas | Hardeman, Ernie | Pupatello, Sandra |
| Barrett, Toby | Hoskins, Eric | Qaadri, Shafiq |
| Bentley, Christopher | Hoy, Pat | Ramsay, David |
| Best, Margaret | Jaczek, Helena | Ruprecht, Tony |
| Brotten, Laurel C. | Jeffrey, Linda | Sandals, Liz |
| Cansfield, Donna H. | Johnson, Rick | Savoline, Joyce |
| Caplan, David | Klees, Frank | Shurman, Peter |
| Carroll, Aileen | Kular, Kuldip | Smith, Monique |
| Chan, Michael | Kwinter, Monte | Sousa, Charles |
| Chiarelli, Bob | Lalonde, Jean-Marc | Sterling, Norman W. |
| Chudleigh, Ted | Leal, Jeff | Takhar, Harinder S. |
| Clark, Steve | Levac, Dave | Van Bommel, Maria |
| Colle, Mike | Mangat, Amrit | Wilson, John |
| Crozier, Bruce | Matthews, Deborah | Witmer, Elizabeth |
| Delaney, Bob | Meilleur, Madeleine | Wynne, Kathleen O. |
| Dickson, Joe | Miller, Norm | Yakabuski, John |
| Dombrowsky, Leona | Milloy, John | Zimmer, David |
| Duguid, Brad | Mitchell, Carol | |

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Bisson, Gilles | Horwath, Andrea | Prue, Michael |
| Gélinas, France | Marchese, Rosario | Tabuns, Peter |
| Hampton, Howard | Miller, Paul | |

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 69; the nays are 8.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

HEALTH PROTECTION AND PROMOTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2011 LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION ET LA PROMOTION DE LA SANTÉ

Deferred vote 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): Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? I heard a no.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1145 to 1146.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On December 8, 2010, Ms. Matthews moved second reading of Bill 141. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

| | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Aggelonitis, Sophia | Duncan, Dwight | Moridi, Reza |
| Albanese, Laura | Dunlop, Garfield | Munro, Julia |
| Arnott, Ted | Elliott, Christine | Murray, Glen R. |
| Arthurs, Wayne | Fonseca, Peter | Pendergast, Leeanna |
| Bailey, Robert | Gerretsen, John | Phillips, Gerry |
| Balkissoon, Bas | Gravelle, Michael | Pupatello, Sandra |
| Barrett, Toby | Hardeman, Ernie | Qaadri, Shafiq |
| Bentley, Christopher | Hoskins, Eric | Ramsay, David |
| Best, Margaret | Hoy, Pat | Ruprecht, Tony |
| Bradley, James J. | Jaczek, Helena | Sandals, Liz |
| Brotten, Laurel C. | Jeffrey, Linda | Savoline, Joyce |
| Cansfield, Donna H. | Johnson, Rick | Shurman, Peter |
| Caplan, David | Klees, Frank | Smith, Monique |
| Carroll, Aileen | Kular, Kuldip | Sousa, Charles |
| Chan, Michael | Kwinter, Monte | Sterling, Norman W. |
| Chiarelli, Bob | Lalonde, Jean-Marc | Takhar, Harinder S. |
| Chudleigh, Ted | Leal, Jeff | Van Bommel, Maria |
| Clark, Steve | Levac, Dave | Wilkinson, John |
| Colle, Mike | Mangat, Amrit | Wilson, Jim |
| Crozier, Bruce | Matthews, Deborah | Witmer, Elizabeth |
| Delaney, Bob | Meilleur, Madeleine | Wynne, Kathleen O. |
| Dickson, Joe | Miller, Norm | Yakabuski, John |
| Dombrowsky, Leona | Milloy, John | Zimmer, David |
| Duguid, Brad | Mitchell, Carol | |

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Bisson, Gilles | Horwath, Andrea | Prue, Michael |
| Gélinas, France | Marchese, Rosario | Tabuns, Peter |
| Hampton, Howard | Miller, Paul | |

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 71; the nays are 8.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): So ordered.

There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1150 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my pleasure to introduce, in the members' gallery today, Travis Poland and his parents,

Dave and Christine. Travis is going to be one of our new pages on March 21, and he's here on a visit today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Ontario Pork and the Ontario Cattlemen's Association are here at Queen's Park today to deliver a message. Ontario farmers need their government to support them with a business risk management program. This is the same message that the grain farmers delivered last week. AgriStability simply is not working for our livestock producers. After years of losses, they aren't qualifying for the support they need.

Last week, at the Ontario Cattlemen's Association's annual general meeting, Ontario PC leader Tim Hudak reiterated that if elected, a PC government would work with farm leaders to develop a business risk management program based on the cost of production of all commodities. But many farmers can't wait. They are competing against farmers in provinces like Quebec and Alberta that are receiving support from their provincial government. As a result, Ontario farmers are suffering and they are losing market share to other provinces. If that continues, they will also lose processing capacity.

Instead of showing leadership, the McGuinty government is pointing fingers. In their annual report issued last week, the cattlemen's association called on the province to act immediately and unilaterally to kick-start and fund their share of the program. The Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition has asked that same thing. They have written to the minister, they have written to the Premier, and they have talked to the MPPs, but it seems no one is listening.

Ontario needs to take a leadership role and support Ontario's farmers. The PC caucus understands that. We have repeatedly tried to explain that—

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

AJAX AND PICKERING HOSPITAL

Mr. Joe Dickson: Back in 2007, I stood up in this House to announce our government was about to invest 90% of the cost of expanding Ajax and Pickering General Hospital. This project, planned in three phases, remained on track and on budget. I'm proud to say that on February 17, Minister Deborah Matthews and I, along with dedicated Rouge Valley staff, physicians and nurses, celebrated the grand opening and completion of the entire hospital expansion.

The project's three phases included: firstly, the expansion and renovation of the emergency room; secondly, the construction of a new wing, including a complex continuing care unit, 30 additional patient beds and added diagnostic facilities; thirdly, an expanded medical laboratory, additional administrative offices and the two-storey

Harwood Bistro, for the combined grand opening of the entire expansion just last month.

This expansion employed an average of 75 workers per day during its busiest construction months. Our provincial government followed through for us by seeing the Ajax hospital expansion through to its completion. Our government remains committed to health care in Ontario and the Ajax and Pickering hospital is living proof.

Thank you to our "minister with a heart," the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, Deborah Matthews, for coming to Ajax-Pickering and helping to deliver this great news on health care.

RURAL ONTARIO

Mr. John Yakabuski: This week was the annual conference for the Ontario Good Roads Association and the Rural Ontario Municipal Association. It is the most important event of the year for these municipal organizations as they seek to share their concerns with their provincial representatives. But instead of giving this conference its full attention, this government calls the House into session, thereby preventing rural Ontario families from having full access to their MPPs. Previous governments showed respect for rural Ontarians by making sure the House did not sit during this important conference. The McGuinty Liberals changed the rules, keeping us in the House instead of allowing us to fully participate in the conference. The Premier and many of his cabinet colleagues attended, while preventing many of us who actually represent rural communities from doing the same.

On Monday night and Tuesday, I spoke with many folks who are incredibly troubled that this government is limiting their access to their MPPs. The provincial-municipal relationship is absolutely critical to ensuring future prosperity in rural communities. Premier McGuinty is so out of touch that he doesn't understand how important it is for rural municipalities to have a close relationship with their MPPs.

This is just another example of the McGuinty government's general disregard for rural Ontario families. This government doesn't understand the needs of rural Ontario and doesn't show it the respect it deserves.

I would hope that, in the future—and I've raised this point before—during the annual conference, this House not sit.

PHYLLIS MARSHALL

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Black History Month was celebrated with great enthusiasm in my riding of Oak Ridges-Markham this year. At the York Regional Police celebration, I learned about a remarkable Canadian. Phyllis Marshall was born in Barrie in 1921, and shortly after, moved to Toronto. She was a young track star with sights set on the Olympics. When these were cancelled due to World War II, she focused on her singing career. At the age of 22, she performed with her own trio at the Park Plaza Hotel and earned an 18-month engagement.

By 1949, she was on CBC Radio's Blues for Friday. When CBC TV first started, she was part of the Big Revue, and later, the Cross-Canada Hit Parade. In 1959, she featured on the British Broadcasting Corp. with her own special, and over the years, performed with such jazz notables as Oscar Peterson.

Phyllis was also an acclaimed actress at Toronto's Crest Theatre and then went on to dramatic and musical roles in stage, radio and TV productions. In later years, she focused her energies on fundraising for various charities before passing away in 1996.

Phyllis Marshall should be recognized for her great works and talents: as a black Canadian songstress, actress and TV star. I, along with local historical societies, urge all members of this House to help get her inducted into Canada's Walk of Fame.

ONTARIO SENIOR GAMES— WINTERFEST 2011

Mr. Rick Johnson: On February 15, the county of Haliburton opened its arms to more than 900 athletes participating in Winterfest 2011 Ontario senior games. The games represent the highest level of provincial competition for gold medal winners aged 55 years or older. As home of Ontario's largest population of seniors per capita, Haliburton was the perfect location for this premier event.

Seniors represent a vibrant and vital segment of our local population. They contribute countless hours and are the driving force behind many community services, events and local improvement projects.

During the games, I was reminded time and time again that Ontario seniors are competitive. The performances were nothing short of inspirational. Be it Alpine or Nordic skiing, badminton, ice hockey or volleyball, each athlete was an example of what a healthy, active lifestyle can do to improve health in our senior years.

This event marked the first major games that Haliburton has hosted, and I know the honourable Minister of Health Promotion would agree that Winterfest 2011 in Haliburton topped all.

My sincerest congratulations go out to the Ontario Senior Games Association and the Sport Alliance of Ontario for their success in promoting good health and delivering the games; to the bid committee for the time, energy and talent put forward developing a winning bid; to this government for its dedicated support of an event that spotlights quality of life through physical activity; and most of all, to the amazing athletes, tireless volunteers and our welcoming communities. The success is yours. Congratulations, and thank you.

CHINESE CANADIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I would like to commend the London chapter of the Chinese Canadian National Council for their very successful Chinese New Year that was held February 19 at the Covent Garden market in

London. The event brought people together from throughout the city and featured a cultural show, exhibits, demonstrations and dancing.

The London chapter of the Chinese Canadian National Council is committed to encouraging co-operation between Chinese Canadians and other groups. They also work to promote knowledge about the historical and cultural heritage of Canadians of Chinese descent.

Last week, as a part of their ongoing programming in support of these aims, the London Chinese Cultural Centre hosted a Heritage Week celebration that will allow London-area students to learn about Chinese art and culture.

Again, I congratulate the London chapter of the Chinese Canadian National Council, and I wish them every success in their endeavours as they continue to be an important and well-established part of the cultural community in my riding of London-Fanshawe and also through the city of London.

1310

TORONTO AUTOMOBILE DEALERS ASSOCIATION

Mrs. Julia Munro: This past Sunday, the doors closed on the 38th annual Canadian International AutoShow. It was a tremendous success. More than 300,000 people had a chance to see 1,000 trucks and cars from 125 exhibitors. Thanks go to AutoShow president Ron Loveys, and committee members Joel Cohen, Sandy Liguori, Frank Romeo and Bob Attrell Jr.; AutoShow general manager Tom Tonks; marketing director David McClean; and director of media services Beth Rhind.

The Canadian International AutoShow is owned and operated by the Toronto Automobile Dealers Association, which has been the voice of greater Toronto's 340 new car dealers since 1908.

Toronto's auto dealers recently made a \$2-million donation to the new Ronald McDonald House Toronto—set to be the largest in the world—to provide a home away from home for families with seriously ill children. This will help Ronald McDonald House to serve almost triple the number of families.

Toronto's auto dealers also support initiatives such as the Toronto Police Service child safety seat program, the Trillium Gift of Life Network and the Canadian Safe School Network.

Congratulations on a very successful event.

COMMISSAIRE AUX SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: La mission du commissaire aux services en français est de veiller à ce que la population reçoive, en français, des services de qualité du gouvernement de l'Ontario et de surveiller l'application de la Loi sur les services en français. Le commissaire a le mandat de mener des enquêtes indépendantes, selon la Loi sur les services en français, et de soumettre des

rapports d'enquête. Il fait très bien son travail. Nous en sommes fiers et nous le remercions de son engagement envers les services en français.

Par contre, contrairement au vérificateur général, à l'ombudsman, au commissaire à l'environnement et au commissaire à l'intégrité qui, eux, relèvent de l'Assemblée législative, le commissaire aux services en français, lui, relève de la ministre déléguée aux services en français.

J'aimerais faire changer ça et j'ai besoin de votre aide. J'ai écrit une pétition qui demande à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario de changer les pouvoirs du commissaire aux services en français afin qu'il relève directement de l'Assemblée législative. De cette façon, les suivis de ses rapports seront assurés par l'ensemble des députés de l'Assemblée. Il suffit d'aller sur mon site Internet ou celui du parti néo-démocrate afin d'imprimer la pétition, de la signer et de demander à d'autres personnes de faire de même, puis la retourner à l'adresse indiquée.

Il est temps de se faire entendre. Ensemble, nous aiderons le commissaire aux services en français à faire son travail encore mieux. Merci de votre collaboration.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Reza Moridi: I would like to take this opportunity to talk about an important initiative of the McGuinty government: full-day kindergarten.

Last year, our government introduced the full-day kindergarten program to almost 600 schools across the province. By September 2012, an additional 900 schools will be offering full-day kindergarten to 120,000 children across Ontario.

Studies have shown that the return on public investment for young children is at least seven to one. We believe, just as the experts do, that this is the right thing to do for our kids.

The opposition, on the other hand, disagrees with the experts. They don't believe our children are worth this important investment. The opposition leader called full-day kindergarten a "shiny new car." Several members of their caucus are on record as saying the program is too expensive. They don't want to invest in our youth. They don't care about the future success of our province.

Only the McGuinty government is concerned about getting our kids on the road to success, which is absolutely essential if we are to build the kind of workforce we are going to need to compete in the new economy.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA SANTÉ ET LA SÉCURITÉ AU TRAVAIL

Mr. Sousa moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 160, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to occupational health and safety and other matters / Projet de loi 160, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail et la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail en ce qui concerne la santé et la sécurité au travail et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'll make my statement during ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Hon. Charles Sousa: I rise for the introduction of the Occupational Health and Safety Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011.

This proposed legislation is about laying the foundation and building the framework for a new and more effective occupational health and safety system in Ontario. Our goal is to protect the working men and women of this province and to accomplish this through the efforts and input of both employees and employers.

On December 16, 2010, the expert advisory panel, led by Tony Dean, delivered its final report. As many know, Mr. Dean is a former secretary of cabinet and is a professor in the school of public policy and governance at the University of Toronto. This expert advisory panel included representatives from labour, business and academia with workplace health and safety experience and expertise.

The final recommendations of this expert advisory panel struck a balance between two key factors: a need to provide better protection and support for workers, especially young and new workers and recent immigrants; and a need to improve compliance supports for the business community, particularly small businesses.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the panel and show our appreciation for the hard, dedicated work they accomplished. Their approach made a consensus report possible, and consensus on such a critically important matter is invaluable.

As we bring this proposed legislation forward, we would hope it will be considered in the same atmosphere of mutual respect and co-operation that existed on the expert panel and that we constantly remember that we share the common goal of keeping Ontarians safe.

Overall, the expert panel received more than 400 responses and submissions during consultations and con-

ducted more than 50 meetings with stakeholders across the province.

Our proposed legislation, based on the panel's report, is a road map for making lasting changes to our occupational health and safety system that will benefit all Ontarians, employees and employers alike. We believe that these changes, if passed, will save lives and help prevent injuries for years to come.

Under our proposed amendments:

The ministry would assume responsibility for prevention;

A new chief prevention officer, reporting to the Minister of Labour on strategic priorities, would provide leadership on the prevention of workplace injury and occupational diseases;

The Ministry of Labour would expand its involvement in workplace health and safety education and promotion;

The minister would also have oversight of the province's health and safety associations, under the leadership of the chief prevention officer, and could delegate that oversight to the chief prevention officer;

A new prevention council, with representatives from the worker and employer communities and health and safety experts, would provide valuable input into the direction of the health and safety system and would be asked to endorse any significant changes to the system;

The minister would have the authority to establish standards for health and safety training in order to enhance this training and ensure that workers are properly trained; and

Workers, especially those most vulnerable workers, would have improved protections against reprisals for exercising their rights under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

1320

Consultation and further advice from stakeholders and the interim prevention council will assist the ministry in the months ahead to ensure cost-effective and thoughtful implementation of these major reforms.

The expert panel heard from stakeholders who said that they wanted to enhance coordination and alignment of prevention activities in our health and safety system, and we listened. We have accepted the recommendations of the expert panel and thank all of those who worked so hard on the panel's report. We're acting by bringing forward this proposed legislation.

Our government believes that by working together, we can continue to foster workplaces that are healthy, safe and harmonious, and, by doing so, also build a strong economy. We believe our bill would strengthen and better align our health and safety efforts, to the benefit of all. We believe we can and will save lives and prevent injury among Ontarians. The people of this province and those who depend on them deserve no less.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Before I respond to this piece of legislation, I want to first say that I received a call a couple of hours ago from some people in the media, wanting me to comment on this piece of legislation, which, of course, hadn't been tabled. During that dis-

ussion, it certainly appeared that the press were more informed of this piece of legislation than me. Once again, this minister—this is the second piece of legislation he has introduced in the House as the new minister, and no briefing. I got notified today that this bill would be coming forward: no briefing; no interest in providing the opposition members with any knowledge about this bill before our time to respond to it.

So, 20 minutes ago, I received this bill. This bill does amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act. It also amends the WSIB act. It's a very significant and substantial document. I think this minister is showing this House his arrogance and contempt for the Legislature when it appears that the media is getting more information about this bill than members of the opposition and myself as critic.

I want to just put that on the record, Minister. We've seen this sort of activity in the past. We have seen some ministers on the other side actually engage with the opposition, provide some briefings, provide some prior notice so that we can provide some intelligent, well-thought-out and informed opinions on a piece of legislation, but this minister seems to be going down the same path as the previous Minister of Labour. I encourage him to have a little bit more respect for this House.

We've seen, in this brief period of time for reviewing this bill, that the minister refers to the recommendations of the Tony Dean panel as the motivation for this bill. But I'll say this: Nowhere in the Dean report did it suggest that inspectors and members of the bureaucracy are not compellable witnesses in a civil suit. Nowhere in the Dean report did they suggest that an inspector is not a competent or compellable witness before a board or proceeding relating to a complaint.

There are a number of things in this piece of legislation that clearly have no relation to the Dean report—and I want to put it on the record: This is about people's health and safety. It ought not to be used as a political football or for partisan purposes.

I want to also put on the record that we have 19 agencies already existing in this province that govern and protect workers' safety: the Office of the Employer Adviser, the Office of the Worker Adviser, the WSIB, WorkSmartOntario—and I could go on and on. This minister has created another level of bureaucracy for workplace safety, except that this new office will be totally unaccountable to the Legislature and totally unaccountable to the people of this province. That is a major, major fault that we see coming out of not just this legislation but the track record of this Liberal government.

It appears from a short review of this legislation that we're taking authority for worker injury prevention out of the WSIB and putting it into an unelected, unaccountable office that the minister can hide behind once again. This is indicative of this government creating more and more layers of fog that make it difficult for people to be properly engaged with the government, make it difficult to find out who makes the decisions, where those decisions are made and how to get through that thickening

maze. That's what this piece of legislation does. It doesn't appear to have anything about occupational health and safety, other than protecting the minister.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: First of all, I want to congratulate my colleague on his promotion to Minister of Labour. It certainly brings to mind that theological concept that when God wants to punish you, God answers your prayers. So, the best of luck.

The first thing I have to say is to really echo my colleague. This is a big bill, and we've had 15 minutes—it's very small-point type. Rest assured that we in the New Democratic Party will look through this very thoroughly and give you a reasoned analysis of it.

Suffice to say that the background of this bill was migrant workers being killed on a work site. That's what prompted the Dean committee, the Dean report etc. I have to say to the minister that it's still going on, and the fact that we haven't had more deaths is really just a stroke of luck, because we still have under-inspected workplaces out there. One in a hundred workplaces in Ontario ever sees an inspector from the Minister of Labour. That's the reality. We in the New Democratic Party have asked, after those deaths, that there be a sweep of 10% of all workplaces to at least set a benchmark.

I know I am not alone, as a member of provincial Parliament, in hearing the stories that come into our constituency offices. One story recently was told to me—this is echoed across the province—by someone who did not have landed status but was working while he was waiting for his landed status and citizenship. He was working, of course, in the underground economy and was being paid \$6 an hour.

I said, "Why don't you complain to the Minister of Labour?" Obviously, the reason he didn't was because then he would have no job at all. So I said, "Well, after you get your landed status, after you become a Canadian citizen, maybe then you should complain about this employer to the Minister of Labour." And he said, "Then all my friends would lose their jobs."

That's the kind of reality that workers face in the province of Ontario, and this is in construction. This is where it happens. One of the most dangerous places to work has one of the most dangerous pedigrees. Unless we get inspectors out into the field, not just in the case of an accident or a complaint but pre-emptively to find out where these places are, this problem will never be solved no matter how many panels you set up.

The Ontario Federation of Labour had a wonderful campaign. It was simply, "Kill a worker, go to jail." I hope—and I doubt—that in this legislation we'll see something that strong. Certainly, I hope that the very least we'll see is the 46—count them—recommendations of the Dean committee. Quite frankly, I doubt that we will. I flipped through it—that's all the time I had to review it—but I certainly saw some very significant parts of the Dean committee report recommendations missing. So we hope that we'll see that, and we also hope, of course, that the prevention council, which we will be

monitoring—trust me—really follows through on those recommendations.

But first and foremost, it doesn't matter how many laws you have and how many statutes you've got on the books. If you don't actually enforce them, they mean nothing. What we have in the province of Ontario is a lack of enforcement where worker safety is concerned.

1330

I know my colleague comes from a Portuguese background. My husband is from a Portuguese background. Many Portuguese come into this country and work in construction. That's the reality. So we know it first-hand. We know they work illegally. We know they work where there are no worker safety councils. We know they work under the table. We know it's going on.

Who is going to stop it? Who is going to speak for workers who really and very truly cannot speak for themselves? In the case in point, the example I gave, he can't even complain after he becomes a Canadian citizen, because then his friends will lose their jobs.

This is the reality of the Canadian workplace as we live it and know it, and this is what resulted in those four migrant deaths. We still have that going. I doubt that this will solve that. I say, kudos to the Minister of Labour for bringing anything forward. Kudos to the Dean report and its committee for the recommendations. Let's actually enact them. Let's actually enforce them.

I know it costs money. This is the problem. This is why it's not going to happen, I fear. Let's get more inspectors in the field pre-emptively checking workplaces before accidents happen so that we know what's going on out there and so that we can protect those who are effectively silenced right now.

PETITIONS

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Pension Benefits Act ... regulations for 'loss of sponsor' of defined benefit pension plans only permit windup and annuity purchase; and

"Whereas, in the present economic climate, the cost of annuities is at a 25-year high, with no relief in sight;

"Therefore the purchase of annuities exacerbates the punitive impact of windup on Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, and increases the costs passed on to the taxpayers of Ontario;

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

"To amend the PBA regulations to permit the administrator and the Financial Services Commission of Ontario ... to apply other options in the 'loss of sponsor' scenario which will provide more benefits to Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, such as the

continuation of the pension plan under responsible financial management by a non-government institution.”

This is a long-time-standing petition, but I received it just recently so I wanted to read it into the record. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

EPILEPSY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This petition is from Epilepsy Cure Initiative.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas more than 300,000 Canadians have epilepsy, and some of the leading epilepsy organizations in Ontario have already proposed improvements in specialized care for those afflicted with epilepsy, and there is a need for improved access to these programs;

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

“Improve access to epilepsy care programs by developing and establishing highly specialized epilepsy treatment centres in Ontario.”

I agree with this and will affix my signature and give it to Oliver to be delivered to the table.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is to support extending the Ombudsman of Ontario’s jurisdiction to include the Tarion Warranty Corp.

“Whereas homeowners have purchased a newly built home in good faith and often soon find they are victims of construction defects, often including Ontario building code violations, such as faulty heating, ventilation and air conditioning ... systems, leaking roofs, cracked foundations etc.;

“Whereas often when homeowners seek restitution and repairs from the builder and the Tarion Warranty Corp., they encounter an unwieldy bureaucratic system that often fails to compensate them for the high cost of repairing these construction defects, while the builder often escapes with impunity;

“Whereas the Tarion Warranty Corp. is supposed to be an important part of the consumer protection system in Ontario related to newly built homes;

“Whereas the government to date has ignored calls to make its Tarion agency truly accountable to consumers;

“Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, support MPP Cheri DiNovo’s private member’s bill, which calls for the Ombudsman to be given oversight of Tarion and the power to deal with unresolved complaints;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act to provide that the Ombudsman’s powers under the Ombudsman Act in respect of any governmental organization apply to the corporation established under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act, and to provide for necessary modifications in the application of the Ombudsman Act.”

Of course, I agree with this, signing my name to it and giving it to Braden to be delivered.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

SMALL BUSINESS BILL OF RIGHTS, 2011

CHARTE DES DROITS DES PETITES ENTREPRISES DE 2011

Mrs. Munro moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 152, An Act to enact a Bill of Rights for small business / Projet de loi 152, Loi édictant une Charte des droits pour les petites entreprises.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Some of the most hard-working and dedicated people I know are small business owners and their families. When you open a small business, you are entirely responsible for its success and its growth. If you have a store and an employee is sick, you have to be there. If an order is coming in, you need to receive it. If your business has closed for the day but there’s work to be done, you stay to do it.

The vitality of small businesses has always impressed me. Starting a small business is not for the faint of heart. It requires enormous energy and self-confidence, as well as significant expertise. You need to be able to plan, you certainly need to work hard, and sometimes you need more than a little bit of luck.

I also find it amazing that even though small business owners work harder than almost anyone else, they are still amongst the most active leaders in our communities. Whether it’s fundraising for worthy projects, sponsoring the local hockey team, organizing the church supper or keeping the chamber of commerce going, small business people seem to be at the heart of almost every local endeavour.

It should be the role of government to encourage this vitality. It’s a resource you cannot pay for, but it is just as valuable as our natural resources education or infrastructure. Yet too often, the actions of government at every level work to sap this vitality. Small business people have to spend more and more time meeting the demands of government regulators and rule makers. Government rules, many of them senseless, cost businesses thousands of dollars a year. And remember: The smaller the business, the more it costs and the more time it takes to meet regulations.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business gives a good statistical background on the problem. They calculate that regulation in Canada costs businesses of all sizes more than \$30 billion per year. What does this

mean for individual small businesses? The latest CFIB red tape report found that the annual regulation cost per employee is \$5,825 for businesses with fewer than five workers. The per employee amount declines for larger businesses so that by the time a business has more than a hundred workers, the per employee cost is \$1,117.

The 2005 data from the CFIB indicates that 55% of all small business owners believe that regulation impedes their ability to compete with larger businesses, and 73% say that regulatory compliance adds significant costs to their lives.

We must remember that in most small businesses, it is the owner who must do most of the work to comply. This means that business people spend less time with their families and more time servicing government.

1340

Shockingly, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business found that 25% of business people would not have gone into business for themselves if they had known the burden of regulation. I'm not saying that we don't need regulation; we just need to minimize regulation and eliminate unnecessary duplication of rules.

The people of Ontario expect the Ontario government to regulate business, but only to the extent necessary to protect human life, human health, the natural environment and the fair treatment of employees, to name a few. While it is necessary for the government to make regulations dealing with business, too often governments pass regulations that harm businesses and damage Ontario's prosperity and economic competitiveness.

What we need is a change in attitude. We need government to start thinking of itself as an enabler of opportunity for small business and citizens. This is the motivation I have to introduce a small business bill of rights for Ontario. If we are to push government to change its attitudes towards business, I think we need to make a statement that binds government in its dealings with our small businesses. Let's have a look at some of the rights that I feel are so important.

(1) The right to operate in a free-market system with as little regulation as is possible and necessary: Only businesses can create jobs and prosperity. Government must stay out of the way as much as possible. Whenever government feels the need to make a rule, the first question should be: Is this necessary? Is this rule based on a need to protect health and safety or any of those other important criteria? Is it based on a scientific assessment of risk and need? Are we duplicating some other part of the law? Will this rule make other things worse or make it unaffordable for a business to operate?

(2) The right to be served promptly and treated with courtesy and respect by all government officials and inspectors: This should be a given. When I first started speaking to stakeholders and small businesses about this bill, one of the first things I started to hear was that they supported what I was doing, but "Please, don't use our names" because they feared they would be targeted by government inspectors. What a sad situation this is, when the reaction of small businesses to the Ontario govern-

ment is one of fear. Small businesses should not be treated as criminals waiting to be caught.

(3) The right to expect the Ontario government and all of its regulatory bodies, inspectors and officials to make the needs of small business a factor in all decisions: It's time to stop writing rules that small businesses cannot reasonably meet and to make small business needs a mandatory factor to consider if a rule is to be written.

(4) The right to expect that all government inspectors will be competent to properly and fairly enforce rules and that any fees charged will reflect only the cost of the inspection: I've heard about both of these concerns from small businesses. Many stakeholder groups actually arrange to train their inspectors in the basics of their individual industries. I think the fee issue is important. Fees should not be used as a tax to fund other activities of regulators.

(5) The right to be consulted by ministries, municipalities and all other bodies empowered by the Ontario government to create rules or regulations that are made or amended and that could affect small business: This is really mandatory. Too often, rules are written without thought being given to their ramifications. We found this when rules were published for the propane industry a year after the Sunrise Propane explosion. Some small propane dealers faced thousands of dollars in new paperwork costs from government to meet the proposed new rules, all of this because government failed to consult, and also because the government failed to base its response to the propane explosion on science and risk assessment. Too many times the government responds to issues with their priority being to get a good headline or to look like they are making a sympathetic gesture. Small businesses end up paying a heavy price for government getting a good headline.

(6) The right to operate on a level playing field with larger businesses in seeking government contracts or participating in government boards, consultations or advisory agencies: Government contracts are getting harder and harder to obtain. Many ministries only want to deal with larger suppliers because it's easier for them. We need to simplify contracts and ensure that small vendors can bid without making the process so expensive that they cannot participate.

(7) The right to a simple, fair and predictable tax system that keeps both tax levels and the cost of preparing and filing tax returns and other required forms to a minimum: The CFIB identified the tax burden as the number one issue for their members.

(8) The right to a well-maintained system of education and infrastructure that meets the needs of small business: another case where small business needs must be taken into account.

(9) The right to a secure and affordable supply of energy: This is vital. Energy is a huge cost, and an unavoidable cost for small business. Costs are rising, and time-of-use pricing doesn't work for many. One of my local pizzeria owners tells me that she would love to use

energy late at night, but she has to cook the pizzas when people want to eat them.

(10) The right to equal treatment by government regardless of where in Ontario the business is located: Rural and northern members should know the importance of this. Small business needs in their communities are different and must be acknowledged.

I urge all members to support my bill. We need to make a statement that we value small business and that we are prepared to change the attitude of governments at all levels to small business. We all know how hard they work. Let's work together to take some of the burden off their shoulders. We have the power to do so.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I commend the member from York-Simcoe for her bill. I'm certainly going to vote for it. There are not a lot of particularly specific recommendations, but certainly the overarching thrust of the bill points to what is absent in this House, and that is really any concern by the government for small business at all, highlighted by the fact that we know longer have a Minister of Small Business. There is no Ministry of Small Business. This was a portfolio removed from cabinet, and certainly the removal of that ministry from cabinet shows the lack of concern and shows the lack of action.

I also mirror her concern. I've heard from many of my small business owners and also from the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas about their horror at the introduction of the HST. They were opposed to it almost uniformly, all 30,000 of their members. They came to Queen's Park hoping to get an audience with the minister to speak about their concerns. No audience was forthcoming. They had a press conference here; no minister attended to address their concerns. They felt very overlooked and very underappreciated, yet these are the engines of our economy: 90% of all jobs in Ontario are small business jobs—90%.

We forget that. The government obviously has forgotten that. Not only the HST is a burden to small business, and as the member pointed out, time-of-use utilities—boy, oh boy, do I hear about that. Think about it. Most stores, most small businesses, operate during the day, at the highest cost times for utilities. Essentially what this government has done with its meters is to tax small business horrendously at a time when they can least afford it.

We have just come through, by everybody's admission, a particularly horrendous dip in the economy. Call it what you will: recession, mini-depression. It has hit small business owners hard. They're suffering. Many of them are hanging on by their fingernails.

1350

In rapid succession we have a government that introduced not only the HST but also time-of-use metered utilities that hit them hardest. It was as if they simply added quite consciously to their burden at the worst

possible time. The member's bill also highlights that reality, and that is a reality for a small business.

You see, what this government tends to overlook—because small businesses don't have the money that big business does. They don't have the money to hire the lobbyists. They don't have the money to hire the accountants and the lawyers. They don't have the money for offshore accounts where they can squirrel their money away. They don't have the money to fight the government at every turn and to end up paying no taxes no matter how much of a break on taxes they get. Small business is extremely exposed to any kind of regulatory change. Small business is extremely exposed to hikes in the taxation system. They don't have ways of manoeuvring about it and around it the way that big business does. They're not the same beast, and you can't treat them the same way.

This government crows about its tax incentives, the billions that it has given away—instead of investing in social programs and other things—to big business, making ours, I think ashamedly so, one of the lowest tax rates charged to big business in North America, at a time when most small business is suffering. Somehow they think that this is going to trickle down and help the corner store. It doesn't. In fact, it hurts the corner store. Why? Because their direct competition is the mall. Main Street's competition is the mall. If we look at our Main Streets and we look at what's happening there, they are emptying out and suffering because the mall is profiting.

Who is the business in the mall? Multinational big corporations, many of them. That's who's in the mall, that's who this government listens to, and that's who is getting the tax breaks. It's not the small business. Everything this government does is designed to help the big guy and hurt the little guy.

We saw an extremely alarming example of this a couple of years back with the butcher shops. We saw ma-and-pa butcher shops being driven out of business by this government because of their ridiculous legislation and regulation. The Toronto Board of Health had passed them. One in my riding had been found fine by the Toronto Board of Health for 40 years. But, no, under this government's jurisdiction, they were then required to spend an extra \$200,000 to meet some imposition of a new regulation by the McGuinty government. It boggles the mind. It literally drove many of my ma-and-pa butchers out of business.

Remember, their concern is about health. It wasn't small business that raised those concerns about listeria and other problems with meat processing; it was big business. It was Maple Leaf Foods—big business that contributed to the Liberal Party. Yet they get the breaks and small business gets turfed. That's the reaction over and over and over again. Whether it's pharmacists, butcher shops—you name the industry—small business, this McGuinty government is not your friend.

And they know it. They speak to us continuously about it. They came to me when I was first elected and asked about the business education tax, a totally unfair

tax system levied upon small business by this government. Those who are in the 416 area pay more than those in the 905 area—same education system. Why is that? It makes no sense. I asked for this government to look into that. I put a motion on the order table about it. They made some small, slight adjustment. As one of my small businesses said, it saved them about \$10 a month. Whoop-de-do.

Meanwhile, they're being hurt by the HST slamming on their customers. They're being hurt by time-of-day-usage utility bills. They're not getting the breaks that the big business gets—none of them whatsoever.

I certainly want to send a shout-out to the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas and all of the business improvement areas. They actually started in my riding. Bloor West Business Improvement Area association started some 40 years ago and was the first in the world. It spread everywhere. It's certainly a help for small business. It brings them together to speak with one voice, which is extremely important, especially when dealing with this current government. Yet it's only effective when the government listens. It's only effective when the government hears what they have to say.

Again, hurting small businesses are not the people who are buying \$10,000-a-seat chairs at Dalton McGuinty's fundraisers—the Premier of the province. They're not the ones paying for those; they're the ones who are working not only from 9 to 5 but 7 in the morning till 10 o'clock at night just to keep their businesses going.

I know whereof I speak because, in fact, I had a small business, and now my children, both of them, run two independent small businesses. Are they hurt by red tape and bureaucracy? Oh yes, they are. It's a nightmare. They have to spend a good portion of their time—and remember, small business start-ups don't have a lot of spare time—complying with ridiculous, out-of-date regulations. They're hurt by the moves that this government has made—HST, utilities—and not helped by them whatsoever. God bless somebody who's trying to start a small business in this economy. God bless them, because certainly they're getting no help from Queen's Park these days.

Here's an interesting thought: If this government really wanted to help small business—I know that at one point in Ontario, there was a time to get a revolving loan, a kind of microloan program that would give a small amount of money, I think it was \$5,000 at the time, to help a small business get on its feet when maybe a bank or some other financial institution would not help—and let's face it: Banks have not been, traditionally, the friends of small business either. They got on their feet and paid back the loan. There's nothing like that forthcoming from this government. There's nothing to help those of our young folk who can't find jobs—because there aren't many jobs in the new Ontario; we've lost, what is it, 250,000 of them—as they may go out and want to start a small business. Can't we help them there? No; no help for you from this government, but, yes, a lot of hindrance.

To get back to this bill: It's a very general bill. It's a bill that points—quite vividly so—to the inadequacy of the McGuinty government's reaction and action—lack of it—for small business in the province of Ontario. It highlights, as should a private member's public business bill, a problem that needs redress. I would suggest to the government that if they're interested in at least symbolically giving a nod to small business, they bring it back as a portfolio, for starters. How outrageous is it that we have no portfolio for small business? Bring it back, put a minister in charge of it, and let's get going. Let's look at what you've done in the past, which has been hurtful; let's meet with small business leaders—not big business leaders; small business leaders. They may not be able to make the contributions to political parties that big business leaders can, but, boy, they vote—and they vote in our communities, unlike the CEOs of the big businesses, who are in the Turks and Caicos, or Geneva, or wherever they live. These small business folk live in our ridings. They speak to our constituents, and here's what they're saying. They're saying over and over again the same messages this government fails to hear, and it reflects in the polls. They're saying that the HST hurts small business; time-of-use metering hurts small business; the business education tax, the way it's in force, and other taxes hurt small business; and there is nothing to help small business.

It was small business, in fact, that supported me on the \$10 minimum wage bill when that first was an issue, way back when. That's not their issue; it's big business's issue. When you've got three, four, five or six employees, it's not a big part of your operating budget, and most of them treat their employees like family and treat them well. That's in the vernacular of small business. That wasn't their issue. Regulation was their issue. Unfair taxation was their issue. Utility costs were their issue. HST hurting their business period was their issue, and the ongoing pressure from the malls. That's their issue, and they get a government that helps the mall and hurts Main Street.

Absolutely, I'm supporting this. New Democrats support anything that will help small business, and call on the government to maybe, just once, think before they act and think from the perspective of someone who has a small business in their riding rather than the large multinational at the mall. If they did, we would get very, very different regulation.

So I hope this bill helps. I hope it raises awareness—whatever the government decides to do with it. I hope that those watching understand the predicament of those people where they shop, those people they do business with every day, those people who really sustain their communities and really hire their children. Let's hope this government listens.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

1400

Mr. David Zimmer: I am very pleased to speak to this bill.

Many, many years ago, I was the chairman of the small business committee of a local chamber of commerce. In that capacity—and I did that for a few years—I learned of the trials and tribulations and the great contributions that small business makes to our communities, our province and our country. Since I was elected in 2003, representing Willowdale, I have had a chance to renew that experience that small business has, particularly in Willowdale. There are many small businesses there and many small immigrant businesses.

I've had an opportunity to review the proposed bill, and I think there is much in that bill that warrants respect and action.

I'm just reviewing the first page of the bill: "The people of Ontario recognize that business and, in particular small business, is the foundation of our prosperity and the creation of jobs and wealth in our province." I agree with that, and I support that.

Elsewhere—and I'm just highlighting some of the points here—referring to the province: "It must establish an institutional framework within government to ensure that regulation reduction and reform actually happens." I think that is an admirable goal.

It goes on about the rights of small business:

"2. The right to be served promptly and treated with courtesy and respect by all government officials....

"6. The right to operate on a level playing field with larger businesses in seeking government contracts or participating in government boards, consultations or advisory agencies....

"8. The right to a well-maintained system of education and infrastructure that meets the needs of small businesses.

"9. The right to a secure and affordable supply of energy.

"10. The right to equal treatment by government regardless of where in Ontario the business is located."

I can say to the member opposite that I support the intent and ambition of this bill. Let me go on to say that, in fact, our government is very supportive and has been very supportive of those goals over the last year.

I just want to make a couple of comments regarding things we've done with respect to tax cuts, efforts on our part to reduce business costs, and perhaps something about our Open for Business strategy, because those strategies and those things that our government has been doing since we have formed the government are really in line with the bill of the member opposite. It's for that reason that I'm happy to speak in favour of the bill.

We have been, and we are, providing a billion dollars in tax relief to small businesses over three years, including:

- cutting the small business corporate tax rate to 4.5% from 5%;

- eliminating the small business deduction surtax;

- cutting the corporate minimum tax to 2.7% from 4% in 2010, and exempting more small and medium-sized businesses from the corporate minimum tax;

- providing enhanced refundable tax credits so that small businesses can hire apprentices and co-op students; and

- extending the refundable Ontario innovation tax credit to more small and medium-sized businesses.

This is a point that I expect I'll hear a howl about from across the way, but the reality is that small businesses benefit from the HST, which changes our tax structure to lower the input costs of small businesses.

Together, the tax cuts that I've just touched on and the HST will reduce the tax burden for small business investments by more than half, from almost 29% in 2009 to just over 13% in 2010.

Let me just say a couple of words about some other things that we're in fact doing that this bill of the member opposite complements.

Reduce business costs: I'm very pleased with the efforts that we've made to help businesses, and particularly small and medium-sized businesses, reduce their cost structure. Businesses can now claim 8% in input tax credits on business purchases and capital investments that were previously taxed under the PST. Businesses will save from the elimination of the embedded tax in the supplier prices because of the HST initiatives. All told, the best advice we have is that we have eliminated \$4.6 billion in hidden taxes. We've also provided one-time transition costs to help small businesses adapt their point-of-sale and accounting systems for the HST. Approximately 800,000 businesses have qualified for this support.

You see, the initiatives of the government in the years since I've been a member of this government, since 2003, do have the needs and the ambitions in mind and are dealing with and helping to deal with the frustrations that small businesses often incur. This bill reinforces many of those initiatives of ours, and I'm happy to support the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to support this bill introduced by my colleague the member from York-Simcoe, and I want to commend her for her hard work on behalf of her constituents and Ontario's small businesses.

Having owned and operated a small feed business for many years, I know that often small business people are not only the CEO, they are the sales department, the accounting department and, in my case, the chief mechanic. Small businesses simply don't have time to deal with unnecessary paperwork and regulations, and that's why this bill is so necessary.

The McGuinty government claimed they were trying to address this problem through the Open for Business initiative, as we just heard across the way, but that's not so. Earlier today, I raised a concern that an internal document produced by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs shows that the government is actually hiding red tape, not cutting it. What did the Minister of Economic Development and Trade do in response? Did

she commit to look into it? No. Did she commit to investigate it? No. No, she accused me of making up the document. I have the document here, and unfortunately for the people and businesses of Ontario, the document is real. That is exactly what they intend to do with it.

I'd like to share just a few of the ways that it recommends hiding the regulations and the burdens. It says, "Forms were not included in the count, per Open for Business. Rather than stating within a regulation that a stakeholder must submit his name, address and phone number (three requirements), simply state that the stakeholder must complete the form (one requirement). That form could then require the name, address and phone number."

The document goes on and says, "If a regulation requires an annual report to be prepared and submitted, that counts as two burdens. However, if the requirement to be prepared was removed, then only one burden would remain."

Later in the document it says, "If a policy or procedure manual were changed to a training manual, perhaps it could be argued that it is no longer a requirement."

Ontarians aren't that easily duped. They know that moving the requirements to another place or renaming them doesn't eliminate them. It demonstrates just how far out of touch this government has become, that they believe it is more important to pull the wool over people's eyes than to actually cut red tape and help farmers and small businesses to succeed.

Last week, during a speech at the Ontario Cattlemen's Association annual general meeting, Ontario PC leader Tim Hudak reiterated his commitment to peel back the growing red tape burden and the crippling tax system that hurts Ontario's farmers.

I think it is particularly appropriate that we are talking about helping small business and cutting red tape today, because this is the first day the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario seminar series entitled *Enough Is Enough* is starting. According to the flyer, this series was created because "Ontario's farmers are fed up with the heavily regulated business environment in which they operate." I want to commend them for creating the seminars to help farmers because, unfortunately, this government seems more concerned with a public relations exercise than actually taking action.

1410

I wish that instead they would listen to people like Henry Stevens, the president of the Christian Farmers Federation, who said, "Ontario's farmers are fed up with the uncompetitive situation in which they find themselves trying to do business." I know that many businesses feel the same way. That's why I believe this bill is so important.

I want to thank again, personally, my colleague from York-Simcoe for bringing it forward at this time so we can actually get something done about getting rid of that parcel of red tape that's inhibiting the growth of our small business community.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm delighted to stand up in my place to speak about the bill that was introduced by the member from York-Simcoe.

The title is a beautiful title, but I don't know. I read the bill in detail. I didn't see something important to change or to endorse, even though I'm supporting the title because I believe strongly on this side of the House in small businesses across the province of Ontario because they play a pivotal role in our communities.

I was a small business owner before I got elected in 2003, and I know that more than 400,000 small and medium businesses in the province run more than 99% of the total business we have in Ontario. They employ more than two million people across this province. I believe that small and medium businesses are the centre and the core of our financial economy in this province. That's why all of us shouldn't take a side or politicize this issue, because it's important for all of us to support the small and medium businesses in Ontario to keep the economy going. Mostly, in this province of Ontario, families and small organizations open a small business to provide for themselves, for their families and also for Ontario in general. That's why it's our duty and obligation to support small business people in the province. That's why the HST came: to eliminate the input tax, lower it and give them a chance to make it easy for them to operate and do business in Ontario.

I heard the Conservative members opposite talking about red tape. I'm not sure if they mean by "red tape" to fire all of the inspectors in the province of Ontario. I think of what happened in Walkerton. Everybody knows what happened with the meat inspectors, especially at Aylmer Meat Packers: Many people were eating dead-stock instead of eating fresh and healthy meat. The elimination of inspectors in the province, or what they call red tape, put the health of the people of Ontario in jeopardy. That's why we have to create that balance. Government regulations should be in place to protect the people and also to allow the small businesses of Ontario to operate in a professional manner. In that way we can protect the economy and also the people of Ontario.

It's important for us on this side, in this government, to make sure all the people of Ontario have a great and successful business because, as I mentioned, the small and medium businesses in Ontario represent more than 99% of the total business we have in the province. As I said at the beginning, I was involved in a small business. My family is still involved in the small business. We want the regulations to be in place to protect against illegal activities in the business community, to protect the hard-working people of Ontario and also to prohibit all the fly-by-night operators from blocking the system and destroying the business of others.

Also, I listened to the NDP speaking, and I'm not sure what they have against business. They think that if a person has a huge business, it's anti-people. I'm not sure about this. Businesses in general—small, medium,

large—create business for the people of Ontario, they create jobs for Ontario, they pay taxes, they support our health care, they support our education system, and they support all the elements we have.

I heard you talking about the education business tax. I believe our government acted in this area and is phasing out all of the education tax by the year 2012—I hope the member remembered that—to allow the small business people to operate and have more profit.

My colleague mentioned a few minutes ago how much importance the HST has for small business. Instead of duplication of taxes, we have a one-tax system.

Also, we help them out in terms of hydro energy, as she was talking about. We have a reduction of about 10% for all the businesses across the province of Ontario. Also, we give them some kind of financial support, such as when we implemented the HST to give small businesses the ability to continue to do business in Ontario, to be profitable and to be able to continue to support themselves and their families.

So I'm puzzled by the whole request when we talk about red tape, which means eliminating all inspectors, or about keeping it open—no jurisdictions, no regulations. I'm not sure what they're looking for.

In general, as I mentioned, I'm supporting the title. It's a beautiful title: rights for small business. I was a small business person, and my family is still in a small business operation. I support the title.

Hopefully, all of us will work together to create a good environment for small and medium-sized businesses in the province of Ontario, because of our obligation to protect them and to create an environment for them to be prosperous and able to continue to provide for all of us in Ontario.

Thank you for allowing me to stand up and speak and give my comments on this bill. In general, I'm not going to go against the title and against small business, because I believe in that too.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm really pleased to join this debate today. I want to particularly congratulate the member for York–Simcoe on introducing what I know is an outstanding piece of legislation.

She is our caucus critic for red tape. In this role, over and over again, I have seen her showing her commitment to assisting Ontario's small and medium-sized enterprises in their fight against what has become an unending onslaught of new Liberal rules and regulations—in other words, red tape.

I commend her for introducing this bill. I commend her for her constant hard work and her advocacy on behalf of small business.

I also want to put on the record the fact that not only is she a tireless advocate for small business in the province of Ontario; she also enjoys, within her own riding, a very well-deserved reputation as a tireless advocate for the constituents she serves. Every time I meet somebody from her riding, I am told again how hard she works on

their behalf, not just in her constituency but also to bring their views to Queen's Park.

Congratulations to the member for York–Simcoe.

I think all of us on this side of the House meet with small business owners on a regular basis. During that time, and more recently, again, they have brought to our attention the fact that it's pretty hard to remain competitive when you operate a business in the province of Ontario. They've brought to our attention many concerns, which this member is now trying to address.

I just want to remind this House that our government has always had an unwavering commitment to help small business operate, to make it easier to be competitive and, obviously, to create new jobs and pay the taxes that are going to support our schools, our health and safety, and the environment.

In fact, in the past, I am proud to say that our government did pass 15 red tape reduction and government efficiency acts. These acts repealed over 80 outdated statutes and amended well over 200 acts.

We always have had a reputation of working side by side with small business in the province of Ontario and being responsive to the concerns that they have brought forward. We recognize how important it is for them to be competitive, more productive and more efficient.

In the past, we had the Red Tape Commission, and it worked very hard. I think we've already heard that it was so successful that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business recommended establishing a red tape commission at the federal level as well, following the example set by the Ontario PC government. So we have much to be proud of.

But times are becoming difficult, and despite the promises that the Liberals did make in 2003, saying that they would convert the Red Tape Commission to make it an agency specifically devoted to meeting the needs of small business, according to small business in the province, that simply hasn't happened. There seems to have been a lack of a grasp of the vital importance that small business plays in this province.

1420

There was an excellent example that was brought to my attention recently. Representatives from the Ontario Printing and Imaging Association came in to meet with us in our office to discuss the issues affecting their industry. Every single person said that their concerns related specifically to red tape. They indicated that they were completely hampered in their ability to conduct business by this government's refusal to consider the burden it imposed upon Ontario small businesses. One gentleman said he had been forced to wait 18 months to receive his noise approval certificate. This comes at a great cost to his bottom line and has resulted in many lost hours of production. It is these unnecessary regulations, which are having dire consequences for our economy, that we must work to remove.

That's why the bill before us today, entrenching the rights of small business officially in law, is so critically important. The bill will officially recognize the role small

business plays in our province. Our colleague has brought forward a concise and straightforward bill to protect the economy, and if it is passed, which I hope it will be, it will serve as a gentle yet constant reminder to government and bureaucrats that they must at all times consider the impacts of their actions on small businesses. This bill makes good sense.

I commend the member for York–Simcoe for bringing this bill forward, for striving to entrench in law the same principles the Red Tape Commission exemplified in their quest to strengthen Ontario's economy. This bill is straightforward. I know my colleague has done a lot of consultation, and it has been very, very well received by those individuals with whom she has consulted. They're looking forward to passage of the bill today.

This bill will require an annual report from each ministry: details of any reduction in red tape and future plans to reduce the burden. That's important.

Finally, and in conclusion, I simply want to say that this bill that has been brought forward is a message to the people of Ontario. It's a message to small business owners, to aspiring entrepreneurs, to employers and to employees that we take your livelihood and your prosperity seriously. It is, as a result of that, that we in this House want to provide the heart and soul of Ontario's economy with a bill of rights that the people in this province so desperately need at the current time, and deserve.

I would encourage everyone in this House to support the bill that has been put forward by my colleague.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for York–Simcoe, Mrs. Munro, has two minutes for her response.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you to all the members who added to the debate today. I want to recognize the members for Parkdale–High Park, Willowdale, Oxford, London–Fanshawe and Kitchener–Waterloo.

In the time I have, I'd like to suggest that the member for London–Fanshawe needs to get out a bit more and talk to some of the small businesses in his own community.

I specifically talked about protecting human life, human health, the natural environment and so forth to make it clear to everyone that of course we don't look at this as an onslaught of getting rid of regulation. We understand the importance of consumer protection; we understand the importance of a level playing field and that there's consumer confidence in products and services. To suggest anything else is totally irresponsible.

What is, however, important to note is that where a few years ago one page was required to fill in a form, it has now grown into a binder, it now requires a third party endorsement and it now costs \$5,000. That's the kind of thing, the proliferation, that we're talking about.

We know that there are business people who have to look after rules and regulations with regard to liquor, tobacco, the lottery. Several ministries may all descend on their business on the same day. It could be health,

labour, the Ministry of the Environment, finance—and the list goes on. The responsibility in compliance, then, for many pieces of legislation affects so many in this most important part of our economy.

Small business is the engine of our economy. It's the place where young people frequently get their first jobs. It's where local prosperity is instigated. So I would want to add my voice to that which the member for Kitchener–Waterloo said a moment ago: that we as a party understand these challenges and we want to make sure that all aspiring entrepreneurs can enjoy the fruits of their labour in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for Mrs. Munro's ballot item has expired. We'll vote on the ballot item in about 100 minutes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, can I ask you—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Could we have a quorum call? Because the member is not here.

Interjection: There's lots.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Your member is not here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): A quorum has been called.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is present.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I just want to ask, with the indulgence of the House, if Mr. Zimmer would be prepared to proceed with his ballot item at this time?

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm sorry, Speaker, I didn't—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Would you be willing to proceed with your ballot item at this time? We're waiting for Mr. Kwinter, who isn't here.

Mr. David Zimmer: Could we just recess for a minute while I get my papers organized here?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We're going to suspend the House for a few minutes and wait for Mr. Kwinter. The time that we are suspended, up to 12 minutes, will come out of Mr. Kwinter's presentation time. So we're suspended for up to 12 minutes.

The House suspended proceedings from 1428 to 1429.

Mr. Dave Levac: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Let me just call the House back to order.

Mr. Dave Levac: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would seek unanimous consent for Mr. Kwinter's time to be included completely, the 12 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Unfortunately, I respect your request, but the rules are pretty strict on Thursday afternoons, and we can't do that.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: We would agree.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Unfortunately, we can't change the rules. They're cast in stone when it's private members' time. If we were in regular Parliament, unanimous consent could do it.

I would now move on to ballot item number 65.

ONTARIO SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL
ENGINEERS ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR L'ASSOCIATION
DES INGÉNIEURS DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Kwinter moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 148, An Act respecting the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers / Projet de loi 148, Loi concernant l'Association des ingénieurs de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has up to 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Just over a decade ago, Ontario's professional engineers took a hard look at their profession and saw the importance of separating licensure and regulation from advocacy and member services. That is why, in 2000, professional engineers in this province created the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, or OSPE.

Today I would like to discuss Bill 148, An Act respecting the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers. This private member's bill, which I introduced to the Legislature on December 8, 2010, is designed to solidify the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers' position as the advocacy member service body for engineers in Ontario. The bill proposes to formally incorporate OSPE with the statutory authority provided by legislation as the advocacy and member services organization for Ontario's 73,000 licensed engineers. The bill, if passed, will define the mandate and objects that OSPE is to undertake and, in addition, provide for structure and governance of the society in legislation.

The bill does not affect the authority of the PEO, nor does it make any changes in this regard. Its intent is to solidify current arrangements. The bill does not affect OSPE's current structure, mandate or bylaws, and OSPE will continue as a corporation without share capital.

Like other major professions in this province, engineers are self-regulated. Since 1922, engineers have been licensed and regulated by Professional Engineers Ontario. Professional Engineers Ontario is a body that protects the public by ensuring that people who call themselves professional engineers meet specific professional standards. Much the way doctors must pass medical exams and lawyers must pass the bar, engineers must pass exams and live up to strict standards in order to practise engineering and to put "P.Eng." after their name. Indeed, most public-facing professions in this province have regulatory bodies that operate to protect the public interest. Such organizations typically develop standards of professional practice, enforce regulations through licensing and disciplinary processes, and allow the public to launch complaints.

Many professions also have a member interest body, which, as the name suggests, is dedicated to looking after the welfare and concerns of its members. This type of organization is not involved in setting standards of practice or qualification, but rather acts to promote the

interests of its members in the eyes of the public, the government and the profession itself. In the medical field, for example, the College of Physicians and Surgeons protects the public interest, granting licences and carrying out disciplinary actions where needed. The interests of doctors are looked after by the Ontario Medical Association, which lobbies government and speaks to the public on behalf of the profession. Within the legal profession, the Law Society of Upper Canada sets standards for the practice of law and suspends lawyers for unethical practice, and the Ontario Bar Association speaks out on behalf of the profession and also provides member services like workshops and training for lawyers. Both the OMA and the OBA are long-standing organizations, and the public is aware of the distinct role of each.

Since the year 2000, with the creation of OSPE, the engineering profession has followed the same model. Professional Engineers Ontario regulates; the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers advocates. Over the past decade, OSPE has played an important role within the engineering profession and also within the public dialogue.

Shortly after OSPE was formed, the organization conducted research asking the public to note which professions they respected the most. Engineers were the third-most-respected profession in Ontario, behind only doctors and pharmacists. But when OSPE asked the same people, "What is it that engineers do?" they were more uncertain. This lack of public awareness was hurting Ontario. It meant engineers were not as influential as they needed to be when it came to sharing their input on important policy decisions that affect the well-being of all Ontarians.

Here in Ontario, we enjoy an exceptional quality of life. We boast vibrant world-class cities. We benefit from exceptional health care. We enjoy clean, safe drinking water. We are creating thousands of jobs and helping to put Canada on the global map through our innovations in biotechnology, green energy and other knowledge-based sectors. None of this would be possible without the work of engineers. Yes, engineers design state-of-the-art buildings, roads and bridges, but they do so much more. Indeed, our economic strength as a province is directly related to the work that engineers do every day.

This is not just an esoteric discussion of what happens in our labs and manufacturing plants. Hundreds of things that the average person touches in the run of a day are the products of engineering, from the food we eat to the vehicles we drive, from the electricity we use to the myriad devices that we rely on to keep us connected. Engineers make our society run.

The fact that the public does not know how important engineers are has been a challenge for this profession for some time. And it is one of the main reasons why OSPE was created. Engineers know how important their work is, but they must work hard to share that knowledge with the rest of Ontario.

OSPE speaks out on behalf of engineers to governments, to engineering stakeholders, to the public and

within the profession itself. OSPE's role is to listen to the concerns of professional engineers and to advocate on their behalf.

First, the society advocates on behalf of the profession, helping to promote awareness of the tremendous value that engineers bring to society. OSPE works with governments and industry to ensure that the voice of engineers is heard when policies are made and legislation is drafted. It speaks out about the concerns of the profession to the public to make them aware of the importance of the work engineers do. OSPE builds community, and it engages engineers in their profession and professional issues through speaking events, leadership and ongoing communications.

In its short history, OSPE has made significant progress. Following the tragic events in Walkerton, OSPE advocated for changes to the Safe Drinking Water Act. The act now requires a licensed engineer to sign off on drinking water systems, ensuring greater safety and accountability for the people of Ontario. When the provincial government considered removing calculus from the Ontario high school curriculum, it was OSPE that lobbied to keep it in, ensuring that students would have the tools needed to pursue further studies in the types of technologies that represent a substantial part of Ontario's economic future.

More recently, OSPE has become one of the lead voices encouraging our federal government to maintain its commitment to nuclear power, a commitment that will protect knowledge jobs and secure Canada's position as a global innovator in this sector. Currently OSPE has been working with our Ministry of Infrastructure, delivering extensive and valued counsel on the development of Ontario's bold 10-year infrastructure plan. These are activities that have and will continue to deliver immeasurable benefits to the people of Ontario, and they are activities that can only be undertaken effectively by a body dedicated solely to advocacy.

1440

Besides advocacy, OSPE also provides important member services. OSPE publishes research and shares information pertinent to the profession, including fee schedules, salary benchmarking and policy recommendations on a range of subjects from infrastructure to energy. OSPE provides job listings and career planning tools for engineering graduates, for professional engineers looking to make a career transition and for engineers who are newcomers to Canada.

OSPE also provides Ontario's engineering community with valuable opportunities for ongoing professional development, which include technical learning, management workshops and specific courses designed to help engineering graduates pursue the path of licensure and professional practice.

The Ontario Society of Professional Engineers is a unifying organization that acts as a powerful voice for engineers. It is a body that builds community and raises awareness among all Ontarians of the vital contributions that engineers make. The regulator, PEO, can only advo-

cate within the framework of self-regulation. A separate and distinct body with the freedom to dedicate itself to the full scope of advocacy and empowered by legislation will ensure that the voice of professional engineers can be heard on a full spectrum of issues. This legislation is necessary to help policymakers and the public hear the voice of engineers loudly and clearly. I would ask that we get the support of all members of this Legislature to make this happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I want to indicate to my good friend Mr. Kwinter my support for his legislation today.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, I am a proud professional engineer in the province of Ontario, one of 73,000 engineers we have in this province. Of interest is the fact that the engineering profession is the single largest professional group in the province of Ontario by a long shot. I think there are something like 20,000 or 25,000 physicians—medical doctors. You can go on to any other kind of profession, and engineers outstrip other professions by two or three to one. Thank goodness for that, because engineers create wealth. Engineers from across Ontario—we have a proud engineering profession in this province—create a lot of wealth for our province. They are in the innovation business, they are in the implementation business and they are in the business business.

I was very, very happy when, prior to 2000, the engineering profession started to look at advocacy, because I felt that the regulating body, the Professional Engineers of Ontario as they were then and are now, were not adequately representing to the public the wonderful contributions our engineers make to our province.

Engineers from Ontario are known all over the world. We have engineers who go to different countries around the world as consultants, not only to design but to build projects, to advise industries all around the world on how to do things as we have been trained to in this province.

I might add that of all professions, engineers probably were the first profession to embrace new Canadians, immigrants coming to our country who wanted to practise the profession they had learned in another country. They have worked very, very hard to modify their entrance qualifications to become professional engineers, and they have been very successful at bringing many, many new Canadians into the engineering profession in our province. It is an under-known fact that they were leading in terms of inviting new Canadians who were properly qualified to be recognized as engineers in the province of Ontario.

Notwithstanding that we have the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, which does the advocacy part and provides member services to engineers, I still feel that engineers don't toot their horn enough. I often say this when I speak to them from time to time. In my view, they should become much more vocal in political issues. When an environmental issue comes up, I believe they should be commenting on it in the press. I think that they

should be taking the advocacy role to a higher level than it presently is. I think they should be involved in environmental policies that are developed by government. I think they should be out there saying whether or not they believe that the government has done its homework in terms of the background in developing those policies. I think they should question us from time to time as to what we do in this place in terms of making scientific or engineering decisions in our policy decisions, and I have encouraged them from time to time to do that, as we go forward.

This bill, as explained to me by Danny Young, the president of the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, really takes the existing bylaws which they have and codifies them into a statute. The society and President Young feel that this will enhance their opportunity to go forward as an advocacy group for the engineers. I believe that the legislation that my friend has proposed should, in fact, pass and should receive third reading as well in the not-too-far-distant future.

I believe that more young people would be attracted into the engineering profession. If we had many, many more engineers in the province of Ontario who were involved in innovating, creating new science, new ways of building things and new ways of inventing new processes, our economy would grow stronger as we go forward. So I think that the advocacy within the engineering profession is really key to not only the professional group themselves but to the overall economy of our province.

As I said in my opening remarks, I'm proud to be an engineer. I was trained as an engineer before I went on to further studies. When I walk down the street campaigning during the campaign, somebody will say, "What did you do before you were involved in politics?" Sometimes I don't tell them that I practised law. Most times I tell them I was an engineer.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Wise choice.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: And you know what? I think they like the engineer a little bit more than the fact that I practised law as well. I'm proud of both professions, but I have a long string of engineering in my family. My brother's an engineer, my brother-in-law—it goes on and on. I think it runs in the bloodlines.

As I say, I can't be prouder to be an engineer and I urge everybody to support Mr. Kwinter and his bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: This is an easy bill, and it makes it easy because the member from York Centre is such a fine person and a fine Liberal. He's one of the few Liberals I like.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There are a few.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You're quite right. You see, when you say "a few," then people start counting, right? That's true. Holy cow, how many hands have we got?

No, you're quite right, Linda, you're right. Linda is one of my favourites too, and the good doctor behind me. There are so many good people here.

It's just an easy bill, and there are times—I like engineers. I do. On the whole, they're good people.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Even Conservatives?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Exactly. Even my good friend from Carleton–Mississippi Mills. I like him too, as a Conservative and as an engineer.

There are times when you can speak on a bill for a long, long time. This is not one of them. This isn't one of them, because it's simple.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Make it up.

1450

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And it's hard to make it up.

In the year 2000, the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers was created, which has the advocacy function, and the Professional Engineers Ontario have the member services function, and it has been going like that since the year 2000. It's an informal relationship that they've got. They seem to like the functions that both the respective organizations have and they now want to formalize it, make it statutory. God bless. I think it's okay. And I think the member from Parkdale–High Park believes it's okay. She did, in fact, tell me she has a brother who's an engineer. She likes him, and I'd probably like him, too. So I just want to say briefly that the member from Parkdale–High Park supports it. I support it. It's an easy bill to support. Let's get on with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm pleased today to express my support for Bill 148, An Act respecting the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers. I'm really glad that my colleague from York Centre, Mr. Monte Kwinter, has brought this bill to the House. Just to add to it, I have a son, similar to my friend from the PC Party, who is also an engineer but turned lawyer. I think he's proud to be a lawyer more so than an engineer. So there it is.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: He's not in politics, I bet.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: He's out of politics, but you never know where he'll end up.

If Bill 148 is passed, it will provide the much-needed distinction between the regulator of engineers, which is the Professional Engineers Ontario, and the official voice of the engineering profession, the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers.

This particular body was created by engineers in co-operation with the regulator, Professional Engineers Ontario. OSPE has a unique mandate to ensure that the expert voice of professional engineers is heard when policy decisions are made, and rightly so; they should be heard, because engineers, as everyone has said, bring us everything that we use, probably eat and wear on a daily basis. They affect our lives. The more we can do to promote the organization and show them that we respect their profession, I think is important.

The particular bill does not change anything that exists today. Professional Engineers Ontario do their job of certification etc., and this particular organization will continue to do what it has been doing since the year 2000, which is to promote and do advocacy work on

behalf of engineers. It respects a 10-year agreement between the two organizations. As my colleague from Trinity–Spadina just said, all we're doing is putting what I guess is an agreement in principle between the two organizations internally in law, in statute, in the province of Ontario to recognize the two organizations. But as we do that, we help the public in Ontario to recognize the profession in an official way and create that need for this particular organization to receive the respect that they deserve in our community.

As Ontario's population continues to grow, our aging infrastructure is being rebuilt on a daily basis. Things like highways, roads, buildings, drinking water, sewage and power systems are some of the ongoing projects that require new, cost-effective, environmentally friendly alternatives that will ensure Ontario's prosperity and quality of life for decades to come.

Currently, our government is working on the implementation of a 10-year plan for infrastructure renewal and development. Professional engineers in our province will play an increasingly indispensable role in conceiving, developing and managing infrastructure projects and ensuring that our government delivers what the public needs. Increasing emphasis on these priorities creates a significant window to highlight the importance of engineers to the growth and well-being of our province. As the advocacy body representing 73,000 professional engineers in Ontario, the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers has been front and centre on infrastructure for more than a decade.

In October 2010, as part of the Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario, OSPE offered extensive recommendations on policies and priorities for consideration within the province's 10-year plan. They are doing so in order to help advance the province's infrastructure development agenda, while at the same time seeking to maximize job creation, boost prosperity and ensure that Ontario taxpayers realize the best value for their hard-earned dollars with the best standards that are available.

OSPE is continuing to work with the Ontario Ministry of Infrastructure to offer advice and expertise that will yield value for Ontarians. While the regulator is PEO, OSPE does their job of advocacy and will continue to do so.

I'm happy to support my colleague on the other side and support this piece of legislation, and I hope everyone else does so.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's a pleasure to stand and support the bill of the member from York Centre and to reiterate some of the comments that were made.

In introducing the bill, the member for York Centre talked about how engineers were responsible for the development of so many things in our society: cars, roads, a lot of things that make our lives easier. I suppose they're also responsible for the creation of BlackBerrys, those umbilical cords that hold us to our office and hold us to our work no matter where we go. No matter where

we try to escape, we're always brought back by some engineer who developed the BlackBerry and brought it into our society. I'm not sure whether those are always a good thing or not, but nonetheless they're there. If we got little time off before, we get no time off now. So thank you very much to the engineers for that aspect of it.

The member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills pointed out that he was an engineer. One day, someone questioned whether or not he was an engineer. It was pointed out that on the corner of the national art gallery in Ottawa—I believe it's the southeast corner—where the cornerstone was laid, on the etchings on that cornerstone is named one Norman Sterling. So it was assumed that he might have had an engineering degree in order to achieve getting his name placed on that cornerstone. Is that story correct, Mr. Sterling?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: It's close.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's close, he says.

So I guess we have to thank engineers for those things.

I know that there is a direct relationship—those comments might have been in jest, but this is very serious—between the number of graduating engineers in a society and therefore the number of engineers who work within that society and the standard of living that society enjoys. Ontario has, as was pointed out, a very large number of engineers, and we have a very high standard of living. In fact, I'm told that the average person in Ontario lives in the top two percentile of the world's population. If you think about that, that's a very chosen spot. I suppose the direct relationship between having a high number of engineers and degrees in science as well, I'd point out, has helped us to achieve that rather unique and coveted place in the world in which we live. We are truly blessed in this province, and the number of engineers and the number of scientists that we have in this province leads very much to that, along with the wonderful post-secondary school education that we have in this society.

I had a lot of trouble understanding what this bill does, and I'm pleased to hear a number of the members say that this bill doesn't change a thing in Ontario, because that's kind of the conclusion I came to. What it does do, I guess, is to elevate or give more credibility to the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, in presenting them with a piece of legislation that is going through this House, recognizing the fact that they do operate in the province.

1500

They remain a voluntary organization. I think it's very important that the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers is a voluntary organization. Having run a voluntary organization in the past, I think that it's a strong statement as to how well the association does as to the percentage of numbers that they have within their organization. If they provide value to the professional engineers, they will have a high percentage of members in their association. If their value is so-so, they will have a lower number in their association. I understand, although I've been unable to come up with a figure, that the

number of engineers in the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers is very high.

Of course, the Professional Engineers Ontario, the PEO, is a mandatory organization and sets the standards by which engineers operate in this province. I think that's also an extremely important organization, but it's not one that can advocate for engineers. Therein lies the difference, and I think it's an important difference.

I recognize and congratulate the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers for taking on that business of advocating for their profession.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further debate?

Mr. Reza Moridi: As a scientist and engineer, and a member of this House, I am particularly interested in issues around the profession of engineering, energy, innovation and the environment and prosperity. In recent years, these are the issues that have been championed by the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, the advocacy body representing more than 73,000 professional engineers across our province.

I am pleased today to voice my support for Bill 148, An Act respecting the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers. I believe that securing the position of the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers through legislation will benefit the people of Ontario, ensuring that both the public and the policy-makers know exactly who speaks on behalf of engineers, whose input has such a paramount and strong impact on Ontario's economy and well-being.

The society's energy task force has a long history of working closely with the Ontario Ministry of Energy, providing invaluable counsel on operational and environmental issues that impact the citizens of this province. The task force also works to build public awareness of the full range of energy options and to help Ontarians make informed choices about energy use and conservation.

In particular, the society has been a leading voice on the restructuring of Atomic Energy of Canada, or AECL, which will have a major impact on the nuclear industry in Canada and in Ontario. Fuelled by concerns about greenhouse gas emissions, nuclear energy is enjoying a global renaissance. Canada is currently not participating in this renaissance because of the uncertainty of AECL's future.

Today, Canada's Candu nuclear infrastructure supports approximately 60,000 direct jobs in Canada. Approximately 18,000 engineering graduates are employed in Canada's nuclear industry.

The nuclear industry is one with deep roots in Ontario. Since the 1960s, nuclear power has been part of Ontario's energy supply, and currently provides more than half of the power used by Ontarians every day. Moreover, many communities thrive because residents are engaged in high-value, knowledge-based jobs within this sector.

The society has emphasized that, if executed well, the restructuring of AECL will provide significant additional

prosperity for local communities such as Pickering, Darlington and Bruce county, which host AECL facilities, as well as other communities where suppliers are located.

Conversely, the society says that if restructuring is done poorly, it could have very severe economic consequences for those local communities. The society and its members have lobbied the federal government to ensure that the restructuring of AECL is undertaken effectively so that the new entity will be financially healthy, commercially successful and will contribute positively to those local communities.

A July 2010 report released by Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters states that "the refurbishment of nuclear facilities at Bruce and Darlington will create 25,000 jobs in the next decade, injecting \$5 billion annually into Ontario's economy."

Bill 148 will help the society to pursue this cause and many others as the official voice of Ontario's professional engineers.

The public is aware that Professional Engineers Ontario—PEO—acts as a licensing and regulating body for professional engineers and is the go-to organization for complaints and disciplinary procedures.

If passed, Bill 148 will tell the people of Ontario that there's another distinct body—the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers—a body that is free to advocate on behalf of professional engineers, a body that ensures that the voice of engineers is heard on vital issues that affect the citizens in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Let's just quickly recap: Bill 148 is a bill that takes those services provided by engineers and divides them into two parts. The existing body, Professional Engineers Ontario, or PEO, retains member services, and it proposes a body called the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers to take on the functions of advocacy.

This is a day in which we celebrate the contributions of engineering. My colleague from Richmond Hill and I both come out of a science background, so today we're going to tell a self-deprecating story about scientists and engineers. The quote is from US novelist James A. Michener, who says, "Scientists dream about doing great thing; engineers do them."

This indeed will be the century of the engineer, in the renewal of housing, telecommunications, infrastructure, power generation, water, manufacturing, environment and transportation. In fact, we can look to our engineers to take us to new heights in IT, clean technology, life sciences and pharma, all needing the cutting-edge skills that our 73,000 engineers bring to the fore.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? Seeing none, the honourable member for York Centre, Mr. Kwinter, has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I want to thank those who participated in the debate: Norm Sterling, the member from Carleton—Mississippi Mills; Rosario Marchese from Trinity—Spadina; Bas Balkissoon of Scarborough—Rouge

River; Ted Chudleigh from Halton—I should tell you, Ted, that there are 73,000 engineers in Ontario; Reza Moridi of Richmond Hill; and Bob Delaney of Mississauga—Streetsville.

When I was first approached by the engineers, I thought this would be a very easy thing to do, just by sending this particular bill to the committee on regulations and private bills. I was informed by legislative counsel that it can't happen because we're asking something that the act that provides for the Professional Engineers Ontario prohibits them from advocating on behalf of the engineers. So we had to come forward with a separate bill to do that.

Nobody is objecting to it. Since the year 2000, they have been doing that in conjunction with each other. This just regularizes it so that there's legislation that gives them that authority and allows them to be able to do what they have to do, and that is to promote the best interests of the profession.

You've heard from everyone who has spoken to it that engineers are highly regarded. They are absolutely critical to the economic well-being of this province. By passing this bill—and I hope it will get unanimous consent and proceed quickly to the point where it gets third reading—will give them the opportunity to tell their story, which is a great story, and everybody in Ontario is going to benefit from getting that knowledge so they understand exactly what an engineer does and how much they contribute to society.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for this ballot item has expired. We will vote on Mr. Kwinter's bill in about 50 minutes.

1510

REGISTERED HUMAN RESOURCES PROFESSIONALS ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LES PROFESSIONNELS EN RESSOURCES HUMAINES INSCRITS

Mr. Zimmer moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 138, An Act respecting the Human Resources Professionals Association / Projet de loi 138, Loi concernant l'Association des professionnels en ressources humaines.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm very proud to have brought this private member's bill forward. What I propose to do is to speak for a couple of minutes on the purpose, why I brought the bill forward; a couple of minutes outlining the structure of the bill, how the bill will operate legislatively; and, thirdly, a few comments on the support that this bill has developed throughout the province.

On November 23, 2010, Bill 138 was introduced into the Legislature. The act would replace the existing Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario

Act of 1990. As you are aware, HRPA regulates the human resource profession in Ontario and issues the certified human resources professional designation, which is the national standard of excellence in human resource management.

HRPA is committed to advancing the human resources profession to ensure that HR is a full partner in developing and executing organizational strategy in the creation of equitable workplaces. HRPA members have long sought recognition as true professionals. As business practices, economic conditions, workforce composition and employee expectations all become more complex and interrelated, so have the demands on the professionalism of HRPA.

The function of HR professionals now has many of the aspects of a profession, including a representative professional organization, a published code of ethics and professional conduct, benchmark performance standards to ensure professional competence, skill development requirements and, finally, a growing public perception of HR as a profession as a result of the HRPA's efforts to promote HR's essential strategic role as a critical business partner. It is vital that HRPA members have a vehicle to evolve and deliver credible HR management that will create and foster success in Ontario workplaces. I believe this, and I want to see HRPA and its members evolve into a strong, credible tier-1 profession. This is why I brought forward the private member's bill.

All Ontarians are touched by work. It gives us dignity and purpose. It sustains our families. It creates wealth and growth for the province. But how happy, satisfied and safe we are at work depends largely on how organizations implement the various laws that govern the Ontario workplace. The 20,000 members of the Human Resources Professionals Association, or HRPA, are committed to building fair and equitable workplaces for Ontario workers.

Human resource professionals are the bridge between the employee and the employer, ensuring that both parties are aware of their rights and responsibilities under the province's workplace rules and regulations. One way the association has proven this is by voluntarily adopting FARPA, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, as a schedule 1 signatory as testimony to its commitment to the transparent, objective, impartial and fair employment treatment and career opportunities of all Ontarians.

Individually, when a human resource professional joins the association, they agree to abide by a professional code of conduct that commits them to professional competence, legal requirements, dignity in the workplace, balancing interests between employee and employer, confidentiality, conflict-of-interest resolution and professional growth and support of other professions.

Here's a fact, members, that illustrates the professionalism of HRPA members. Last year, HRPA carried out a small research project into the relationship between HRPA membership and the conviction rate under the Employment Standards Act. Between October 2008 and

January 2010, there were 489 convictions for violations of the act. The essential finding was that of these 489 ESA violations, none could be linked to an HRPA member. Although there are many explanations that might explain the findings, it is clear that the presence of HRPA members is linked to fewer workplace issues.

This study is compelling evidence that the regulation of HR professionals is clearly in the public interest, and there's plenty of additional evidence that points to the need for more robust regulation of the human resources profession. Although human resources professionals are employed by organizations, their actions impact all employees. Employees can't choose the HR practitioner they deal with, and there is an imbalance of power between HR professionals and employees. From this perspective, there is simply too much risk for the public good for HR professionals not to be regulated.

For instance, consider confidentiality. Compared to any other professional group in organizations, including accountants and so on, HR professionals have more access to confidential and very personal information about the employee—and the employer, in addition. They know who's on stress leave. They know who's battling an addiction and who's dealing with health issues. We count on their confidentiality to keep personal employee matters private.

As professionals who oversee compensation, there's also a financial impact from an HR practitioner's choices. Given that salaries are usually the biggest line items in an organization's budget, given all the evidence that shows that HR practices have a big impact on an organization's bottom line, an incompetent or an unethical HR professional can do just as much, if not more, financial damage to an organization as a CA, a CGA, a CMA, a lawyer or any other professional. The potential for incompetent or incapacitated HR professionals to do harm to employees, to employers, to clients and to society is at least as great as it is for accountants.

While regulating HR professionals is clearly in the interests of employees, Bill 138 has a lot to offer Ontario business, too. As business practices, economic conditions, workforce demographics and employee expectations all become more complex, HR professionals are at the centre of this rapid change. HRPA and its members make significant contributions to the productivity and success of the business community and organizations of all types. HRPA members possess a high level of professionalism and provide human capital management know-how that creates huge value for organizations that employ them.

There's a reason why I have been making comparisons with Ontario's three main accounting bodies. The proposed Registered Human Resources Professionals Act shares some similarities with the Certified Management Accountants Act. The idea is not that HR professionals are just like accountants, but that they are like accountants in terms of the kind of regulatory legislation that would best fit the profession. Like accountants, human resources professionals practise in a world of business.

They include a mix of practitioners that work as employees and as independent consultants. They perform roles that are mission-critical for organizations. They perform a role that requires high personal integrity. It's for these reasons that the act is very similar to the accountancy act, and it makes sense.

Let me speak briefly, outlining how the legislation works. First of all, Bill 138 does not introduce regulation to the HR profession in Ontario. This was, in fact, accomplished 20 years ago by the human resources professionals act, 1990. Most of the powers included in Bill 138 already exist in the current legislation. Since receiving the 1990 act, HRPA has regulated the HR profession by setting standards of practice to protect the public interest. In sum, its regulatory framework seeks to ensure that HR professionals are competent in their work and behave in an ethical manner.

1520

HRPA determines the right to set standards on who may enter the profession, the right to set standards of practice for those working in the profession, the right to create rules for when and how members may be removed from the profession, the power to regulate the practice of members, the power to establish professional liability insurance requirements, the power to establish requirements for membership and certification, and the power to discipline members.

Bill 138 would provide more regulatory tools for HRPA to better protect the public. This is acknowledged when the public becomes aware of the fact that there are trained professionals in the field who follow appropriate standards. The continuing professional development of its members provides reassurance that the public and people are treated fairly and legally by practitioners. The public will feel confident that its interests are being protected.

There are also other checks and balances for the public and the members of HRPA. Conduct proceedings would need to be up to the standards of the Statutory Powers Procedure Act. HRPA would be required to abide by the fair registration practices code. The application of powers is subject to the bylaws, which must be ratified by the general membership of the association.

Another distinction would be that as a tier 1 profession, the board would include three individuals who are not members of the profession or a self-regulating human resources body and who are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor. These board members would, in effect, represent the public interest and would, along with the board's elected members, be charged with implementing the regulatory regime.

To conclude, let me say a couple of words about the support the bill has garnered. HRPA sought an independent expert opinion on the bill from a distinguished lawyer. His name is Mr. Steineke. He believes that if Bill 138 is passed, it will create a modern professional regulation statute that addresses many of the gaps found in current private statutes. Overall provisions are similar to those found in other statutes regulating professions. If anything, the provisions provide greater safeguards.

Bill 138 has numerous advantages for the public and its members. Bill 138 has received strong support from the business community and allied professional groups, including the Retail Council of Canada, the Canadian employee regulation council, the Certified General Accountants and many other organizations that feel strongly about the bill. CGA Ontario president Doug Brooks wrote the Premier last summer in support of the bill.

Ultimately, protection of the public is what this bill is all about. That's why I brought this bill forward. That's why I encourage my colleagues to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to join the debate today. What we're doing here, of course, is looking at Bill 138, the Registered Human Resources Professionals Act, which was introduced on November 23, 2010. If this legislation were to be passed, it would replace the existing Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario Act, 1990.

We're talking about an association that I believe currently has about 20,000 members and became a self-regulating professional association under statutory authority granted by the Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario Act, 1990, and since then has developed in scope, sophistication and responsibility to match the remarkable development and influence of the human resources profession.

I'm going to be making some remarks on behalf of my colleague the member for Whitby–Oshawa, who wanted to speak today but wasn't able to be here. Before I commence with her remarks, I want to just put on the record that, personally, I have received emails both in support of and in opposition to Bill 138. I would say to you that the numbers are probably about equal.

It's important to know that obviously, as a member of the opposition, it's my obligation to make sure that all of the points of view regarding legislation are placed on the table. Here's an example of one letter I received, an email: "I urge you to vote against this proposed bill when it comes up for second reading." The person goes on to state, as many of them did, that they have two primary concerns: Number one is the content of the bill and number two is the process that has been undertaken in communicating this bill to the membership and the lack of consultation. It's important that those concerns, which have been shared, I know, with other members of this Legislature, be put on the public record.

I will go now to deal with the comments that were given to me by my colleague the member for Whitby–Oshawa. She states the following:

She is pleased to support Bill 138. She feels it has much to offer Ontario business. She goes on to say, "Quite simply, Bill 138 is good for employers in the province of Ontario.

"Ontario businesses are in the midst of great change as business practices, economic conditions and workforce demographics and labour law all become more complex

and interrelated. And HR professionals are at the centre of this rapid change.

"HRPA members make huge contributions to the success and productivity of the business community and organizations of all types. And, as regulated professionals, HRPAs members specifically possess a high level of professionalism and human capital management knowledge that creates enormous value for the organizations that employ them."

She continues by saying, "HR professionals provide value by:

"(1) identifying workforce trends and forecast changes before they happen;

"(2) discovering potential problems before they materialize and adversely impact the organization;

"(3) identifying key talent for retention and leadership development; and

"(4) forecasting changes in human capital resources—within the organization and in the changing economic environment.

"To sum up their key role in Ontario organizations, HR professionals 'put the right people in the right place at the right time.'"

She then goes on to say: "A regulated HR profession has big upsides for Ontario business. Regulated HR professionals commit to career-long learning that keeps them at the leading edge of human capital management—and human resources, or people, as any business person knows, is an organization's greatest competitive advantage.

"They also commit to an HR-specific code of professional conduct. These rules provide assurance to both employers and employees that there are clear guidelines defining the professional conduct of all HRPAs members. The rules cover areas including:

"—competence;

"—legal requirements;

"—dignity in the workplace;

"—balancing interests;

"—confidentiality;

"—conflict of interest; and

"—professional growth and support of other professionals.

"Bill 138 will prevent the occasions where employers and clients of a practitioner try to pressure the practitioner to cut corners or do something that is unethical. It makes an enormous difference when a statutory regulatory body is able to provide information to the practitioner (or even, in some cases, the employer or the client directly) that such conduct is not permitted.

"Preventing that conduct will save employers money and resources in the long run.

"Some have argued that Bill 138 will be a cost burden to employers." My colleague goes on to say, "This is false.

"In regard to cost burden to members and their employers, the thing to keep in mind is that the membership in HRPAs is voluntary and the CHRP designation is voluntary. Nothing forces HR professionals to be mem-

bers of the association and nothing forces HR professionals to obtain the CHRP designation. It is a fact that, on the whole, designated accountants command better remuneration than bookkeepers. Is that because employers and clients are forced to employ designated accountants? No, it is because the marketplace puts more value on designated accountants than bookkeepers.

1530

“In the 20 years it has been in existence, the CHRP has been very successful in demonstrating its value. If anything, Bill 138 will increase the value of the CHRP designation.

“Regulated HR professionals ensure employees are full partners in this process by acting as advocate and change mentors. With their knowledge about and advocacy of people, a regulated HR professional provides expertise in creating work environments in which people are motivated and fully contributing members.

“HR professionals are now often seen as ‘champions of change’ as organizations continually assess and seek to increase their professional effectiveness. They know how to link this change to the strategic needs of the organization while getting employees onside.”

She wanted to make some specific comments at this point in time about human resource professionals being change agents with respect to the employment of people with disabilities. She says: “There are many people in Ontario who are able to work but are unable to find work because of attitudes about their disability.

“This issue was recently dealt with by the all-party Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. Recommendation number 15 called upon a new agency, Mental Health and Addictions Ontario, to work with employers and community-based service providers on strategies to increase employment opportunities and supports for people with mental illnesses and addictions. The report noted that mental health and addictions issues in the workplace are a tremendous direct and indirect cost to the Canadian economy, but stated that: ‘Employers with an understanding of mental health and addictions can provide an environment within which employees dealing with those issues are more likely to succeed and thrive. That understanding includes knowing how to hire prospective employees, how to accommodate the needs of both new and existing workers, and how to promote a healthy workplace. There could be an untapped supply of skilled workers waiting for the opportunity to enter or re-enter the job market with the appropriate supports.

“‘Training and employment supports (e.g., resumé writing, job interview techniques and job placements) ease reintegration into society and help in finding and retaining meaningful work. A job can do much to improve a person’s financial situation, lessen their dependence on social assistance and, most importantly, bolster self-esteem at a critical point on the road to recovery.’

“So,” she says, “It’s clear that human resource professionals are critical for the success of this important transformation in both the workplace and in our society.”

I would conclude by quoting again from the comments she has left with me: “A regulated HR professional with the strength of the profession as a backdrop can assume the role of objective investigator in instances of management-employee discord or appealing management decisions or disciplining inappropriate employee behaviour.

“Between HRPAs’ commitment to professional excellence, their unique role as a bridge between employees and employers, and their key business role in getting the right people in the right place at the right time, I think,” says the member for Whitby–Oshawa, “Bill 138 is a win-win for everyone—government, workers and Ontario’s employers.”

Those are the comments that I was asked to put on the record by the member for Whitby–Oshawa. I would conclude simply by referring to the point I made when I began. That was that I had received, and I know other people had received, emails expressing strong support for the bill. But of course, we also did receive emails that had grave reservations about the bill moving forward at the pace that it was without adequate consultation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It’s always a privilege to rise in this House to represent my constituents and to represent constituents in this particular industry. I have to say that, along with the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, I’ve received the same responses from my constituents and constituents in the industry, both for and against this bill. At first blush, this seems like a no-brainer. It looks like the bill that we just passed for the engineering association, somewhat along the same lines: a private bill that is now going to be made public and pass publicly.

What I’d like to do is I’m going to go over the arguments for, and I’m going to go over some of the argument against, which I don’t think we’ve heard yet in this debate. Suffice to say, it’s a private members’ bill, which is to say that, unless it comes back as a government bill—touch wood—it doesn’t have a lot of chance of passing in this session. What we’re suggesting as New Democrats is that this bill be heard, that you have hearings, that you have deputations, because clearly there are voices who would like to speak to this bill that are far more informed about the field of HR than we are in this House.

Let’s start with the arguments for, most of which you’ve already heard, so I’m going to be brief on those—not because they may not have merit but because we’ve already heard them.

This bill, as I said, makes a private act into a public act. It addresses some of the gaps that exist in the current act and brings the regulatory context up to date. It allows HR professionals to be on the same tier as other professions, notably accountants. It increases, perhaps, the value and career opportunities for those in the profession. It gives added weight to the CHRP designation. The regulatory powers extend only to the members; as has been pointed out, nothing in Bill 138 forces somebody into these regulatory acts unless they choose to do so.

Also, it gives some protection. Professional regulation protects the public. When professionals in independent practice go bankrupt, they can leave clients high and dry, hence the necessity for not only the designations and organization in this field but in all fields. You've heard those expanded upon.

Now I want to take a little bit of the House's time to go over the arguments that I've heard, also from constituents who are HR professionals who are concerned, about what some of the problems are. Certainly, many of them came to me and spoke about how this bill might be detrimental to their profession and to the companies and organizations they represent.

Their concerns circulate, mainly and mostly, around one key issue, and that is the lack of transparency and consultation. My goodness, if there's one thing we've all learned in this House with our own constituents, in our own parties and in our own lives, it's that when you want to make changes, you want to get many stakeholders together, have informed discussion, be transparent, give everybody a chance to speak, and then you move—not before. Clearly, it seems to me, from what I have received from constituents, that that hasn't happened here, hence another reason why we need these hearings and deputations.

Again, what I've heard from them is this: There's been inadequate debate among their members. They believe that the HRP AO has failed to engage, consult and listen to its members. Of the 29 chapter presidents and the board of directors who represent the 18,000-plus members, they say that the 29 chapter presidents and the board of directors were never consulted on the specifics of this bill at any time and were never asked for their input. That's a problem.

It's also a problem—and this was brought to our attention—that 1,000 members have petitioned against the bill. When you have 18,000 members and one in 18 petitions against the bill, I think we need to listen to that voice. I think we need to have that voice at the table in discussions, pure and simple.

Notably, the membership is asking that the bill not be rushed. Even those dissenting, I have to say, are not asking that this bill not pass in one day, but they are saying, "Let's have transparency and discussion."

The bill allows membership to be regulated. Almost 20% of the membership is made up of students. This is one concern raised by constituents: Do students really need to be regulated?

It's argued by the HRP A that professional regulation protects the public; for example, in bankruptcy cases. But again, there has been no data brought forward that has shown that it could be harmed or not harmed. Again, further consultation is needed.

1540

Also—and this is something that really sticks in my mind; this raises a red flag to me. The Society for Human Resource Management currently has a legal dispute with HRP AO over the use of one of the designations: "senior human resources professional." So there's another body

out there that has problems with some of the designations and what constitutes a designation. Again, this is far from being like the bill we just passed so handily for the engineers, where there seemed to be real accord on what was necessary. Clearly, there's not real accord.

To make matters more complicated, listen to this—and those who are listening at home, many, many more than are in this place today, will ring with this, I'm sure, even if they know nothing about the human resources profession. On November 29, the HRP AO board of directors held a meeting, and the Toronto board agreed to fully comply with the new chapter bylaws proposed by HRP AO. Subsequent to this agreement, the HRP AO board of directors and CEO demanded that they sign a document that would take away their citizens' rights to express their concerns about this bill to any government official or to their members.

Now, I'm not a lawyer, but it sounds illegal to me. It certainly sounds coercive to me and it certainly sounds like a cause of concern within the context of this organization.

This is a problem. Any member who refused to sign would be removed from their position immediately. Carmine Domanico, one of the directors, refused to sign and was subsequently removed from his position. The other 11 board members refused to sign and were removed from their positions. The charges have yet to be proved.

Friends, colleagues, we've got some problems here. Before we weigh in as a legislative body, saying that we want to give even an imprimatur to the existing powers, or in a public way—remember, we're doing this in a public way—to really weigh in and give them potentially more power than they already have, I suspect that we need to hear from some of those concerned in at least that case, give them their day in court and their day before us to hear from them. It makes me and it makes us, in the New Democratic Party, a little loath to jump in and say, "Oh, this is a wonderful thing," if all of these problems are out there. Luckily the legislative process allows for this and, luckily, because it is a private member's bill and not a government bill, it allows for this.

I wanted to take the few remaining moments I have and explain to the public, for whom this place is often full of arcane rules and regulations that don't make a lot of sense, exactly what will happen from here, one thinks. As a private member's bill, it may or may not get committee time. As a private member's bill, it may or may not have hearings. As a private member's bill, its chances of actually being passed are pretty remote, even for a Liberal government backbencher.

For those who have concerns on either side, either they think that this should pass immediately, or those who have concerns about it on the other side and think it should never pass, you will have your day in court. You will have your day, I hope, to stand up and witness to your concerns before committee before this ever comes to fruition. I want to assure both sides about that and assure both sides that it probably won't happen this time around.

Even more to the point, you'll have a chance to voice your opinion to your candidates, if you are in the human resources field, leading up to the next election on October 6. I would suspect and suggest that if you are an HR professional and you feel strongly one way or the other about this bill, that's exactly what you should do: You should talk to your member of provincial Parliament or candidates who are running against them. Make your case heard. Be at all-candidates meetings; be very clear about what you think so that they have some basis upon which to judge and so that, dependent on who's in government and who's sitting over there after October 6—it may very well look very different—that case will then be brought forward, and certainly with more nuance than we're seeing this afternoon.

"No fear. It's not going to happen overnight" is basically what I'm saying—or maybe "Fears, it's not going to happen overnight," depending on what side you're on on this issue. Either way, I think it's a good thing, because from what we've heard in my office, we need further debate on this. From what I've heard in my office, we need to hear both sides on this and we need to at least allow those voices to be heard. Again, it's not our area of expertise. In a case like that, it's even more important to hear the experts from both sides weigh in.

So that's what we're going to do. We're going to kind of sit this one out as New Democrats. The government has power; I'm sure it will pass. But I just want to assure people that it doesn't mean much. If it passes in this House this afternoon, it doesn't mean much. What it does mean is that everyone out there who's opposed to this—and everyone who's in favour of it, for that matter—needs to let their voice be heard by their MPPs, needs to demand that it go no further and certainly that it not come back as a government bill, because then we're in real trouble if you're opposed to this bill. If it goes forward anywhere, it should go to committee and have deputations and hearings. That's what we're proposing. That's what we need.

That's what we have to say on this. It's good to hear all voices. I hope I've been able to do them some justice. As I say, we're sitting on our hands on this one, letting it go. Government is going to weigh in and make it pass.

I certainly suggest that if you have concerns about this bill, speak directly to the corner office. We know that nothing happens in this place without the say-so of Dalton McGuinty, the Premier. We all know that; we just don't say it too often. If you have real concerns about this, please send your emails to him, make your concerns heard and demand that either way—I think, to be fair to either side of this issue, we need committee hearings, and we need not to rush on implementing anything that is certainly seen as being this controversial in its own field. Good luck, everyone.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm pleased and honoured to enter the debate on Bill 138, the Registered Human Resources Professionals Act, 2011.

I'm going to be different from the member opposite. I'm going to be more positive. I'm going to look at the glass as half full instead of half empty because—you know what?—in the end, it's a private member's bill. I want to commend the member from Willowdale for always bringing such important issues to the House to be debated. He knows, as a lawyer, that a lot of technical issues have to be fixed, have to be enhanced to support and serve the people of Ontario.

He's asking in this bill to replace the private act of 1990 with a public bill, Bill 138. Like the member opposite, I have received a lot of messages from many different constituents too—some with and some against.

As you know and the member knows very well, no bill goes right away and becomes a law. The bill has to be debated in this place, and then, if it passes second reading, it goes to the committee. When it goes to the committee, we're going to listen to a lot of stakeholders from across the province, a lot of interested people, a lot of people for and against who are going to voice their concern. We've got to listen to them in order to enhance the bill and make it applicable for all the people of Ontario.

But in the end, my colleague from Willowdale brought such an important issue, because the human resources professionals are more than 20,000 members across Ontario. They deal with at least two million employees across the province, almost 800,000 businesses, and they know exactly what's going on in those businesses. They know about the employers, they know about the employees, and they know all the secrets. They know about every detail. I think it's in our own interest as a government to protect the people of Ontario, to regulate this industry and to make professional organizations and also enhance the ability to protect the citizens of this province. That's what my colleague is trying to do: bring some kind of enhancement to an act passed almost 20 or 21 years ago. As you know, the technology is enhanced, life has changed, and many different professional systems came in our lives like computer systems, iPads, many different pieces of technology. So I think it's very important to enhance it and make it public instead of keeping it private, for the sake of the protection of the people of Ontario.

To the member opposite, I know that the people have a right to voice their concern, but to make it a political bill, to make it an election issue, as you mentioned, and the people, when you knock on the doors, you have to ask them if they support this or not support this—I think the people of Ontario are thinking about bigger things and important things. They're especially thinking about the economy, creating more jobs, green energy, if they have lights on or not, how they can cope with the future and find a job for the future generations, how we can enhance our education system and how we can keep our health care in the public domain and accessible for all.

1550

Also, this bill affects every profession: health care, education, companies, factories and many places that use

human resources. Those human resources department professionals determine what kind of jobs we can create. They oversee the number of jobs that we have and the quality of the jobs. They know details about all the employees, their qualifications, and their problems, if they have any. That's why they are most able to have access to private information about millions of people in Ontario.

I want to commend my colleague for bringing such an important issue to us to be debated in this place. I hope this bill passes and will go to committee and the committee, hopefully, will discuss this bill more and invite all stakeholders and people who have any concerns about this issue to come forward, voice their concerns, advise us on how to fix it and make it applicable and good for all people in Ontario.

I read this bill, and I think it's very technical. I received so many different emails. I was reading them a few minutes ago before I came to the House to see what I was going to say when I stood up in my place to speak about this bill.

I want to talk to all the people who sent me emails. I want to thank you very much for advising me and giving me your input and voicing your concern. When you voice your concern to me and educate me about your concerns, at least I know exactly what's going on outside this chamber. It will also give me the ability to use my judgment in order to support the people of Ontario.

I think it's important to bring such important things to the House to be debated and to listen to all the concerns from both sides of the House. In the end, I want to say that our aim and goal is to strengthen the ability of the people of Ontario, give them the power and comfort they need and create an environment to create more jobs and to maintain the jobs we have in the province. Human resource professionals play a pivotal role in creating and maintaining jobs and in choosing the best of the best of the people of Ontario to occupy those jobs.

Again, thank you very much for allowing me to speak. I want to congratulate my colleague for bringing such an important issue to us. I'm saying publicly that I'm going to support it to pass second reading. I'm also recommending that it go to committee to be debated more, to listen to many stakeholders to strengthen it and to give it a chance to pass as a law in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a pleasure to rise to speak to this particular piece of legislation brought forth by a member, my colleague the member from Willowdale, who has a long and enviable tradition in this House of bringing forward well-thought-through, progressive, sensible proposed pieces of legislation. This is certainly one of them.

I think it's worth starting with a bit of a perspective. We're talking about a profession that, in its roots, evolved from basically the boss depending upon his or her personal intuition in hiring people to progressing through the function of what was called, as many of us

were growing up, personnel. The function evolved into a profession. It was a profession that had a set of core principles and that used a recognizable and, more importantly, teachable body of knowledge, that governed itself through recognized and uniform standards and that moved forward through the evolution and the leadership of its peers. That's where we are today.

The profession became such in the early 1990s. I believe it was 1990 that its first act was passed. In Ontario, it touched that plateau of maturity in being recognized as a profession that was called "human resources." Today in Ontario, some 20,000 people earn a living as human resources professionals.

Bill 138 builds on the success of the human resources profession. As their act in 1990 brought the personnel function into the 20th century as the human resources profession, so too Bill 138 brings the human resources profession into the 21st century through being able to enhance such things as the setting of standards; the enforcement of those standards; the service and certification of members—certainly you've heard of the CHRP designation; providing a means of redress for members, employees, employers and the general public; and giving the profession the tools and methods of such professionals as doctors, accountants, lawyers and so on.

So, I think, a few words here to say what it is that we're trying to do. This act applies to members of the Human Resources Professionals Association only, not those who wish to say that they're out there consulting in the practice of personnel, staffing or whatever. It will not affect the transferability of the CHRP designation for members of the HRP. It won't increase dues or costs. Most of what's in there, the act merely clarifies. These are functions that are largely done today.

This is a piece of legislation influenced by a great deal of homework and consultation. There were some 40-plus communications efforts—articles, newsletters, chapter visits and so on and so forth—over the past three years. The profession sought independent expert legal opinions and came to a conclusion that the proposals are, in fact, good for their members, good for their employers and good for the general public. This empowers the Human Resources Professionals Association to advance in scope, sophistication and responsibility and meet the organization-wide challenges of the 21st century, where human capital is more strategic, in many cases, than financial capital.

We need skilled HR professionals who work within a framework of rules and regulations that they don't get in their corporate environments. We need them to bring to the organization, its stakeholders and the people affected by what the organization does the full range of expertise that they acquire and use, in such areas as setting missions and goals, setting strategies, measuring organizational effectiveness, matching staffing needs to the available labour pool, sourcing strategic skills for the organization, retaining key employees, coming up with a fair framework of compensation and full and proper costing, both present and future. These are all things that HR people do.

Training and development, for example, in the IT sector: One assumes that it takes between 10 and 20 days a year just to stay even in your field. In most knowledge work today, that function of training, development and employee retention is key, because your primary assets are the people who walk out the door on Friday afternoon and go home for the weekend. You've got to have them managed, and managed well, and that's what the HRP does. You can't waste people, time and money; you have to manage them, and that's what the HRP does. Those are the tools and techniques that this act enables them to advance in sophistication and to enforce, to ensure that in the future, HR professionals are getting the best possible association they can get.

So, good for the Human Resources Professionals Association. They're providing for the profession such functions as networking, leadership and management development, the evolution of a common body of standards and management of that all-important CHRP designation. They're giving people a chance to discuss the ideas, to share some of their thoughts and, basically, as HR professionals, to play a role in advancing their profession, their company, their skills and the people whose careers they affect so deeply; managing them with the best possible tools and techniques and ensuring that, here in Ontario and here in Canada, our organizations manage human resources as effectively as we possibly can.

What we've done here is to empower the Human Resources Professionals Association with a world-class regulatory framework. Good for them. Go forward, HR people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The honourable member for Willowdale has two minutes for his response.

Mr. David Zimmer: I just want to address this business of the petition in objection to it. The petition was signed by about 800 people. Of those 800 people, approximately only 420 signatories were members of HRP. The total membership of HRP is 20,000. I can tell you that there are 28 or 29 chapters of the association in Ontario, and 83% of those 28 or 29 chapters support this matter. That 83% represents almost 20,000 members.

With respect to the consultation, I have a list here of consultations going back, starting in February 2008 and going right up—the most recent was February 18, 2011, last week, in the Kingston, Quinte, Northumberland, Brockville and Peterborough chapters. The consultations include website consultations; two presentations at the AGM of the association, one in 2009 and one in 2010; various webinars; and other consultation vehicles. I have the titles of each of the consultation meetings.

1600

With respect, let me just put this in some context. If this bill is passed, it's going to create in Ontario one of the best employer-employee labour relations relationships in the world. That's good for Ontario, because that makes Ontario a good place for companies to set up shop and employ people. It will attract business. It will keep

business here in Ontario. This is good for the economy of Ontario. We want to have the best employer-employee relationship model in the world.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

SMALL BUSINESS
BILL OF RIGHTS, 2011

CHARTRE DES DROITS DES PETITES
ENTREPRISES DE 2011

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will first deal with ballot item number 64, standing in the name of Mrs. Munro. I'd ask members to take their seats.

Mrs. Munro has moved second reading of Bill 152, An Act to enact a Bill of Rights for small business.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mrs. Munro.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'd ask that this be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Agreed that the bill be referred to the finance committee? Agreed. So ordered.

ONTARIO SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL
ENGINEERS ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR L'ASSOCIATION
DES INGÉNIEURS DE L'ONTARIO

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 65, standing in the name of Mr. Kwinter.

Mr. Kwinter has moved second reading of Bill 148, An Act respecting the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Kwinter.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I ask that it be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Agreed? So ordered.

REGISTERED HUMAN RESOURCES
PROFESSIONALS ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LES PROFESSIONNELS
EN RESSOURCES HUMAINES INSCRITS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 66, standing in the name of Mr. Zimmer.

Mr. Zimmer has moved second reading of Bill 138, An Act respecting the Human Resources Professionals Association.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Zimmer.

Mr. David Zimmer: I would ask that this be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Referred to the general government committee? Agreed? So ordered.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now call orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOOD GOVERNMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LA SAINE GESTION PUBLIQUE

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 6, 2010, on the motion for third reading of Bill 110, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts / Projet de loi 110, Loi visant à promouvoir

une saine gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Seeing none, on December 1, 2010, Mrs. Smith moved third reading of Bill 110, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

I've been given a deferral slip. Pursuant to standing order 28(h), Mr. Leal has requested that the vote on third reading of Bill 110, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts, be deferred until deferred votes on Monday, March 7, 2011. So ordered.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Orders of the day.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1605.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|---|---|---|
| Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB) | Hamilton Mountain | Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées |
| Albanese, Laura (LIB) | York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston | |
| Arnott, Ted (PC) | Wellington–Halton Hills | Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle |
| Arthurs, Wayne (LIB) | Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est | |
| Bailey, Robert (PC) | Sarnia–Lambton | |
| Balkissoon, Bas (LIB) | Scarborough–Rouge River | |
| Barrett, Toby (PC) | Haldimand–Norfolk | |
| Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB) | Sudbury | Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement |
| Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB) | London West / London-Ouest | Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones |
| Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB) | Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest | |
| Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB) | Scarborough–Guildwood | Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport |
| Bisson, Gilles (NDP) | Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James | |
| Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB) | St. Catharines | Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels |
| Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB) | Etobicoke–Lakeshore | Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine |
| Brown, Michael A. (LIB) | Algoma–Manitoulin | |
| Brownell, Jim (LIB) | Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry | |
| Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB) | Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre | |
| Caplan, David (LIB) | Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est | |
| Carroll, P.C., Hon. / L'hon. Aileen (LIB) | Barrie | |
| Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB) | Markham–Unionville | Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture |
| Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB) | Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean | Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure |
| Chudleigh, Ted (PC) | Halton | |
| Clark, Steve (PC) | Leeds–Grenville | |
| Colle, Mike (LIB) | Eglinton–Lawrence | |
| Craitor, Kim (LIB) | Niagara Falls | |
| Crozier, Bruce (LIB) | Essex | Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président |
| Delaney, Bob (LIB) | Mississauga–Streetsville | |
| Dhillon, Vic (LIB) | Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest | |
| Dickson, Joe (LIB) | Ajax–Pickering | |
| DiNovo, Cheri (NDP) | Parkdale–High Park | Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB) | Prince Edward–Hastings | Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation |
| Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB) | Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre | Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|---|---|---|
| Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB) | Windsor–Tecumseh | Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances |
| Dunlop, Garfield (PC) Elliott, Christine (PC) | Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord Whitby–Oshawa | Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle |
| Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB) Fonseca, Peter (LIB) | Oakville Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville | |
| Gélinas, France (NDP) | Nickel Belt | |
| Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB) | Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles | Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs |
| Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB) | Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord | Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts |
| Hampton, Howard (NDP) Hardeman, Ernie (PC) | Kenora–Rainy River Oxford | Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle |
| Hillier, Randy (PC) | Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington | |
| Horwath, Andrea (NDP) | Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre | Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario |
| Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB) | St. Paul's | Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration |
| Hoy, Pat (LIB) Hudak, Tim (PC) | Chatham–Kent–Essex Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook | Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario |
| Jaczek, Helena (LIB) | Oak Ridges–Markham | |
| Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB) | Brampton–Springdale | Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles |
| Johnson, Rick (LIB) | Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock | |
| Jones, Sylvia (PC) | Dufferin–Caledon | |
| Klees, Frank (PC) | Newmarket–Aurora | |
| Kormos, Peter (NDP) | Welland | Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu |
| Kular, Kuldip (LIB) | Bramalea–Gore–Malton | |
| Kwinter, Monte (LIB) | York Centre / York-Centre | |
| Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB) | Glengarry–Prescott–Russell | |
| Leal, Jeff (LIB) | Peterborough | |
| Levac, Dave (LIB) | Brant | |
| MacLeod, Lisa (PC) | Nepean–Carleton | |
| Mangat, Amrit (LIB) | Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud | |
| Marchese, Rosario (NDP) | Trinity–Spadina | |
| Martiniuk, Gerry (PC) | Cambridge | |
| Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB) | London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord | Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée |
| Mauro, Bill (LIB) | Thunder Bay–Atikokan | |
| McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB) | Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud | Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario |
| McMeekin, Ted (LIB) | Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale | |
| McNeely, Phil (LIB) | Ottawa–Orléans | |
| Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB) | Ottawa–Vanier | Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones |
| Miller, Norm (PC) | Parry Sound–Muskoka | |
| Miller, Paul (NDP) | Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek | |
| Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB) | Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre | Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités |
| Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB) | Huron–Bruce | Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--|--|--|
| Moridi, Reza (LIB) Munro, Julia (PC) | Richmond Hill York–Simcoe | Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Murdoch, Bill (PC) Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB) | Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre | Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation |
| Naqvi, Yasir (LIB) O'Toole, John (PC) Oraziotti, David (LIB) Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC) Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB) Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB) Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB) | Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre Durham Sault Ste. Marie Oshawa Kitchener–Conestoga Elgin–Middlesex–London Scarborough–Agincourt | Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement |
| Prue, Michael (NDP) Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB) | Beaches–East York Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest | Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce |
| Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB) Ramal, Khalil (LIB) Ramsay, David (LIB) Rinaldi, Lou (LIB) Ruprecht, Tony (LIB) Sandals, Liz (LIB) Savoline, Joyce (PC) Sergio, Mario (LIB) Shurman, Peter (PC) Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB) | Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord London–Fanshawe Timiskaming–Cochrane Northumberland–Quinte West Davenport Guelph Burlington York West / York-Ouest Thornhill Nipissing | Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement |
| Sorbara, Greg (LIB) Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB) Sterling, Norman W. (PC) Tabuns, Peter (NDP) | Vaughan Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud Carleton–Mississippi Mills Toronto–Danforth | Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu |
| Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB) | Mississauga–Erindale | Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux |
| Van Bommel, Maria (LIB) Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB) Wilson, Jim (PC) | Lambton–Kent–Middlesex Perth–Wellington Simcoe–Grey | Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée |
| Witmer, Elizabeth (PC) Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB) Yakabuski, John (PC) | Kitchener–Waterloo Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke | Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle |
| Zimmer, David (LIB) | Willowdale | |

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Kim Craitor, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Peter Fonseca
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Toby Barrett
Bob Delaney, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Helena Jaczek
Norm Miller, Leeanna Pendergast
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Oraziotti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jim Brownell
Jim Brownell, Steve Clark
Kuldip Kular, Dave Levac
Amrit Mangat, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Oraziotti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Donna H. Cansfield, Aileen Carroll, P.C.
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Lisa MacLeod, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Reza Moridi
Bas Balkissoon, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Ted Chudleigh, Mike Colle
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Reza Moridi, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Joe Dickson
Sylvia Jones, Amrit Mangat
Norm Miller, Yasir Naqvi
Michael Prue, Mario Sergio
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
Wayne Arthurs, Aileen Carroll, P.C.
France Gélinas, Jerry J. Ouellette
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Peter Shurman, Norman W. Sterling
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
David Caplan, Kim Craitor
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Select Committee on the proposed transaction of the TMX
Group and the London Stock Exchange Group / Comité
spécial sur la transaction proposée entre le Groupe TMX et le
London Stock Exchange Group**

Chair / Président: Gerry Phillips
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Frank Klees
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Gilles Bisson, Michael A. Brown
Frank Klees, Gerry Phillips
Peter Shurman, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Thursday 3 March 2011 / Jeudi 3 mars 2011

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Time allocation

| | |
|------------------------|------|
| Mr. Michael Prue | 4439 |
| Vote deferred..... | 4440 |

Health Protection and Promotion Amendment Act, 2011, Bill 141, Ms. Matthews / Loi de 2011 modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé, projet de loi 141, Mme Matthews

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| Second reading vote deferred..... | 4441 |
|-----------------------------------|------|

Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act, 2011, Bill 140, Mr. Bartolucci / Loi de 2011 favorisant des collectivités fortes grâce au logement abordable, projet de loi 140, M. Bartolucci

| | |
|--|------|
| Mr. Steve Clark | 4441 |
| Mme France Gélinas | 4442 |
| Mrs. Liz Sandals | 4442 |
| Mr. Norm Miller | 4443 |
| Mr. Michael Prue | 4443 |
| Mr. Steve Clark | 4443 |
| Mme France Gélinas | 4444 |
| Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield | 4446 |
| Mr. Michael Prue | 4446 |
| Mr. Pat Hoy..... | 4447 |
| Mme France Gélinas | 4447 |
| Mr. Michael Prue | 4447 |
| Second reading debate deemed adjourned | 4449 |

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

| | |
|--------------------------|------|
| Mr. Steve Clark | 4449 |
| Hon. John Wilkinson..... | 4449 |
| Hon. John Gerretsen..... | 4449 |

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Government contract

| | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| Mr. Frank Klees | 4449 |
| Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne..... | 4449 |

Power plant

| | |
|--------------------------|------|
| Mr. John Yakabuski | 4450 |
| Hon. Brad Duguid..... | 4450 |

Government's record

| | |
|---------------------------|------|
| Ms. Andrea Horwath..... | 4451 |
| Hon. Dalton McGuinty..... | 4451 |

Government's record

| | |
|---------------------------|------|
| Ms. Andrea Horwath | 4452 |
| Hon. Dalton McGuinty..... | 4452 |

Small business

| | |
|----------------------------|------|
| Mrs. Julia Munro | 4452 |
| Hon. Sandra Pupatello..... | 4452 |

Services for the disabled

| | |
|-------------------------------|------|
| Mr. Michael Prue | 4453 |
| Hon. Madeleine Meilleur | 4453 |

Full-day kindergarten

| | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| Mrs. Amrit Mangat..... | 4453 |
| Hon. Leona Dombrowsky | 4454 |

Red tape reduction

| | |
|----------------------------|------|
| Mrs. Julia Munro | 4454 |
| Hon. Sandra Pupatello..... | 4454 |

Northern economy

| | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| Mr. Gilles Bisson | 4454 |
| Hon. Michael Gravelle | 4455 |

Elder abuse

| | |
|-------------------------------|------|
| Mr. Bas Balkissoon | 4455 |
| Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis | 4455 |

Red tape reduction

| | |
|----------------------------|------|
| Mr. Ernie Hardeman..... | 4456 |
| Hon. Sandra Pupatello..... | 4456 |

Health care

| | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| Ms. Andrea Horwath | 4456 |
| Hon. Deborah Matthews | 4456 |

Renewable energy

| | |
|------------------------|------|
| Mr. Rick Johnson | 4457 |
| Hon. Brad Duguid | 4457 |

Anti-crime legislation

| | |
|-------------------------------|------|
| Mr. Garfield Dunlop..... | 4457 |
| Hon. Christopher Bentley..... | 4458 |

Curriculum

| | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| Mr. Rosario Marchese | 4458 |
| Hon. Leona Dombrowsky | 4458 |

Research and innovation

| | |
|--------------------------|------|
| Mr. Bob Delaney | 4459 |
| Hon. Glen R. Murray..... | 4459 |

Minister's comments

| | |
|--------------------------------------|------|
| Mr. John Yakabuski | 4459 |
| Hon. Sandra Pupatello..... | 4459 |
| The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)..... | 4459 |

Continued on inside back cover

Continued from back cover

Visitors

| | |
|--------------------------------------|------|
| Hon. Deborah Matthews | 4459 |
| The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)..... | 4459 |

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Time allocation

| | |
|------------------------|------|
| Motion agreed to | 4460 |
|------------------------|------|

Health Protection and Promotion Amendment Act, 2011, Bill 141, Ms. Matthews / Loi de 2011 modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé, projet de loi 141, Mme Matthews

| | |
|--------------------------------|------|
| Second reading agreed to | 4460 |
|--------------------------------|------|

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

| | |
|-------------------------|------|
| Mr. Robert Bailey | 4460 |
|-------------------------|------|

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Assistance to farmers

| | |
|-------------------------|------|
| Mr. Ernie Hardeman..... | 4461 |
|-------------------------|------|

Ajax and Pickering hospital

| | |
|-----------------------|------|
| Mr. Joe Dickson | 4461 |
|-----------------------|------|

Rural Ontario

| | |
|--------------------------|------|
| Mr. John Yakabuski | 4461 |
|--------------------------|------|

Phyllis Marshall

| | |
|------------------------|------|
| Ms. Helena Jaczek..... | 4461 |
|------------------------|------|

Ontario Senior Games–Winterfest 2011

| | |
|------------------------|------|
| Mr. Rick Johnson | 4462 |
|------------------------|------|

Chinese Canadian National Council

| | |
|------------------------|------|
| Mr. Khalil Ramal | 4462 |
|------------------------|------|

Toronto Automobile Dealers Association

| | |
|-----------------------|------|
| Mrs. Julia Munro..... | 4462 |
|-----------------------|------|

Commissaire aux services en français

| | |
|--------------------------|------|
| Mme France Gélinas | 4462 |
|--------------------------|------|

Full-day kindergarten

| | |
|----------------------|------|
| Mr. Reza Moridi..... | 4463 |
|----------------------|------|

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Occupational Health and Safety Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011, Bill 160, Mr. Sousa / Loi de 2011 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne la santé et la sécurité au travail, projet de loi 160, M. Sousa

| | |
|------------------------------|------|
| First reading agreed to..... | 4463 |
|------------------------------|------|

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Occupational health and safety

| | |
|--------------------------|------|
| Hon. Charles Sousa | 4463 |
| Mr. Randy Hillier | 4464 |
| Ms. Cheri DiNovo..... | 4465 |

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Pension plans

| | |
|-------------------------|------|
| Mr. Ernie Hardeman..... | 4465 |
|-------------------------|------|

Epilepsy

| | |
|-----------------------|------|
| Ms. Cheri DiNovo..... | 4466 |
|-----------------------|------|

Home warranty program

| | |
|-----------------------|------|
| Ms. Cheri DiNovo..... | 4466 |
|-----------------------|------|

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS / AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS

Small Business Bill of Rights, 2011, Bill 152,

Mrs. Munro / Charte des droits des petites entreprises de 2011, projet de loi 152, Mme Munro

| | |
|------------------------|------|
| Mrs. Julia Munro | 4466 |
|------------------------|------|

| | |
|------------------------|------|
| Ms. Cheri DiNovo | 4468 |
|------------------------|------|

| | |
|------------------------|------|
| Mr. David Zimmer | 4469 |
|------------------------|------|

| | |
|-------------------------|------|
| Mr. Ernie Hardeman..... | 4470 |
|-------------------------|------|

| | |
|------------------------|------|
| Mr. Khalil Ramal | 4471 |
|------------------------|------|

| | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer | 4472 |
|-----------------------------|------|

| | |
|------------------------|------|
| Mrs. Julia Munro | 4473 |
|------------------------|------|

Ontario Society of Professional Engineers Act, 2011, Bill 148, Mr. Kwinter / Loi de 2011 sur l'Association des ingénieurs de l'Ontario, projet de loi 148, M. Kwinter

| | |
|-------------------------|------|
| Mr. Monte Kwinter | 4474 |
|-------------------------|------|

| | |
|------------------------------|------|
| Mr. Norman W. Sterling | 4475 |
|------------------------------|------|

| | |
|----------------------------|------|
| Mr. Rosario Marchese | 4476 |
|----------------------------|------|

| | |
|--------------------------|------|
| Mr. Bas Balkissoon | 4476 |
|--------------------------|------|

| | |
|------------------------|------|
| Mr. Ted Chudleigh..... | 4477 |
|------------------------|------|

| | |
|----------------------|------|
| Mr. Reza Moridi..... | 4478 |
|----------------------|------|

| | |
|-----------------------|------|
| Mr. Bob Delaney | 4478 |
|-----------------------|------|

| | |
|-------------------------|------|
| Mr. Monte Kwinter | 4478 |
|-------------------------|------|

Registered Human Resources Professionals Act, 2011, Bill 138, Mr. Zimmer / Loi de 2011 sur les professionnels en ressources humaines inscrits, projet de loi 138, M. Zimmer

| | |
|------------------------|------|
| Mr. David Zimmer | 4479 |
|------------------------|------|

| | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer | 4481 |
|-----------------------------|------|

| | |
|-----------------------|------|
| Ms. Cheri DiNovo..... | 4482 |
|-----------------------|------|

| | |
|------------------------|------|
| Mr. Khalil Ramal | 4484 |
|------------------------|------|

| | |
|-----------------------|------|
| Mr. Bob Delaney | 4485 |
|-----------------------|------|

| | |
|------------------------|------|
| Mr. David Zimmer | 4486 |
|------------------------|------|

| | |
|--|------|
| Small Business Bill of Rights, 2011, Bill 152, Mrs. Munro / Charte des droits des petites entreprises de 2011, projet de loi 152, Mme Munro | |
| Second reading agreed to..... | 4486 |
| Ontario Society of Professional Engineers Act, 2011, Bill 148, Mr. Kwinter / Loi de 2011 sur l'Association des ingénieurs de l'Ontario, projet de loi 148, M. Kwinter | |
| Second reading agreed to..... | 4486 |
| Registered Human Resources Professionals Act, 2011, Bill 138, Mr. Zimmer / Loi de 2011 sur les professionnels en ressources humaines inscrits, projet de loi 138, M. Zimmer | |
| Second reading agreed to..... | 4487 |

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

| | |
|--|------|
| Good Government Act, 2011, Bill 110, Mr. Bentley / Loi de 2011 sur la saine gestion publique, projet de loi 110, M. Bentley | |
| Third reading vote deferred | 4487 |