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of Ontario
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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 13 April 2011

Mercredi 13 avril 2011

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 13 April 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 13 avril 2011

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that the orders for second and third reading of the following private bills shall be called consecutively and the questions on the motions for second and third reading of the bills be put immediately without debate: Bill Pr36, An Act to revive 1314596 Ontario Inc.; Bill Pr40, An Act to revive S.L. McNally Consulting Services Inc.; Bill Pr42, An Act to revive Bahram & Hamid Inc.; Bill Pr43, An Act respecting the Ursuline Religious of the Diocese of London in Ontario; Bill Pr45, An Act to revive 1312510 Ontario Ltd.; that Mr. Leal may move the motions for second and third reading of Bill Pr40 on behalf of Mr. Caplan; and that Mr. Leal may move the motions for second and third reading of Bill Pr45 on behalf of Mr. Dickson.

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

Motion agreed to.

1314596 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2011

Mr. Kormos moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr36, An Act to revive 1314596 Ontario Inc.

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

Second reading agreed to.

1314596 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2011

Mr. Kormos moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr36, An Act to revive 1314596 Ontario Inc.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I should indicate that I appreciate the support of my colleagues on both sides of the House this morning.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

S.L. McNALLY CONSULTING
SERVICES INC. ACT, 2011

Mr. Leal, on behalf of Mr. Caplan, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr40, An Act to revive S.L. McNally Consulting Services Inc.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I appreciate the co-operation on all sides of the House on this one.

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

Second reading agreed to.

S.L. McNALLY CONSULTING
SERVICES INC. ACT, 2011

Mr. Leal, on behalf of Mr. Caplan, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr40, An Act to revive S.L. McNally Consulting Services Inc.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I appreciate the co-operation from the member from Welland.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

BAHRAM & HAMID INC. ACT, 2011

Mr. Zimmer moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr42, An Act to revive Bahram & Hamid Inc.

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

Second reading agreed to.

BAHRAM & HAMID INC. ACT, 2011

Mr. Zimmer moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr42, An Act to revive Bahram & Hamid Inc.

Mr. David Zimmer: I must say, I was looking forward to the opportunity to debate this bill at length with the member for Welland, as is his usual wont, but I ex-

pect it's rather early in the morning for even him to fire up the cells of his brain.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Zimmer has moved third reading of Bill Pr42. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

URSULINE RELIGIOUS
OF LONDON ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2011

Mr. Hoy moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr43, An Act respecting the Ursuline Religious of the Diocese of London in Ontario.

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

Second reading agreed to.

URSULINE RELIGIOUS
OF LONDON ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2011

Mr. Hoy moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr43, An Act respecting the Ursuline Religious of the Diocese of London in Ontario.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

1312510 ONTARIO LTD. ACT, 2011

Mr. Leal, on behalf of Mr. Dickson, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr45, An Act to revive 1312510 Ontario Ltd.

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

Second reading agreed to.

1312510 ONTARIO LTD. ACT, 2011

Mr. Leal, on behalf of Mr. Dickson, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr45, An Act to revive 1312510 Ontario Ltd.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Orders of the day.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I forgot to wish you a happy pink day earlier today, so, happy pink day.

Government order number 3.

SECURITIES INDUSTRY

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 13, 2010, on the amendment to the motion by Ms. Broten to locate the new common securities regulator in Toronto.

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak on this very important motion.

Before I talk about the motion, I want to take the opportunity to also highlight that today is international Day of Pink, a day that resolves to fight all forms of bullying, discrimination and harassment. Of course, we don't need a day to stand firm and committed to fight discrimination, to fight homophobia, to fight all sorts of gender-based violence. But it's important to take a day like today and make a statement. I know that a lot of members—in fact, all members—do important work in their communities to ensure that this day is important, and we work with our youth, in particular, in our communities to ensure that we continue to fight discrimination, bullying and harassment.

It is a pleasure for me to speak on this motion. It's been a while since this motion has been debated, so let me take the time to read the motion. It's a short one that was introduced by the finance minister, Mr. Duncan, and it states:

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario endorses the need for a strong national securities regulator and endorses the Open Ontario plan to grow our financial services industry by calling on the federal government to recognize Toronto's role as the third-largest financial centre in North America and therefore locate the new common securities regulator in Toronto, where it belongs.”

That's what the motion is. In my mind, there is no disputing the sentiments that are expressed in this motion; that is, (1) we need a national securities regulator in Canada, as opposed to the 13 different security regulators that exist right now in all provinces and territories across the country; and (2) that the headquarters, the main office, for this new national securities regulator shall be located in Toronto, because Toronto is the largest financial services centre in all the country. I will speak to both of these very important points.

0910

Having this debate today is also quite valid, because today this issue and the issue around whether or not the federal government has the authority under the Canadian Constitution to create a federal securities regulator is before the Supreme Court of Canada. I believe there are two-day hearings taking place at the Supreme Court, which by the way, as a matter of interest, is located in the great riding of Ottawa Centre; it's a national institution that I'm very much aware of because it's part of my riding.

Lawyers from different provinces and the federal government are arguing this particular issue today at the Supreme Court. I'm also very happy to note that Ontario is part of those proceedings. It's participating as an inter-venor in support of the creation of a Canada-wide securities regulator.

I think there are a couple of questions that are embedded in this debate that are important to explore. One, I think many people find it surprising that we do not have a national securities regulator, and that in fact what we have in Canada are 13 separate securities regulators, one for each province and then one for each of the three territories, so 13 in total. All those 13 regulators try to work together, but obviously they have different rules and regulations; they have different policies, different guidelines and different priorities. So it does create a bit of a disjointed system across the country.

The important thing to note, again, is that we are perhaps the only jurisdiction in all the industrialized world that has a fragmented system composed of 13 different securities regulators as opposed to one securities regulator. It is important, I would argue, that we resolve that issue. We've got international organizations like the OECD, the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, and the IMF, the International Monetary Fund, that have been arguing for some time that Canada, being such an important player in the capital markets internationally, should have one securities regulator in place. So I think this move is extremely important.

What are the benefits of creating a single national securities regulator? Well, there are a few benefits that I want to highlight. One, it will allow for more consistent protection for investors across Canada. The purpose behind securities regulation is to ensure that investors locally, be it in Ontario or federally, have protection when they're making investments in various instruments, be it corporations, companies or businesses that are publicly traded on the stock exchange, or other financial instruments, many of which we know, like bonds and mutual funds, etc. By having a single regulator, you can have a more consistent set of rules to protect investors across the country, so that we do not have different levels of protection, or lack thereof, from jurisdiction to jurisdiction across the country. I think that is not only good for local, domestic investors but also international investors who are looking into investing in Canada.

The other benefit for having a national securities regulator is more improved regulatory and criminal enforcement to fight securities-related crime. Again, another important aspect of securities regulators like the Ontario Securities Commission is that they are an enforcement agency. Part of their role is to ensure that white-collar-related crimes that deal with securities are properly regulated, and if any rules are being broken, then they are offences that are associated with it. By having, again, a more Canada-wide securities regulator, we get better and improved regulatory and criminal enforcement in terms of any securities-related crimes that may come forward.

Another benefit would be better support for the stability of the Canadian financial system; again, making sure that British Columbia is not doing something different than Alberta, Quebec or Ontario. You have a more consistent, harmonized set of rules that allow for a more stable financial system, especially in today's climate, where we live in a very globalized market economy. We

need to make sure that the rules in Canada are stable in nature; are sending the right message that Canada is open for business, that Canada provides the right level of consistent protection for investors who may be considering investing in our strong economy, in Ontario or anywhere else in Canada.

Another, I think, important aspect to having a harmonized system—or having a uniform system—across the country is a faster policy response to any emerging market trends. This has been a challenge in that, as the economies develop, as the financial services sector develops, you want to be able to respond at a faster pace, especially in today's world where, with all the technologies at hand, things do move fast. By having a national securities regulator, again, we're looking at a more consistent policy approach in terms of dealing with any emerging market issues.

Another good benefit, I would argue—if there is such a thing as a bad benefit—is simpler processes for businesses when it comes to their interaction with the securities regulator. Again, if you're looking at a large company which may be doing business in various jurisdictions, they may have to deal with two or more of the securities regulators: different sets of rules and different processes, which makes the whole process quite cumbersome for those businesses as well.

Then there's the element of cost for the investor, because the more regulatory agencies you are dealing with, the more costs you will incur as an investor. By having one more streamlined securities regulator, I think one is looking at simpler processes for business and a lower cost for investors as well, giving them more opportunity to invest that money and grow our economy and create jobs.

Lastly, I would argue that on an international front, by having a national securities regulator what we are talking about is more effective international representation and influence for Canada. As I mentioned, there's OECD and IMF, to name a few organizations out there which deal with issues at a national level on securities matters. Having one consistent voice on behalf of Canada would give more weight to Canada's voice, as opposed to the disparate voices that exist across the country.

A lot of work has gone on on this issue, as I mentioned, which is all being accumulated into—I believe it's a reference before the Supreme Court of Canada. It's being heard today and tomorrow.

0920

One of the works that took place on this particular issue was that the government of Canada, in 2008, appointed an expert panel on securities regulation. The idea was for that expert panel to provide the government advice and recommendations on securities regulation in Canada. They highlighted three key challenges with the existing structure. Again, that is 13 different securities regulators across the country.

The first one—the obvious one, I would argue—was that we have a fragmented structure in place. It makes it difficult for Canadian securities regulators to react

quickly and decisively to capital market events. I mentioned earlier the fact that we have 13 securities regulators of various sizes, Ontario of course being one of the largest ones, because we are the hub for financial service markets in Canada. It is difficult to make quick decisions. It is difficult to react in an expedient manner to issues that may be developing in terms of the financial services market. That fragmented structure was identified by the expert panel as a challenge for our regulators.

Another concern that was expressed by the panel was that the provincial mandates are incongruent with the national reforms required to address development in capital markets—that could be national or international in scope. Again, as things develop—and I think the last recession was a good example of a situation where there was quite serious turmoil in the financial services market. We saw banks in the United States collapsing. There was a lot of conversation that took place at the international level to ensure that our securities regulators are able to respond. Those types of situations are difficult to deal with in the structure that exists today.

Lastly, one of the concerns the expert panel reported was around how the current structure misallocates resources, causing securities regulation to be less efficient and effective—another challenge because, again, we have 13 separate regulators across the country spending their resources on doing pretty much the same thing, when we could bring them all together, put one regulator in place and get things done. That's the issue around the need for having a single securities regulator.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And that's enough.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: No, Mr. Marchese, I have a few more things to say. I think this is an important issue, and I very much support having a national securities regulator.

The second issue, which I think which we should all be supporting in this Legislature, is that the headquarters for this securities regulator should be based in Toronto. I think we will all agree that Toronto is the capital of the financial services sector in all of Canada. There is no disagreement—there should be no disagreement—about that. In fact, Toronto is the third-largest financial centre in all of North America. That is very significant as well. It only makes sense that when we are creating a national securities regulator, the headquarters, the regulator, be located here in Toronto, because in the world globally, when we're talking about the financial services market, all investors automatically think of Toronto as the place to go.

I think it will send a very good signal to all investors across the world that Toronto is where the national securities regulator is, and I think it will instill confidence in those investors in terms of investing in Canada. We also know that Toronto is home to the 13 largest banks in North America by market capitalization, and is, as I mentioned, the third-largest financial sector in North America, behind only New York and Chicago, which gives further credence that this securities regulator should be located here.

The point, I think, is that if there is homework for all of us to do, it is that we need to put pressure on federal members of Parliament from Ontario to advocate that Toronto should be the place for the national securities regulator. I think all of us need to make sure, and this election is an apt opportunity for us to take that message home. I really urge the members of the official opposition as well to talk to the Conservative members coming out of Ontario, and perhaps other Conservative members from other parts of the country, that Toronto should be the home for the national capital securities regulator. It does not make sense at all that it be located anywhere else.

So my plea to everyone is that this is an issue where we are meeting individually with candidates who are seeking office right now to be members of Parliament, and then those who will be fortunate to be elected on May 2; that we sit down with them and have this issue on the top of our priority list, so that when they are back in the House of Commons, this issue is raised.

I ask my Liberal colleagues and I'll ask my Conservative and NDP colleagues to take this issue because I think it is an important one. It means jobs for our communities; it means more prosperity for our communities; it ensures that Ontario remains at the forefront when it comes to attracting new capital investment dollars. And Toronto is ready to meet those needs. Toronto is ready to serve all of the country as the head office for the national securities regulator.

Speaker, thank you very much for giving me an opportunity to speak on this very important issue. I really hope that all members take my plea seriously in terms of speaking with their federal counterparts, ensuring that this issue remains at the forefront and that Toronto is chosen as the place to locate the national securities regulator, because this is where the action is taking place. This is what the global players around the world know, where the capital of the financial services market is, and that's in Toronto. I think it is our collective responsibility that we ensure that that decision is made appropriately by the federal government.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I just would want to indicate at this time that I will be sharing my time with the member from Burlington and the member from Cambridge.

First of all, I want to indicate here that obviously we in the official opposition do support the notion of the important role and the argument for Toronto as the home of the national securities regulator. I think that while others have indicated certain specific areas of the reasons for the—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for York-Simcoe, I'm advised that you have already spoken on this motion, so I'll go to the member—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Well, it's some time since we've debated it—I think it's about a year—so it's reasonable that someone would forget.

The member for Burlington.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: How desperate is this government, regurgitating something that was introduced on March 22, 2010, that people have even forgotten whether they have spoken to the darned thing or not? An honest mistake, but shame on the government. If this were so important, as the member from Ottawa Centre has stated, and so urgent, why are we discussing this over a year after it was introduced? My gosh. This makes no sense to me whatsoever, and it was a complete surprise to all of us when this was introduced as the debate this morning. Again, shame on the government: desperate—totally desperate—to keep us here and talk about something. You know what? The member from Ottawa Centre said. “We wanted to keep this in the forefront.” Keeping this in the forefront over a year after introducing it makes no sense at all.

0930

I understand completely the importance of recognizing the financial services sector in Toronto as being the capital of our financial services sector here in Canada. I completely recognize that, and I value that, but I think that it was unfortunate, regrettable, that the government had to slip their Open Ontario plan into the recommendation to keep this as Canada's financial capital, because it was a bit of a trick to try to get folks who did not endorse the plan to endorse it or vote against Toronto being Canada's financial sector capital.

What is that about? Are you so desperate that your legislation and your plans and your policies can't stand on their own that you've got to interweave them into something that makes it difficult for the opposition to oppose? Well, I won't be supporting the plan if it includes the statement that endorses the Open Ontario plan, because I did not support that.

In fact, in the whole 20 minutes that the member from Ottawa Centre spoke, he not once—not once—mentioned that, as part of this recommendation, the Open Ontario plan was included in the wording of that recommendation. So obviously it wasn't as important as the government thought, but they did just slip it in there so that it made it difficult for the opposition. Again, shame on the government.

The city of Toronto is a busy place; it's a bustling place. It's had its ups and downs, but it's a very proud city with a great, great history. One part of its great history is the fact that it has grown into the financial services capital of Canada. It's home to the headquarters of five of the major banks. It has thousands of employees—growing yearly—who work in the sector. We have the headquarters of about 80% of the foreign banks that operate in Canada right here in Toronto: a proud, proud moment for this city. The Toronto Stock Exchange is the largest stock exchange in Canada. There are almost 2,000 financial firms right here in this city, and that's great.

I would love to support this recommendation. However, by slipping in endorsement of the Open Ontario plan, it makes it impossible for me to support this. If we could divide the recommendation to be able to support

part of it, that would be great, but this Legislature doesn't allow that to happen, and that's unfortunate.

The employment in this sector has grown considerably in the last few years, and it continues to grow. Even with the recessions that have occurred, the troubles in the world economy, this city continues to keep its mark on that world stage by proving itself to be a strong and viable place to do business. There are now upwards of 130,000 folks employed in this sector. It would be a darned shame if anything happened to make that change. People are depending on this city—they have grown around the sector in this city and in the GTA—to contribute to a productive, wonderful economy in our country, and I would hope that that remains.

It's been my pleasure to speak to this. It's my disappointment that it was brought forward this way, as a complete surprise, after over a year of sitting somewhere on somebody's desk. My concern is that the member from Ottawa Centre did not make enough points that gave me any consideration to be able to support this recommendation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Cambridge.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: This government has sat on its hands for seven long years with one of the most important problems that we have in Canada, and that is the credibility of the Toronto stock market for this great nation. This government has starved the funding of the Ontario Securities Commission. It has refused the funding and prevented the commission from doing its job.

The commission was before a committee which I sat on over two years ago, and it pleaded with the committee and the government to increase the funding. They told us about the problem that, where they had a jurisdiction which in effect covers the whole of Canada, wrongdoers outside of the province and inside of the province—investigations were impossible because of the lack of funding. The police departments are busy doing other things also, so their co-operation is not always there, and certainly police departments outside of Ontario are not really interested in assisting the securities commission.

What happens? A gold company—an individual, the president—discovered gold in China. It happened within the last five years. Well, that's great. The announcements took place, and periodically announcements were made about the cores being drilled and the gold being found. The whole thing was a fraud. It happened right here, not more than two years ago.

The individual involved has never been prosecuted. He's not here in Ontario. I don't even know whether an investigation has been done, but there is no ramification. Right now in Canada, you just ensure that you're not within Ontario—and even then you may be safe. But if you're outside of Ontario, you're perfectly safe to defraud the public.

This government for seven years has sat on its hands and done absolutely nothing, and all of a sudden it's concerned that it may lose a federal regulator. Where are they going to go? They're going to go west, of course.

The power is slowly shifting. Oil, potash—the west is reborn. We have the stock exchange now. Is it possible that an exchange commission could be seized in Alberta or Saskatchewan or BC? Why not? I've warned this government in a minority report over two years ago that that was a possibility, and it still is.

It's really a shame that this government has ignored the pleas of the Ontario Securities Commission for greater funding to permit them to do their job. It's a sad tale when other provinces look at us, and we have the stock exchange located in our great city of Toronto, and yet it is not governed properly, through no fault of our commission—our present commission—but through the fault of this government and its lack of funding.

I really get concerned about Ontario, this government and what the rest of this great country thinks of what's going on in this province.

Mr. John O'Toole: Alberta. Go to the Alberta line.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: In the province of Alberta, the newspaper the Calgary Herald wants to talk about Ontario. This is its picture of Ontario: "In a bold move, an Ontario teachers' union has signalled its intent to buy a provincial government." That is the byline in the April 8, 2011, newspaper dealing with the Catholic teachers' union's attempt to raise money to circumvent the morality of the situation. They found a loophole in the law, they believe, that permits them to in effect buy this government, buy any government in Ontario, through their support, circumventing our present laws dealing with elections and the restraints that we all properly live with in elections. We can only spend so much as a party. There's an equality there, there's a fairness there, and that is being broken.

0940

We want to have the federal securities commission remain in Ontario. Places like Calgary are looking at Ontario and saying, "It's a banana republic." What happened to the great Ontario that was revered, not just in Canada but throughout the world, the economic engine of this great country? What has happened to this province in the hands of this government? We're a lot poorer. Our image in the world has degraded, and some consider us a banana republic. A government, any government in Ontario, can be bought. I say no, there is no possibility of that happening. However, we are losing, somewhat, the public image; we're losing our perception of integrity—and I believe there is great integrity in this Legislature.

We're losing part of the battle, so even if we have—and over two years ago, in a minority report, we insisted that this government move and that it do something in encouraging a federal commission. Down in the United States of America, they have the SEC. When you mention the Securities and Exchange Commission in the United States of America, people listen, because they're terrified of that commission. They know its awesome power; they know that it's well-funded for investigations, and they listen. The latest famous prosecution was that of Mr. Black.

When you mention the Ontario Securities Commission to anybody outside of Ontario, there's no concern there.

They know that they are underfunded; they know that they will get no assistance from anyone outside the province to do their investigations. Inside Ontario, we know that too. They're like Rodney Dangerfield: They get no respect from the markets, through no fault of theirs. I listened very carefully for almost a full day when they recited the problems that they have. They've got problems getting the co-operation of the police, they've got problems in underfunding and they haven't got sufficiency in the way of regulators.

I can see that this government wants to get rid of the problem, get rid of the funding, and put it into federal hands. I'm in favour of that, because this government is doing such a poor job of regulating our stock exchange right now, permitting, as I mentioned when I started, a gold company to issue false core specimens, to do it on a number of occasions, and when the truth was finally out that it was all falsified, there was no prosecution of one person. There's got to be something strangely wrong with Ontario today. If you get caught stealing a loaf of bread, there's a possibility that you will be prosecuted and that you will have a fine or even spend a night—admittedly, not a long time—in jail. But if you steal \$1 million in our Ontario through white-collar crime, you walk away free and get to keep your money, your ill-gotten gains. There's something wrong with the system. There's something wrong with a government that looks the other way when this is happening.

I certainly would support the motion if it dealt with the transfer of power to a federal commission. That is the right thing to do. I said that over two years ago in a minority report, and I repeat it. To foul the nest, so to speak, by throwing in some mumbo-jumbo that some spin doctor in the Premier's office has figured out will sell this government; by throwing in some words that no one really knows what they're about, is really a sad tale. Does it mean that this government is not serious in supporting a federal commission, or does it mean that they're so desperate that they can only spin, rather than really deal with the real issues that this province has to face in the years ahead for the benefit of all?

So, though I support the intent, I have a great difficulty. We have proposed a motion which would clarify it and remove the spin, remove the election platform promises, and just deal with the request of the federal government—and the strong request, I hope—that a federal-jurisdiction commission to govern the stock exchange be, at long last, instituted across this great country.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Living in Toronto and living in Ontario is a huge privilege. We in the Liberal Party love this province. We are extraordinarily proud of the sacrifices that farmers, bankers, labourers and teachers have made to do that.

I'm very proud to be the member for Toronto Centre. I am very proud to be the member for a large part of Toronto's financial services.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Bring back George Smitherman.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yes, George Smitherman would be a great person to bring back, to my friend from Nepean–Carleton. Maybe in your seat. It would be a major improvement.

It's fascinating to me—the member for Cambridge clearly doesn't have much regard for this province. To refer to Ontario as a banana republic is one of the most offensive—I can't find parliamentary language to describe how ridiculous it is, coming from the Monty Pythonesque antics of the party. Some 80% of people don't have a stable banking system and they don't have a stable democracy, and they came here to Ontario because we have a stable democracy, a stable financial system and a democratic, civil-based society.

How do you run for office and attack bankers? Mr. Drummond, a life of public service—we're very fortunate to have five of the 10 largest banks in North America headquartered in our province, of 13 banks. Referring to Mr. Drummond as some Bay Street banker, as if those people are unimportant and have nothing to contribute—well, having been mayor of a city that didn't have any banks, when there were days when Halifax, Montreal, London, Toronto and Winnipeg all had bank head offices, now, essentially, we're the only city with a bank head office, which is why we should have a securities commission here.

0950

But the party opposite is absolutely offensive. The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, only a few months ago, was suggesting that Toronto separate from the province of Ontario. I spent my adolescence milking cows in Alexandria, and I understand, and this party understands, that we need the pools of capital, that there are very few cities that have the large pools of capital that banks—because farmers need them, and cities need farmers. But this is typical of the party opposite's divisive politics. They want to set farmers up—“Every farmer doesn't understand.” They treat them like they're backward bumpkins, and then they treat bankers like they're some city slickers who are trying to take advantage of everyone who doesn't live in Toronto. This incredibly offensive view of this province is exactly why I don't think those people across the way are fit to govern.

It seems to me that this is so obvious. In Winnipeg, they have the wheat board because Winnipeg is the wheat capital of Canada. I'm very proud to have grown up in Montreal, and I saw the financial system collapse there and relocate to Ontario. When you live in any other part of the country, you understand that when you have the banking industry, you have some of the higher salaries; you have the capital necessary for innovation in businesses; you have the capital necessary for agri-business; you have the capital necessary for manufacturing.

We only have a banking system here because of the people in northern Ontario, quite frankly, like my friend Bill Mauro, because it is the financing of mining and resource extraction that brought banking here originally. We are the largest banking centre in the world right now for minerals and those kinds of resources, and we're very

proud of that, because we understand that the banks serve northern Ontario and Toronto wouldn't have the competitive advantage if northern Ontario, for example, weren't part of Ontario. But you've never heard anyone on this side of the House suggest that we carve the province up in little pieces.

Finally, it seems to me that we are living in a much more competitive world. We compete with London, Chicago and New York. The Open Ontario plan is attached to this motion for a very good reason: It drives an entire agenda of incentives and assistance for the formulation of risk capital; it works toward a strategy to build our financial services, of which having the securities regulator here is a critical part.

We are proud of bankers. We see bankers as an important part of our economy. We do not berate them, because if they ever picked up and left for Calgary or for Winnipeg or for Montreal, we would be a much lesser province. Look at who gives money to the arts and anti-poverty. Look at the \$400-million addition to the Sick Kids hospital research centre. Do you think we could build that if we didn't have banking and financial services here?

If only my friend from Cambridge and my friend from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, who like to take shots at everyone who lives in urban Canada and drive those wedges, would talk to their federal cousins—because we have a petro dollar in this country, not an innovation dollar, not a manufacturing dollar and not an agri-dollar. And why is that? Because the most subsidized industry is not our Green Energy Act, which they love to chastise us about; it's their federal cousins. You put a dollar into the oil sands and you get a tax writeoff from the federal government of 42.5 cents. We have to compete now with a higher dollar than they had when they were in power. We're more successful in recovering, and that's extraordinary.

We live with a government, federally, that understands oil and doesn't understand banking and doesn't stand up for our financial services sector. That, to me, is just sad, given how many members from the party opposite sit in the federal Parliament.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: What's actually sad is that this government, this Liberal government, will put this on the table today after it has not been discussed for almost an entire year, if it has not been—yes, it has been an entire year. It was introduced on March 22, 2010. Why is it appearing now? Because this government, this Liberal government, wants to inject itself into a federal election. They saw yesterday that their hero, Mr. Ignatieff, couldn't win a federal debate, so we have to bring this up to talk about something to intervene in a federal election.

But let me tell you something. The members on this side of the House, in the official opposition, have been very clear that we support a national securities regulator housed in Toronto. We have been very clear about that. We have been very clear about that since the government

agencies committee actually brought in the Ontario Securities Commission to talk about what they're doing and did a review of the entire agency. At that time, we echoed exactly what the federal finance minister, Jim Flaherty, was saying in his budget a few years ago.

Let's not forget that Jim Flaherty is the architect of this idea, who believes that there should be a national securities regulator. He was the first finance minister in this country to actually put that in a budget, and guess what? Not only was the member from Durham at that budget, not only was the member from Whitby-Oshawa at that budget, but I too sat there to watch the finance minister of the day—who, I imagine, in a few weeks will remain Canada's finance minister—bring that to the floor of the House of Commons.

The question here today is not whether people support Toronto as the economic centre of this nation; the question here today is, why did they have to hide the title of their throne speech in this motion? That is the question. They are trying to force people into either voting for something that we don't support, which is their Open Ontario initiative, or to vote against it, to suggest and imply that members of this side of the House don't recognize Toronto as the economic and financial capital of this province and this country. And we do; I want to be very, very clear with you and with the folks who are at home that the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party and our caucus, under the leadership of Tim Hudak, supports this notion of a national securities regulator, but also that we support its headquarters here in the province of Ontario.

At the time, I had asked Mr. Wilson, who was a previous head of the OSC, a lot of different questions about how a national securities regulator would actually impact the OSC and where those folks would find jobs, and he was very much in favour at the time. We, of course, now have a new head of the securities regulator, Mr. Wetston. My colleague here from Oxford was there when we brought him in, and I believe he was endorsed by our government agencies committee.

But the reality is that the heart of this resolution, as my colleague from Burlington said, is trickery. They're trying to trick people. And why are they bringing it up over a year later? It can't be that much of a priority for them, other than to get engaged in this federal election, which I think demeans this House. There's no point in trying to intervene in an election which these federal parties are now engaged in.

We can all take our own personal views outside this chamber and into our constituencies, should we so choose, and I often do. I'm a big advocate for that. After all, we are in a democracy. But using this Legislature for a wedge issue like this or a wedge resolution is despicable, and quite frankly, I think it's beneath the government of the day.

They actually had an opportunity a year ago to debate this, which was, I believe, timely. It was not too long after Mr. Flaherty brought forward this resolution into his budget in the Parliament of Canada, and so we ask now why—why, why, why is this being debated in the middle of a federal election?

Are we going to be expecting Dwight Duncan, the finance minister of the day, to do what he said on the day of the election, which is to get involved in the federal election? He'll go out helping his Liberal counterparts. I have no problem with that, but just don't use your budget and don't use this motion to try and divide and conquer Ontarians and Canadians. That's wrong. This government should be well above that and well above reproach. Unfortunately, they aren't.

My colleagues have spoken on this bill, I think, because we are so offended that the government of the day has tried to trick Ontarians and Canadians. They must imagine us all for fools, but I can assure you, we aren't. Of course, on October 6, 2011, we will indeed show them who needs change in this province; I suspect that will come very quickly.

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My colleague Peter Shurman, who is our economic development critic, has spoken quite at length. He's also a member from the GTA, from Thornhill, and he talked about some of the positives that are in favour of Toronto and what the record is. I thought it was really interesting, in reading his speech earlier this morning, some of the things he pointed out.

Toronto is the heart, as we all know, of Canada's financial services sector. It's home to five of Canada's largest domestic banks, 55 foreign bank subsidiaries and branches, and 119 securities firms. Right now, you can count those groups like Manulife and Sun Life among two of the top 10 life insurers worldwide as residents in this city. The TMX Group, commonly known as the Toronto Stock Exchange, has its headquarters here. We also have the operations of seven of the top 10 largest global hedge fund administrators. He also tells us that the city of Toronto is the largest Wi-Fi zone in Canada.

Coming from Ottawa, obviously we like to champion our city, and I'm very proud of that. It's also the home of our nation's capital; the federal seat of Parliament resides in the city that I represent. However, those of us from this province champion not only our nation's capital but also our financial and provincial capital.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that you're engaged in this conversation that is going on beside me, but it's fine. They're actually just whispering what I should be saying; right?

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: No, no?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Just trying to be of assistance.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: They're trying to be of assistance.

My colleague from Durham has noted, and I believe the member from Cambridge quite elegantly noted, the importance of Toronto, but also that this government is not being fair with the people in bringing this motion forward. It's so timely for them. If you wanted to get involved in a federal election by using this chamber—which they've already done by using their budget—then this would be a perfect time for it.

I look at what's happening in Peterborough with my friend Dean Del Mastro, and what may happen there on

October 6. We're looking forward to change in Ontario and being able to work with the federal government, instead of seeing this particular chamber always pick a fight with our federal government, which will be returned, of course, on May 2.

I just want to talk a little bit more about the mutual fund industry. Of course, they were hard hit, as many of you will know, through the HST. I worked with many of those mutual fund companies that were telling us that this was going to be an extra tax on people who were trying to save for their retirement. The Mackenzie Financial report estimated that the cost of the HST for a \$100,000 portfolio would be almost \$2,500 over the course of 10 years. On larger portfolios, that would be much more.

Why do I bring that up? Because the mutual fund industry, as I mentioned earlier, is very large here in Toronto. If the government of this day, this Liberal government, chose to actually be supportive of the financial services sector here in Ontario, they would have listened to people from Mackenzie Financial, CI Financial and other groups that were here and spoke on many occasions to the Minister of Finance, but also to committee.

I remember, when the HST was being brought in, that young stockbrokers and young mutual fund agents would be in the galleries up there, because they knew how much this was going to tax not only their own industry but certainly the people they represent. They didn't think it was fair that somebody who was working hard, playing by the rules and saving was going to lose about \$2,500 in extra taxes after they had been saving.

So again, if you think this is a government that actually feels compelled to support the Toronto financial sector, you have to think again, and you have to consider what their motivations are for bringing this forward. They're bringing it forward well after they've entrenched the HST into law. It's a \$3-billion tax grab that comes from middle-income families, many of whom have been hit with very high hydro rates and high gas prices and a plethora of other increases to the cost of living. That's a motivation. They wanted to hide this bill so that we couldn't talk about it at that particular time.

The other motivation is that they clearly would like to get engaged in the federal government election that is occurring right now. By all accounts, as proud Ontarians, we all know that this is a very important province in the federal election landscape, and of course they want to use and abuse their powers in this chamber to force an outcome.

I can tell you, though, I think that Ontario voters won't be fooled by them; they refuse to be fooled by them, and I think they're going to show up in numbers and disregard these political games my colleagues opposite are playing right now. I'll continue, as do my colleagues in the chamber on the opposition side, to support a national securities regulator, but more than that, support its location in Toronto.

There are a number of outlying issues, and I believe my colleague from Cambridge mentioned them earlier in debate. We were talking about other provinces not exact-

ly being engaged in this process or actually pushing back; they're not completely supportive of a national securities regulator. I think that's when we ought to be assisting, as a chamber, that message.

I guess the question then comes back to the government. You can put forward this little fluffy motion that really doesn't mean anything because, again, it's not binding. If they really supported this, here's what I would do—and this is some free advice to this government. I'm happy to give them free advice. If they were very serious about a national securities regulator and they were serious about housing it in the city of Toronto, this is what I would do: I would pick up the phone and I would call every finance minister in Canada and encourage them to get to the table, to buy into this—that means Quebec, Alberta, the Maritimes and other provinces—to ensure that they know the value of hosting a national securities regulator not only in Canada but specifically right here in the city of Toronto.

I would be investing my efforts and energy to bring those finance ministers from across Canada to this provincial capital, but also to Canada's financial capital, and I would do that with the federal finance minister. But you're not going to find them doing that, because it's just not their style. They would rather put forward this flimsy, four-line motion that means absolutely nothing, with the exception of trying to wedge the opposition against the financial services sector and the folks of Toronto and trying to engage in a political campaign that we're not actually engaged in here in this chamber.

That is what is so offensive to us on this side of the House. If they were serious and they really wanted to support a national securities regulator, there are lots of ways to do it. This motion is not how you do it. In fact, this motion actually speaks against exactly what they want to do because they're using it as a political tool, but that's what they do.

When you have no ideas of your own, what do you do? You fight with Ottawa. I knew that when I was a young person working on Parliament Hill. You would always know that when you're in trouble at home, the provinces would pick a fight with the federal government.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Yes, they try that.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Of course, this government does it all the time.

My colleague right here from Oxford is a prime example. As our critic for agriculture, he has been standing up for farmers and he has been working with our federal counterparts. He is responsible for the risk management program in this province that was in the last budget because of hard work and the credibility he has with farmers across this province. At the last minute, this crowd across the way decides they're going to get engaged when they don't have to do a payout. Is that not right?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Exactly, exactly. No payout this year, so out comes the announcement.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: They don't have to do a payout, so they decide they're going to minimally support that

program. But I can tell you something: The member from Oxford understands how to get things done and the member from Oxford understands—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'd like to hear the speaker who has the floor, so we'll have some order, please.

The member for Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

Again, as I said, my colleague from Oxford knows how to get things done.

Do you know what the most frustrating thing in this House is? It's when this Legislature will go into a full rant and we'll have a minister opposite completely blow a gasket. Why are they blowing a gasket? Because they're in trouble, and they say, "Call your federal cousins." That's hilarious. Can't they do their job? Can't they actually represent the province? No, they can't because they're so focused on the small stuff, on the little stuff, on the things that aren't going to matter and playing little games.

But I can tell you something: It's about to come to an end. They've got less than six months over there. It's going to be a long, long road, the next six months, for them. I look at my friend from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock. It's got to be tough for him to know that in another five or six months he'll be retired from this place and we'll be bringing, of course, our friend Laurie Scott back.

I look across the way at some of the other friends who are going to be leaving. The reality is, I wish them well. I hope, when they leave this place, that they'll take with them the fond memories we've all had here.

But I'm looking forward, of course, to continuing this debate to talk about a national securities regulator for Toronto, because as I said, this party clearly supports this. We have been on the record as supporting this. In fact, during those exact debates I was talking about earlier with my colleague from Oxford at government agencies, I believe our leader actually participated in some of those hearings, as our finance critic previously. So it was great.

I hear a lot of talk about Gerry Ritz, and I can tell you—here's a little story, actually. We have some time in the morning. I was talking to Gerry Ritz a couple weeks ago, maybe a month ago, about agriculture. He was very well received in my suburban rural community. And do you know what he said? He said, "Lisa, we need to get that agriculture minister in Ontario to start working with us." Do you know what he said?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Nepean—Carleton, what we need to do is get back on the subject of the resolution.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Here's the subject, though, because it does play into interprovincial and intergovernmental affairs.

So he says to me, "We need to start working with that agriculture minister of yours." I said, "You know what, Minister Ritz? You're right." And this is what he said.

He said, "Yeah, you tell him to give me a call." The federal Minister of Agriculture had no idea who the agriculture minister was in Ontario—two consecutive ministers who were females. But they don't do anything. They're so ineffective they're not picking up the phone.

It goes to the heart of this legislation that's before us. It speaks exactly to this legislation before us. It says they won't work with their federal counterparts, that they'll only complain about them in this Legislature and that they'll try to play partisan political games, but they won't pick up the phone to do what needs to be done. Whether that is calling their federal counterparts or—in this case, they should also be calling not only their federal counterparts but every single finance minister in this country. But they won't do it and they don't do it, and we continue to debate silly little non-binding resolutions here and listen to the Backstreet Boys over in the corner heckle as the legislators here on the opposition side want to be committed to actually seeing a financial services regulator here in the city of Toronto. We could be no more disturbed by this legislation than we are at most things that they do.

But again, I go back to the fact that the Ontario Progressive Conservatives support a national securities regulator in the province of Ontario. We support its location in the city of Toronto. We are going to continue to support that, but we will not support this legislation. We will not allow the Liberal Party of Ontario to put us into a corner. We will not allow them to divide us through wedge politics. We will make sure that when we form government on October 6, 2011, we push this idea forward and that we work with our federal counterparts to ensure it will happen.

In the short moment I have left, I want to continue to support my colleague from Oxford, again, for doing what no one on that side could do, and that is bring forward a risk management strategy. Because here is the heart of things: As somebody who represents a suburban/rural riding, a risk management strategy for Ontario is important, as is the Toronto national securities regulator in this province. I will continue to champion that. I will continue to support my colleague from Oxford.

I've enjoyed this opportunity to debate. Thank you very much.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 8, this House is in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I want to introduce Trevor Jones, who is the grandfather of page Emma Redfearn. He's here and, I'm sure, very proud of what she's doing here.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Please welcome, in the west members' gallery, Josie and Louis Tonazzo. They're

visiting from Sault Ste. Marie, visiting their daughter Stephanie Veitch and family in Stouffville, in the great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'd like to introduce to the House Julia Hawthorthwaite, who is visiting us today. She's currently interning in the environmental programs division at the Ministry of the Environment. Julia is in her fourth year studying environmental studies at the University of Waterloo. I just want to take this opportunity to thank Julia and the 50 other interns at MOE for all the hard work they do to make sure that our environment is protected.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to introduce, in the east members' gallery, some members of the Oakville provincial youth advisory committee who are visiting Queen's Park today. We've got Alex McKeen, Conor Lewis, Steven Rai, Tori Lang, Christine Rankin, Ronnie Allen, former page Natalie LaMarche, and Ellen Bushnik from my staff.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'm delighted to introduce to you His Excellency the consul general of the Republic of Croatia, Mr. Ljubinko Matešić. He's going to report back on what he hears today to his country. Congratulations, and welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome, consul general.

ORAL QUESTIONS

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is for the Premier. Premier, yesterday you got caught using taxpayer dollars to pay for enhanced cable packages for prisoners, enhanced cable packages that are unaffordable for many Ontario families. But it goes further than that.

Let me tell you about your bizarre priorities when it comes to victims of crime and criminals. Kellie Smith's son was brutally murdered. Kellie had to choose between paying the rent or paying for her son's funeral. She applied to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board for help over a year ago and is still waiting for an answer. But according to FOI requests received by the Ontario PC caucus, somehow, Premier, you found money to pay for prisoners to take "freeing the human spirit" yoga classes developed by a Zen master. Premier, why are you putting the priorities of criminals ahead of victims of crime?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my honourable colleague—and I would ask that he acknowledge—that we have, in fact, on the matter of this cable-tv, put an end to a practice that was begun under the former Conservative government. I think it would be important that he acknowledge that so that Ontarians gain a full appreciation of the foundation of fact on this particular issue.

I think as well that my honourable colleague will acknowledge that we have moved in a number of different

directions to enhance public safety in our province, whether that's investing in more police officers on our streets, whether it's investing in new, modern jails that better protect the public or a number of other areas.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Those answers simply don't cut it for women like Kellie who have to deal with these tragic circumstances. Not only did she find out that you are paying for enhanced cable packages for prisoners, but you're paying for 90-minute yoga and meditation classes for prisoners, and you are as well paying for creative writing workshops for prisoners. FOI records obtained by the Ontario PC caucus say the workshops "offer writing as a cathartic method of clarifying feelings." Contrast that with Kellie Smith, who has no catharsis for the stress that she lives with while waiting for money to help to pay for student loans and bills that are in arrears because she spent everything she had to pay for the funeral of her murdered son.

Premier, how did you get so out of touch with these warped priorities?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Although I won't speak to an individual case—and my friend will always take up individual cases—we all stand for the rights of victims and their families. We all stand for a system that supports victims and their families.

In this part of the House we're investing twice as much in victims and victim-related services as that side of the House ever did. We've invested almost three quarters of a billion dollars in these services, and constantly look for better. We got advice that the CICB should not only be continued but that we should deal with the backlog which it accumulated over many years.

We've dealt with the backlog, but it's also an adjudicative system, meaning that there is a hearing, meaning that you have to gather documents and meaning that it sometimes takes a while. It's a lot faster than it ever was under the previous party, and we're continuing to do it as fast as we can, but it is a process that takes a little while to deal with all the needs and the rights of victims.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Premier, you had no hesitation in paying for enhanced cable packages for prisoners, for paying for, "freeing the human spirit" yoga classes for prisoners or for paying for cathartic creative writing classes for prisoners. It shows how deeply out of touch you've become that you put the criminals ahead of victims of crime like Kellie.

It's not just Kellie Smith. The minister blithely says, "Oh, you pick cases out of the air." Minister, real people like Kellie Smith, like Liz Hoage, like Donna Dixon, Wendy Flanagan and Claudette Lalonde, all came to you about not only the tragic loss but the murder of their children, and they were told to wait for sometimes years on end while you pay for yoga classes, creative writing and cable packages for prisoners.

How did you get so dramatically out of touch to put the rights of criminals ahead of crime victims?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The fact of the matter is that we're not. We're doing just the opposite. My friend opposite does not want to remember his past. When did the cable programs come in? Under them. What channel has he been watching? Because they were funding all of those channels. All of the creative programs he talks about were under him. They started it; we stopped it.

It's a typical theme. A CICB that was not getting the funding it needed under them; a Criminal Injuries Compensation Board that is getting the funding under us. A victims' justice fund that was accumulating a big surplus under them; a victims' justice fund that's spending the funds under us for the benefits of victims.

He stands and speaks for people, but did nothing. We stand and speak for people and actually protect victims, the services they need and the people who need our assistance.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Premier, our FOI requests, which your government tried to delay as long as possible, reveal how you're spending taxpayer dollars and putting criminals' rights ahead of those of victims. You have something called the Brain Gym program. You have enhanced yoga classes freeing the human spirit and cathartic creative writing classes.

Why don't you explain that to Wendy Flanagan? Wendy Flanagan was told by your government, through the compensation board, that they wouldn't pay her support claim because she didn't actually see her daughter get murdered and then dismembered. But you pay for criminals to free their human spirit in 90-minute yoga classes designed by a Zen master.

Premier, this is dramatically out of touch. How do you explain to women like Wendy Flanagan, who didn't get compensation because she didn't see the murder of her daughter, that you're paying for these outrageous abuses like yoga classes for prisoners?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Of course, what the Leader of the Opposition fails to say is that these programs that are in place were programs which, by and large, were initiated by the previous government, the Conservative government.

I wasn't being particularly critical of them at the time. I know that they've evaluated the programs. Some of these programs are delivered by volunteers. I know that the Salvation Army comes in. I know that representatives of the various churches work with those who are inmates within the system. I know that there are a number of organizations, which are volunteer organizations, charitable organizations and religious organizations, which work with inmates within the system.

What has happened with the premium cable TV is that in many instances, your government brought it in. Our government is now taking it out.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

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Mr. Tim Hudak: Let's face the facts, Minister. The only reason you were forced to act is because you got caught; you got caught and were forced to act. But real people like Liz Hoage, like Wendy Flanagan, like Claudette Lalonde, who was denied support and told it was because she wasn't actually there to witness the murder of her son Corey—the same goes for Kellie Smith, who wonders what parent would just stand there and watch their kid being murdered. These women face this experience under the McGuinty government. Simply because they did not witness the murder of their own children, you turn them away and spend on frills like this for the very criminals in prisons in our province.

Why don't you get your priorities straight and act for these mothers instead of coddling the prisoners in our jails in Ontario?

Hon. James J. Bradley: That is precisely why we are taking out the premium cable TV that in many instances you put into the system in the province of Ontario; that's precisely why we're doing it.

The Attorney General has mentioned on this occasion and many other occasions the amount of work that is being done on behalf of victims in the province of Ontario. We remember the huge surplus that was in that fund when the Conservative government was in power. That surplus has diminished considerably with our government in power. We are spending more money on victims' services. We are serving more victims at this time, as the Attorney General has appropriately pointed out, than your government ever did. We have expanded the program tremendously in this province, with, I think, positive results.

On the other side of it, we are ending some of the practices that you established in our prison system.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know what, Minister? The practice you should end is the practice of denying these mothers access to support simply because they did not see the murder of their children. That is outrageous. Today, you're paying for Zen yoga classes to give inmates—and this is a description from your very own ministry—"a leisure experience that silences the mind and disciplines the body."

Meanwhile, there's no silence for victims of crime like Wendy Flanagan, who lives in a nightmare because she can't bury her daughter, whose bones are sitting in a forensic lab, or Donna Dixon, who copes with the knowledge that her son was kidnapped, shot, incinerated and put into bags of animal feed.

These are real people, Minister. Will you finally act on behalf of these mothers and quit putting the rights of prisoners ahead of legitimate victims of the most violent crimes?

Hon. James J. Bradley: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We've already said in this House—the Premier said and I said—that we're going to find a way to appropriately deal with these individual cases.

What's interesting, though, is that the wording in the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board act is the same wording as when the Tories were in power, and they didn't change it. It's the same wording, pretty much, that's been in the act since the beginning.

There's a recurrent theme here. My friend the Leader of the Opposition stands and complains about something that was in existence under his watch, and he did nothing about it. Then when we deal with it, he is all full of outrage. It's the cable in prisons that we're dealing with getting rid of, but he put it in. It's the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board victim who's not dealt with as we would all like, but he knew about that before, and we're fixing it. It's the victims' justice fund that he accumulated; we're distributing it—

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

NUCLEAR SAFETY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The US Environmental Protection Agency is reporting increased radiation levels in rain water, drinking water and milk across the United States as a result of the nuclear crisis in Japan. Yesterday, when asked whether radiation levels were elevated in Ontario, three ministers didn't know the answer. The Minister of Energy said that he had heard that radiation levels had increased, but wouldn't say where, what they were found in or what the levels were. Today, the Premier said that he didn't even know about the rise in radiation levels.

Why is this government all over the map on what is an important public health issue?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Even on an issue as serious as this, the leader of the third party still says things that aren't in keeping with the facts.

Here's the situation: We need to be vigilant with what's happening in Japan, and we need to ensure that we learn any lessons that can be learned from the terrible tragedy that the Japanese people are still coping with.

The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission works with respective federal departments like Health Canada to monitor radiation levels across Canada on an ongoing basis. They note that their detections do not pose any risks to Ontarians or Canadians. Our Ontario medical officer of health spoke out yesterday on this, and this is what she had to say: "Based on current information, I am of the view that there is no health risk for Ontarians from the damaged nuclear facility in Japan.

"Canada and Ontario have strong systems in place to protect"—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It is precisely the facts that Ontarians want about this issue. The public is rightly concerned about the impacts of the Japanese crisis in Ontario. They need full information and transparency about radiation levels in Ontario in order to be reassured and

make healthy decisions, yet this government totally dropped the ball in the monitoring and sharing of this important information.

When exactly did the Ontario government find out about the radiation levels that were raised, and why wasn't the public made aware of that information?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to invite the leader of the third party to join us in reassuring Ontario families that indeed there is no health risk involved in this whatsoever, and all the experts who have weighed in to this have made that very clear.

She asks about the information on radiation levels. The information on this is reported on the websites of the federal government through Health Canada, which I believe has it on its website, and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. So that information is available. It's there for the public.

Again, I would invite the leader of the third party to reassure her constituents and families across Ontario that there are no health risks involved in this at this point in time. That's what all of the experts, from our medical officer of health here in Ontario to the federal agencies that actually have carriage of this particular issue, are saying as well.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is a simple matter of transparency and accountability and public health. The Environmental Protection Agency is publicly posting, in real time, radiation levels in milk, rain, drinking water and air for locations across the United States. Health Canada publishes data on radiation in air on its website, but there is no data on radiation levels in milk, water and rain publicly available in Ontario.

When will the government make this important information available to Ontarians?

Hon. Brad Duguid: As I've said, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission and Health Canada take these matters very seriously, as they should. We take these matters very seriously as well. That's why they post on their websites information as it becomes available.

I want to ask the leader of the third party one more time: Will she join with us in reassuring Ontario families about what Ontario's medical officer of health is saying, what the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission is saying, what Health Canada is saying, or does she have an alternative motive to bringing forward these questions?

These are legitimate questions. We're providing responses that are in keeping with the information that the professionals engaged in these areas are providing, and that is that radiation levels in Ontario are not at any kind of an unsafe or unhealthy condition at this point—

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

NUCLEAR SAFETY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. Media reports indicate that Bruce Power had

found increased radioactivity levels in late March. Dr. Ray Copes, the director of environmental protection at the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion, has been consulting with provincial and federal counterparts on this issue since at least April 1.

How is it, then, that the Ministers of Energy and Health waited almost two weeks until the NDP asked questions in the Legislature before revealing that there was an increase in radioactivity levels in Ontario?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague is looking for something where there is nothing to be found. I think the single most important thing that we can do today is to send a message on behalf of all members of this Legislature to reassure Ontario families: There is no danger associated with their food; there's no danger associated with their water; there's no danger associated with their milk; there's no danger associated with the air; there's no danger associated with the environment.

We are relying on the very best expert evidence and advice that we are receiving. The fact of the matter is, what we have today in Ontario is not harmful to our health. That's an important message that I'm sure my honourable colleague opposite is going to want to join us in sending to Ontario families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The message I'm trying to relay to this Premier is that Ontario families actually deserve all of the information on this issue; that's the important message. Full posting of radioactivity levels in air, water and food—that's all we want; we want to have all of the information. But the government seems more concerned with dampening fears than with providing full information.

Yesterday, in a hastily prepared press release, the medical officer of health said that there was no risk from radioactivity. Did she review radioactivity levels of air, water, rain and food? And if so, will information on these levels be shared with the public?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As was anticipated by experts around the world, there was thinking that the radiation that is leaking from a nuclear reactor in Japan would make its way into the atmosphere and migrate into the western hemisphere. So this radiation, which has been referred to as "minuscule" by the experts in terms of its increase—they tell us, in fact, that there is more radiation in a natural rainfall than there is existing today as a result of the occurrence in Japan.

We continue to hear from our experts. They monitor this on a daily basis. They have been anticipating this for a long time. Again I say to my honourable colleague: The last thing we want to do is alarm Ontario families when there is no need to do so. I think our joint responsibility here today is to reassure Ontario families that there is, in fact, no danger to their health whatsoever.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government needs to do better in sharing information about radioactivity levels—period. They need to do better about sharing that infor-

mation. It is not good enough that, more than a month after the Japan earthquake, Ontarians are still not getting full information about changes in radioactivity levels. This is not about fearmongering; it's about providing full and open information to reassure Ontarians. Americans are getting that full and clear information; Ontarians are simply not getting that full, clear and transparent response from their government.

Will the Premier commit to providing full information on radioactivity levels in milk, rain, drinking water and air to the public now and on an ongoing basis?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to refer my honourable colleague to the news release that was put out just recently by Dr. Arlene King, our chief medical officer of health in Ontario. She says, "I am of the view that there is no health risk to Ontarians from the damaged nuclear facility in Japan.

"Canada and Ontario have strong systems in place to protect the safety of our food supply.

"The government of Canada is monitoring and assessing the situation at the nuclear facility in Japan in order to assess any potential risks to Canadians. To date, all imported and domestic products tested by the federal government are below Health Canada action levels for harmful radiation, and regular updates on test results are available on the Canadian Food Inspection Agency website."

Interjection: It's been there all along.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: That information has been there all along.

I say to my honourable colleague once more that if she has the opportunity to speak directly to the media today, I would encourage her to send an important, intelligent, thoughtful message to Ontario families: We are in fact safe, based on the best advice we are receiving from our experts here in Ontario and Canada.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: To the Minister of Correctional Services: It took the release of freedom-of-information records to the Ontario PC caucus for you to cancel premium cable packages on the prisoners' high-definition cable TVs. But here are some of the prisoner perks the records from another FOI request show you still find money for: creative writing classes that teach inmates "how to create one's own story"; yoga classes that give inmates "transferable skills that can be taken back to their cells"; and healthy alternatives to fast food lessons to let you be the nanny Premier, even to criminals. Meanwhile, you force victims of crime, like Liz Hoage, Wendy Flanagan, Claudette Lalonde, Donna Dixon and Kellie Smith to beg for support to deal with the loss of their murdered children. In the words of Kellie Smith, "How is this fair?"

Hon. James J. Bradley: I can tell the member, first of all, that he is aware that the Attorney General has pointed out very vividly to this House that our government has moved much more extensively and comprehensively in terms of providing assistance to victims of crime. You

left a huge surplus in that particular account. You covered far fewer people when you were in government.

The programs you describe are programs which were available to inmates, in many cases, when your government was in power.

If you're asking that volunteers from the Salvation Army and churches—and I know that the church that I belong to, the United Church, has had volunteers who have gone into the correctional institutions in this province for years and years—withdraw their services, I think you'll be hearing from those volunteers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: That wasn't the question I asked, and Kellie Smith wouldn't be very happy with that answer, either.

Kellie Smith's son Patrick was shot while sitting on the couch at a friend's apartment. Kellie lives paycheque to paycheque and is the sole provider for her 15-year-old daughter. She had to use the rent money to pay for Patrick's funeral. Over a year ago, she applied to the victims of crime fund for support, but she's still waiting for an answer.

You open the vault for criminals. You pay so that they have transferable skills to take back to their cells. You want to be the nanny Premier for murderers and crooks. How do you explain spending so much on classes for criminals and perks for prisoners while making victims of crime wait for support?

Hon. James J. Bradley: That's even over the top for my friend in asking questions.

I think there's a recognition from the Attorney General of how extensively this government has moved in helping victims. The Attorney General has also given an undertaking to look into individual cases that have been raised either in the media or in this House and will be dealing with that appropriately, with the largesse that has been provided to victims in this province, as it should be.

In terms of the other programs, I really question whether the member truly believes—because he was part of a government that had these programs in effect—that these people who are going to come out of the prison system at some time and come back into the community—they have to be prepared to come back into the community. Your government recognized this when you brought a lot of these programs into effect, so that when they do come out into the community they can be contributing members instead of going back into a life of crime. That was a good policy you had at that time, and I agree with that policy today.

TAXATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Anyone who tuned in to last night's federal leadership debate saw clearly that when it comes to corporate tax giveaways, the Prime Minister and the Premier of Ontario sing from exactly the same songbook.

This morning, yet another study proves exhaustively that these corporate tax giveaways don't increase business investment and don't create jobs.

When will this government finally abandon the discredited tax giveaway policies that it and the Prime Minister cling so stubbornly to and accept the evidence presented in study after study that corporate tax giveaways don't create jobs?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'm proud of the tax package for jobs and growth that our government created. For every dollar of corporate tax cuts, we have more than \$2 in personal tax cuts.

I'd refer my colleague opposite to his colleague from Beaches—East York, who quite properly noted that everybody is getting a tax cut.

I've said this before to the third party and I will say it again: We are faced with competition from Alberta, from British Columbia, from Saskatchewan. The Ministry of Finance estimates that we are losing between \$200 million and \$500 million a year in revenue due to tax seepage as a result of the lower corporate tax rates. It is simply a matter of being competitive and simply a matter of creating good, high-paying, new jobs across Ontario—

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Minister of Finance, you're going to have to look at the reality in this world. The facts presented in this latest study of Statistics Canada data by the CCPA couldn't be more definitive. Business capital spending has declined notably as a share of gross domestic product since the early 1980s, despite repeated tax cuts.

When study after study shows that there are far better ways to create jobs than corporate tax cuts, why is this government walking lockstep with Stephen Harper while ignoring everyone else?

1100

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite—I've read the study—is completely misinterpreting the study. He's just taking it completely out of context, isolating certain variables and not being completely candid with the people of Ontario. What I will refer him to are the Q3 results for Ontario, which saw business, machinery and equipment investments up 7.7%—a record—since we have been implementing that.

I think the only people out of touch are the New Democrats, who don't want to deal with unemployed steelworkers in Hamilton. They want to say, "Stay unemployed." They don't want to deal with unemployed auto workers throughout southwestern Ontario; they'd rather create jobs in Alberta. They don't want to deal with the unemployed in northern Ontario, in the pulp and paper industry; they'd rather create jobs in other provinces. Not this government; we're going to continue to do the right thing by investing in health, investing in education—

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

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, today is the international Day of Pink. This is an internationally recognized day against bullying, discrimination and homophobia. I know all

members in this House agree that there is no place for bullying in our schools, places of work or communities.

Minister, parents in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham have been contacting me as they want to know that when they send their child to school, they're going to be learning in a safe and positive environment, free from discrimination and bullying. We know that in order for students to learn, they need to feel safe at school.

Minister, what can I tell my constituents who want to know that their government is standing up to combat bullying in Ontario schools for Ontario students?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: An important question, and I know that all members in this House have heard from constituents who are very concerned about bullying. The fact is, it's important that this government has taken action, through our safe schools strategy legislation that was passed here, to deal with issues of bullying in schools.

Now we know that bullying, for example, is something in schools that—students can be suspended for acts of bullying. Parents of students—both those who would be guilty of doing it and the students who would have been victims—must be notified.

We continue, as a government, to work with our schools and school boards to increase that knowledge and understanding of bullying issues and to build capacity on how best to deal with these issues and ensure that they—

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

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I think we can all appreciate that bullying needs to be combated at the root cause, which is primarily because of indifference, misunderstanding and fear.

Minister, the roots where the Day of Pink began were with two grade 12 students in Nova Scotia who stood up for a grade 9 student who was being bullied because he wore a pink shirt to school. Through the leadership of the grade 12 students, the next day, the majority of the school population was wearing pink shirts to combat bullying. Because of their leadership, adults across Canada and around the world now wear pink as a symbol that bullying is not acceptable in any form. This type of leadership is both inspirational and necessary to confront the important issue of homophobia in our schools.

Minister, what can I tell parents in my riding that we are doing to work toward students no longer being targets, specifically of homophobic bullying, in Ontario's schools?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Of course, homophobia is absolutely unacceptable. To help combat homophobia in our schools, we have brought in the first equity and inclusive strategy that requires school boards to have policies in place to combat discrimination based on race, age, gender, disability or sexual orientation.

The member is absolutely right when she says that this is the type of leadership we need—the leadership that those students in Nova Scotia demonstrated. That is why we have made very clear in our policy that student-led groups to deal with these issues must be allowed in schools where students have said this is what they want.

We are committed to working to build capacity to work with school boards and, most definitely, with students in our schools to deal—

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

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: This question is to the Premier. Premier, for the second time this week, you've been caught red-handed trying to fool Ontario families. First, the Ontario PC caucus caught you trying to hide expenses by posting them under the names of other people in your office. Then you tried to take credit for cancelling premium cable packages at provincial jails the same day that the Ontario PC caucus obtained freedom-of-information records that revealed what you have been up to. Premier, what made you think you would get away with this?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I hear the member for Lanark interjecting here, the member who personally ensured that Norm Sterling, a long-standing—

Interjections.

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

Please continue.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member for Mississippi Mills would understand, being a long-serving member of this Legislature and having served in the justice portfolio, that this government, when in power, had many of these programs available to people, largely delivered by volunteers in our society.

Many members of this House belong to churches and volunteer organizations that have gone into the system over the years and ensured that the people who were in there, when they were coming out of the system—

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: First of all, high-definition TV didn't even exist a decade ago. You were caught red-handed in a clumsy scheme to try and fool Ontario families. It didn't even occur to you to cancel premium cable for inmates until you had to release the FOI records to the Ontario PC caucus. Even then, you sat on the FOI records for as long as you could. They were 137 days overdue. We had to threaten to haul the Minister of Correctional Services in front of the privacy commissioner before you were forced to release them. When you did release them, you panicked and ran throughout the halls of this building trying to quiet the media, and we've never seen you run that fast. Is it any wonder you say that crime isn't a priority when you plot and scheme so hard to hide what you've been up to?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I will just remind members on both sides, in the questioning and the answering, that policy is what we need to

discuss and not bring things down to a personal level in a question or a personal level in an answer—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East.

I would just caution both honourable members about that. Minister.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much for that caution.

I appreciate the fact that the critic for the Conservative Party would think that I could move that quickly in the hallways of Queen's Park. I'm not in as good physical condition as the member or the House leader for the Conservative Party. But I can tell you that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The member from Peterborough and the member from Lanark: The question and answer was between the member from Simcoe North and the Minister of Community Safety, not between Lanark and Peterborough. If you want to have a discussion, please don't interfere in the question and answer and don't interfere for our guests who want to be here. Take your discussions outside this chamber.

Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I've been in opposition, so I know the kinds of questions you have to ask in opposition, even when the questions are those which ask the present government to fix a problem that the last government created.

Let us clarify one more time for the House. You put the premium cable in the correctional institutes; this government is taking the premium cable out—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Perhaps the member from Renfrew may want to reflect on his comments.

Interjection.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please come to order. New question.

1110

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The budget announced the closure of three supposedly underutilized and inefficient jails: in Sarnia, Owen Sound and Walkerton. This announcement came as a complete surprise. In Sarnia, the jail has been operating at more than 100% capacity. It is the newest small jail in the province and it is part of a comprehensive justice system serving not only Sarnia and surrounding communities but also plays a major role in border security. Can the Premier explain why, then, his government made this decision without a shred of evidence?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm somewhat surprised to hear this question coming from the New Democratic

Party that they want us to keep old prisons, inefficient prisons which are not serving the purposes of the province of Ontario in light of our economic circumstances—that you want us to keep those open.

We do know that the Conservative government, when it was in power, closed about 25 jails in the province of Ontario. We recognize that. I suspect that there might have been some jails—I can't say for sure—that might have been closed under the New Democratic Party.

We are looking for ways to save money in this province, to devote that money to health care, education and other very constructive activities. We've looked at the old buildings, inefficient buildings, and revised the system, and we hope to have the efficiencies that can be channelled back into those—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The problem is that this particular decision makes no financial sense. This government has ignored the cost of transporting prisoners between Sarnia and Windsor, an over two-hour drive each way. This government has ignored the concerns of First Nations communities who have worked hard to develop appropriate local supports in this jail. They've ignored the important financial contribution that the \$6 million in corrections wages brings to the community as a whole. If the Premier had bothered to talk to the local community, he would actually know all of this.

Now that he knows, will the Premier re-evaluate these closures?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would point out to the member that the Sarnia jail was built over 50 years ago and requires more than \$1 million in capital investments. It costs \$180 per day to house an inmate in the Sarnia jail. It will cost an estimated \$125 per day to house those same inmates in the new Windsor jail when it opens in 2013. This represents a savings of approximately 30% to Ontario taxpayers.

The Ministry of Correctional Services and Community Safety officials, when asked to look at ways to find efficiencies and save money, provided information to the ministry—to the minister, in this particular case—and the decisions are based on those statistics provided by ministry officials.

PHOTO IDENTIFICATION

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. There are citizens in this province who do not have access to a driver's licence. Approximately 1.5 million Ontarians aged 16 years and older do not have a valid driver's licence.

I have heard from and worked with many of my constituents, including the CNIB and the Canadian Council of the Blind representatives, about the need to have a proper photo ID. These constituents are from all walks of life but, for some reason or other, either cannot or choose not to have a driver's licence. Some just don't own a car.

These fine folks find it very difficult to access the most basic services which require a particular photo ID.

Some may know that many people are forced to carry their passports as a form of ID; that's not recommended.

This is certainly not a new situation. Previous governments never attempted to remedy this. Can the minister please provide an update on the status for a non-driver photo ID card?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: This is really a very important issue for people who don't have a driver's licence in Ontario, and it has been this way for decades. We know that a photo ID—if you have a driver's licence, there are a whole lot more things you can do than if you don't have a driver's licence: opening a new bank account, cashing a cheque, applying for a loan, gaining admittance to certain bars and clubs, boarding a domestic flight.

I've had meetings with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, the Canadian Council of the Blind and numerous other groups who are concerned about this. It's really not just an administration issue; it's a social justice issue, and we're working with groups to make sure that we can move forward on it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Dave Levac: I reinforce my point: Previous governments did nothing about this issue whatsoever. I want to thank the minister for moving forward on it and taking into account these folks who don't drive and thus do not have photo IDs and drivers' licences: Ontarians such as seniors and those with special needs, or those who don't own a car.

It's too often our most vulnerable populations that are left with the least options needed to level that playing field. This legislation, if passed, would address exactly the type of situation so that the people who do not have a driver's licence, who cannot obtain a driver's licence or who decide not to drive have a proper piece of photo identification with them.

I've been working on this issue for a long time, and I'm glad to see that this government is doing something about it. That's why there's such a need for this photo ID. Ontario and Quebec are the only provinces in the country that don't have this yet. I'm confident that we're going to get an answer. Given the—

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you to the member for Brant for working on this file. When I was first appointed to this ministry, one of the first meetings I had, actually, was with the CNIB, who brought forward this issue.

We need to make sure that the photo card has the right features on it. There have to be some special features, particularly for people with visual impairments. There are some significant IT requirements that need to be in place through ServiceOntario in order to be able to issue these cards.

I'm going to be bringing forward an update to the House very soon. I just want to reinforce that we consider this a priority for people who, throughout their whole lives, have not been able to have the kind of ID that someone who has a driver's licence is able to have.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. The Minister of Health dismissed my previous question on the costs related to the air ambulance and critical care land ambulance organization. I'm hoping the Premier will take this more seriously.

Capital expenses attributed to Ornge for the 2008-09 fiscal year were \$2.25 million. In 2009-10 they increased to \$8.6 million, followed by another increase for 2010-11 to more than \$12 million.

My question to the Premier is this: How much of that taxpayer-funded capital has subsidized equipment and facilities that are actually being used by the for-profit businesses that are also owned by the Ornge organization?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Minister of Health is rightly proud of the achievements of the new Ornge ambulance service, which is expanding air ambulance service across the province and, as I understand it, doing it in a very, very efficient way.

I am delighted that, in fact, there is new capital and new air ambulances are available to serve remote communities. Just yesterday in my community, a little boy was hit by a car backing up, and it was an Ornge ambulance that took him from Windsor to the best care available anywhere in the world, in London.

Those investments are important. The return to taxpayers is important. It's measured by a variety of factors, including improved service and improved care for all of our people.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: No one is arguing about the importance of air ambulance.

This is the annual report for this organization. In every one of its pages, there is not one reference to financial information, not one, yet 12 million of taxpayers' dollars have been transferred to this company. They have just moved into a new \$3-million facility.

I am asking this of the Premier: How many health care dollars transferred to Ornge are being used to subsidize parts of this business that are for-profit, that are owned by this Ornge organization? Can he tell me that, or does he know?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I can assure the Legislature and the people of Ontario that the contractual arrangements with Ornge protect the interest of taxpayers unequivocally. We believe that these investments—and this is one of the reasons we engaged Ornge. You can see their new facilities at the Toronto Island airport. You can see the air ambulances themselves throughout the province of Ontario.

I'm glad the member opposite is talking about how money is used and where this money gets found, because the people of Ontario would like to know where we're going to find the \$3 billion in cuts in health care if they cut the HST. I can assure the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew will withdraw the comment that he made.

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Mr. John Yakabuski: I don't know how he can keep lying about that.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I can assure the people of Ontario that the arrangements with Ornge are proper. The service is outstanding, and by the way, when that member and his party were in office, they refused to make the appropriate investments in air ambulance service, particularly to the north, that were so desperately needed.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Members of the Algonquin Nation, including Algonquin Firekeeper Daniel Bernard, are here at Queen's Park again today. They are frustrated with the government's refusal to listen to their concerns about clear-cutting in the Ottawa South March Highlands. For months, they've been calling for the Minister of Culture to conduct a new archaeological study on the site to protect sacred aboriginal artifacts, but the government has refused flatly to address any of their concerns.

In the meantime, the area is being clear-cut for new development. Instead of showing such disrespect to First Nations, will the government halt the destruction at this site while a new and proper study is actually conducted?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Tourism and Culture.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question. The city of Ottawa is the approval authority for the South March Highlands development. It is solely responsible for the decision to require an archaeological assessment. Under the Ontario Heritage Act, my ministry approves the licensing of consultant archaeologists. As well, my ministry reviews their archaeology assessments.

In the case of the South March Highlands, the assessment in question was completed under the 1993 standards and guidelines. My ministry reviewed the archaeological assessments of the site in 2004. I understand that the city had asked the developer to engage the local aboriginal—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The reality is that the South March Highlands is a diverse and valuable ecosystem, home to many species at risk. Many community groups, along with First Nations, have raised their voices and come together to oppose the razing of this area for development.

This government has ignored significant evidence of archaeological artifacts in the South March Highlands. In fact, the Minister of Culture has accepted an archaeological study which he refers to, commissioned by the developer, a study which has been called by other archae-

ologists "fatally flawed." In fact, an award-winning archaeologist, Robert McGhee, labelled it "fatally flawed."

Before the final trees are cut down, will the Premier finally demand that a new and proper study be conducted?

Hon. Michael Chan: When any artifacts are found on the land, the developer has the responsibility to hire a licensed archaeologist to complete an archaeological assessment. The licensed archaeologist is then required to report their findings to the ministry. I have confirmed this in writing to several interested parties. With that said, my ministry is not an approval authority with respect to any development project. My ministry's role is to review archaeological assessments conducted by consultant archaeologists.

My ministry also licenses consultant archaeologists under the Ontario Heritage Act. It is responsible for decisions regarding the needs—

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

CONVENTION CENTRES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is also for the Minister of Tourism and Culture. Minister, yesterday we had the great pleasure of watching my city's new jewel, the Ottawa Convention Centre, officially open its doors, and it is spectacular.

As the economy continues to be a priority for families across this province, a convention centre is a smart investment to drive key sectors of our economy with new jobs and new opportunities. That is because convention centres are more than just a piece of our civic landscape; they are constantly alive with people, attracting regional, national and international events and conferences. These visitors, in turn, create new jobs—jobs that are critical in my riding of Ottawa Centre.

Could the minister tell my constituents and the people of Ontario what this government has been doing to support convention centres as a key driver for tourism—

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

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. He's right: It is a spectacular building there.

Investments in convention centres stimulate business and contribute to our province's economy. Across North America, the convention business is worth more than \$263 billion. This is an industry that creates and supports jobs.

Speaker, allow me to give you some numbers. Since 2003, we have invested across this province \$60 million to redevelop the Ottawa Convention Centre, \$35 million to construct the Scotiabank—

Interjections.

Hon. Michael Chan: As the economy turns the corner, our investment is putting Ontario in the minds of conventioners—

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It's important that we recognize the economic benefits of investing in convention centres. Equally important is a vision for an Ontario that welcomes people from across Canada and around the world to come visit, experience, and enjoy the amazing things this province has to offer.

However, our investment must also yield results. When we invest, Ontario families want to see the difference our investment is making in their community and know that their government is making smart, reasoned investments on their behalf. They must see the jobs it creates and the increased numbers of tourists that are coming to our community. I can certainly say that the Ottawa Convention Centre is already attracting international attention, and we have seen the people who have been hard at work making it worthy of that attention.

Could the minister share with the House some of the tangible economic—

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

Hon. Michael Chan: Our investments are making a difference for families. Yesterday, I attended the opening of the Ottawa Convention Centre with the Premier and the honourable member from Ottawa Centre. All our partners agree on the economic benefits. In Ottawa, the projected economic impact is \$200 million, supporting 3,000 new jobs.

National and international events are also coming to Ottawa, events such as the National Hockey League's 2012 all-star game.

In the Niagara region, our investment in the Scotiabank Convention Centre is creating jobs. It is projected to inject \$93 million into Niagara's economy, creating more than 200 direct jobs.

There is no doubt that our investment is creating strong jobs for families across—

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

MUNICIPAL PLANNING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. As you know, in March, an application for a quarry operation in the township of Melancthon was filed with your ministry. This application, at over 2,300 acres, is the largest in Ontario's history.

The comment period ending on April 26 does not give Melancthon enough time to prepare a comprehensive submission. The township is finding it difficult to assemble a team of experts to assist them on such a large application. Also, the notice of application did not appear in the Dundalk Herald, the only weekly publication which covers the northern half of Melancthon.

Minister, will you commit today to extending the deadline for comments to August 26 so that the township of Melancthon has an opportunity to—

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

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm pleased to answer the question. I understand there has been local concern expressed about the aggregate licence application from the Highland Companies in Melancthon township.

I can confirm that our local district office has received a licence application. I want to make it clear that now is the time for local citizens who have concerns about this project to become involved in the consultation process. Groups or individuals have 45 days, or until April 26, to register concerns or objections to the proposal through the environmental website. It can also be accessed via my ministry website.

I can tell you that I did meet with a delegation from Melancthon township on February 28 of this year at the ROMA/Ontario Good Roads Association conference. I know the council is concerned, and I want to ensure that their residents' concerns are addressed.

I'd be happy to answer further in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Minister, when you met with Melancthon, I understand that they did share their concerns that they were having difficulty finding these experts, in some cases because they had already been hired by the proponent.

I want to ensure that the residents of Melancthon and North Dufferin actually get an opportunity to involve themselves in the process. This is a huge operation that is of a scale never seen in Ontario. I think it is incumbent on you to make the opportunity for residents and the township to actually have the time needed so that they can review the application properly. I would hope that, with the 10 resolutions I will send over to you now from townships in both Simcoe and Dufferin, you would seriously consider their—

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

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Even before the application was submitted, I know that this proposed quarry was the subject of significant local media attention. Residents are concerned about the preservation, I understand, of agricultural land and the quarry's effect on the water table. The Aggregate Resources Act has a process that gives the applicant up to two years, until March 2013, to resolve any of the objections to the application. If there are still unresolved objections to the licence application after that two-year period, the Ministry of Natural Resources can refer the application to the Ontario Municipal Board.

We are at the very early stages of this application, and I would encourage anyone with an interest in this aggregate proposal to become involved in the consultation process. I'm interested in what they have to say about the application, and I encourage all members to participate.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Education. The Toronto District School Board will be discussing the issue of allowing TV advertising in high schools tonight, again. Schools across Ontario are

starved for cash and are being forced to consider exposing students to corporate advertising. The Toronto District School Board is proposing to download this decision to individual schools. Does the minister agree that the decision to allow TV advertising should be left up to local schools?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Actually, the honourable member would know that we have made a commitment that we are going to be bringing forward draft regulations around corporate involvement in our schools in Ontario. We feel that it's absolutely appropriate that we do have a look at how corporations are involved in our schools, particularly given that this government has made such significant investments to support education in our schools. We've increased funding by 40%. That, in our view, has a significant impact on the need for schools to consider these types of partnerships. We do recognize that there may be particular circumstances in situations where it would be appropriate. We think that it is something that does need to have guidelines, and that is why our government is committed to ensuring that we put those in place for the good of the school community and the students and families who would be involved.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We have spoken to trustees, to parents, to student trustees, and they are expressing utter frustration that there are still no clear provincial rules on corporate advertising for our school boards. While your ministry takes years to develop guidelines, schools have to scramble to bring in revenue. When will the ministry show leadership—any kind of leadership—and establish clear guidelines and prevent students from being used as targets for corporate advertising?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm very happy to have this opportunity to make clear for the member opposite that this is an issue that we have been dealing with, that we have shown leadership on. As a result of that, we now have guidelines that very clearly describe student fees and what is appropriate for student fees. We now have draft guidelines on our website around fundraising in our schools, and we are eager to get the feedback from all of those stakeholder groups, like students and parents and trustees, around what is appropriate in terms of fundraising and the guidelines that are needed. And this year, we are going to be bringing out draft guidelines that deal with corporate involvement in our schools. We think this is fair. We think it is appropriate at this time, particularly since we have made such significant increased investments in our schools. We are now spending fully 40% more in our education system than ever before. We think that now is the time to deal with these issues.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the motion by Ms. Smith for allocation

of time on Bill 173, An Act respecting 2011 Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters.

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

The division bells rang from 1134 to 1139.

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

On April 12, Ms. Smith moved government notice of motion 56. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Duncan, Dwight	Naqvi, Yasir
Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Oraziotti, David
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Hoskins, Eric	Ramal, Khalil
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Ramsay, David
Best, Margaret	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ruprecht, Tony
Brotten, Laurel C.	Johnson, Rick	Sandals, Liz
Brown, Michael A.	Kwintar, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Carroll, Aileen	Leal, Jeff	Smith, Monique
Chan, Michael	Levac, Dave	Sorbara, Greg
Chiarelli, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Sousa, Charles
Colle, Mike	McGuinty, Dalton	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	Meilleur, Madeleine	Van Bommel, Maria
Dickson, Joe	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Murray, Glen R.	Zimmer, David

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hillier, Randy	Munro, Julia
Bailey, Robert	Horwath, Andrea	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bisson, Gilles	Jones, Sylvia	Prue, Michael
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	Savoline, Joyce
Clark, Steve	Kormos, Peter	Shurman, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	MacLeod, Lisa	Tabuns, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	Marchese, Rosario	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gélinas, France	Martiniuk, Gerry	Yakubuski, John
Hampton, Howard	Miller, Norm	
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Paul	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 54; the nays are 31.

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

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Laurel C. Brotten: I want to acknowledge what I will say in advance is quite a lengthy list of individuals joining us here in the gallery today. I understand they're making their way in:

Mary Ballantyne from the OACAS; Francine Boldovitch at the Dave Thomas Foundation; Deborah Brennan, the Adoption Council of Canada; Noelle Burke, Adoption Council of Ontario; Pat Convery, Adoption Council of Ontario; Aleisha Deece-Cassidy, Lexi Deece-Cassidy,

and Sean Deece-Cassidy; Adam Diamond, the coordinator of YouthCAN; Irwin Elman, Ontario's child advocate; Jill Fairbrother, the Dave Thomas Foundation; Will Falk, expert panel member and adoptive parent; Nathan Gilbert, the executive director of the Laidlaw Foundation; Rory Gleeson, from the OACAS; Marcelo Gomez-Wiuckstern, OACAS; Mary Henry, the Adoption Council of Ontario; Neil Lester, FirstOak and the Dave Thomas Foundation; Jade Maitland, the coordinator of YouthCAN; Eric Martin and Quinn Martin; Bruce McKenna, the Dave Thomas Foundation; Denney Morrison; Virginia Rowden from OACAS; Moira Sicat from the Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare; John Stapleton; Susan Towle from the Dave Thomas Foundation; Ene Underwood from the Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare; Andrea Weissman-Daniels, Ignite the Spark fund; and a number of individuals from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

Welcome to all of you.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'd like to welcome to the Legislative Assembly today my EA from the riding, Michael Jiggins; also, from the municipality of North Grenville, a long-time family friend and a councillor in that municipality, Tim Sutton. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly today.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I would like to introduce, in the west members' gallery, an Oakville constituent and author, Deborah Brennan. She wrote a fantastic book about the human side of the adoption process called *Labours of Love*, and she's here today to hear the announcement with the adoption council.

CLERK'S BIRTHDAY

Mr. Steve Clark: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Little birds told me that there may be a young lady at the table who is 29 years old; I think it's her birthday. Through you to the Clerk, maybe that can be clarified?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Happy birthday to the Clerk.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RAY TANGUAY

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I'm indeed fortunate that my position allows me to meet so many outstanding members of my community, persons who I admire for enriching the lives of so many. Though it is most difficult to choose from this distinguished group, I stand here today to honour the dedicated employees of Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada in Cambridge and Woodstock, and their leader, Mr. Ray Tanguay, a person of great ability and vision.

Mr. Tanguay was recently named as one of three new senior managing officers for Toyota Motor Corp., making him the top non-Japanese executive in the com-

pany. I am proud to know Mr. Tanguay and to have witnessed him become a global leader in the automotive industry while bringing prosperity to so many in our region. Mr. Tanguay began his career with Toyota in 1991 and is today senior vice-president of Toyota Motor North America and chairman of Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada.

The Cambridge plant has undergone many expansions since 1986, including Woodstock, and today employs 6,500 people.

With Mr. Tanguay as president, Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada in Cambridge became the only automobile manufacturing plant outside of Japan to produce the jewel of Toyota, a Lexus brand of vehicle.

Today, I salute Ray Tanguay and his team at Toyota and wish them continued success.

JOHN BADHAM

Mr. Jeff Leal: In my riding of Peterborough, we've had over the years many great media personalities. I rise today to speak about a radio announcer in Peterborough who recently made known his intention to leave his daily news broadcasting position.

I don't believe there's anyone in Peterborough who doesn't recognize the deep, strong voice of John Badham. We've all been listening to him deliver the news for 23 years. John completed his last broadcast on March 4. He has promised the residents of Peterborough that they will continue to hear his views on local events and politics, but not always on the daily news broadcast. He recently stated that this change of pace gives him "a little more opportunity to wander [and] talk to more people without the definition of a time frame of being on air."

John's career began many years before coming to the Peterborough airwaves. He began broadcasting over 53 years ago in Saskatchewan. At the age of 73, he can boast of being the voice of the Toronto Argonauts as one of his accomplishments as a broadcaster.

John has always been a well-informed, non-biased reporter who took his position in our community very seriously. He researched his material and delivered the news with passion and respect. Over the next 12 months, he will transition into his new role at KRUZ FM radio station, working on commentaries and opinions, but not on a set timetable.

I want to wish John, his wife, Dorothy, and his family all the very best for the future. We'll all stay tuned to see what comes next as he transitions into this very new phase.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: As we recognize National Victims of Crime Awareness Week in Canada this year, we acknowledge that there are many voices and many paths taken by victims of crime and those who work to support them. We acknowledge all children, youth, adults and seniors who themselves, or whose loved ones, have been affected by the injurious nature of crime. We are

reminded of the ongoing need to treat victims of crime with compassion and respect as they voice their unique experience and undertake their journey of recovery.

This is why I called on the government to make the recommendations in the Goudge report a priority. Victims of Dr. Charles Smith should not have to undergo the strain of delayed justice after they were so unconscionably denied justice. Indeed, no victim of crime should have to undergo the strain of a delayed criminal justice system. It is why I called on the government to account for a surplus in the victims' justice fund and to ensure that the rules of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board treat all victims fairly and with respect.

As members of provincial Parliament, we must work to ensure that victims of crime are heard, are respected and are not revictimized by the policies and programs of the state. It is for this reason that the PC caucus has supported and continues to support programs and policies that reduce crime and its victims while remaining ever-mindful of the need to support victims of crime through the criminal justice system and along their journey of recovery thereafter.

TORNADO MEDICAL SYSTEMS

Mr. Bill Mauro: I recently had the pleasure of being part of an important event. Tornado Medical Systems, or TMS, announced its first wave of recruitment to build its Thunder Bay product development team. TMS has over 20 employees. In August of last year, TMS announced that, with the help of a \$1-million investment from the northern Ontario heritage fund, they were establishing a new state-of-the-art product development facility in Thunder Bay's historic Whalen building.

Earlier this year, TMS announced that it was expanding its Thunder Bay team, recruiting software developers, electrical, mechanical and optical engineers, and engineering project managers. They are planning to add at least 10 more employees to their Thunder Bay lab alone.

The rise of TMS's Thunder Bay operations is another important step forward in the evolution of our region's economy. The rise of the knowledge-based sector in the northwest is helping grow and diversify the number and types of jobs in our community and offering opportunities to our young people.

Tornado Medical Systems has close ties to the Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute, including formal collaboration on the development of medical imaging devices. Several years ago, our government provided \$15 million in assistance to help establish the Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute.

That initial investment has helped set some extraordinary things in motion: the creation of a revolutionary new dual-site surgical centre; the growth of RegenMed and its recognition as an Ontario tissue and bone bank; and now TMS, just to name a few.

I want to congratulate Stefan Larson, CEO of TMS; Michael Power, the CEO of TBRRI; and Tornado Medical Systems' entire Thunder Bay team. Thunder Bay's knowledge-based economy is on the move.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm proud to say that my riding of Durham is home to many significant natural heritage features like the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt. Residents and municipalities have embraced the principle of stewardship and preservation throughout Durham. But while stewardship and protection are important, it must be done with respect for the people—the average landowner, the taxpayer.

1510

This past week in Clarington residents learned that their land and livelihood could be taken away from them. The Ministry of Natural Resources and the municipality of Clarington have taken it upon themselves to designate swaths of land as "provincially significant wetlands." This would effectively restrict residents from farming, building and generally enjoying a productive use of their property.

I want to thank Heather Whalen, representing her father, William Wallace; Walter Pingle; Roland, Bert and Glenn Weigel; Kerry Meydam; Vicky MacBeth; Ted and Beth Meszaros; and Brian Catherwood, as well as Karen Tremblay, all of who have made some deputation to the municipality expressing their concerns.

These are some of the citizens who have raised these concerns. These are people whose lands and privileges are being taken from them. In many cases, no one from MNR has even been there to see their properties, yet they're being classified without any input.

I call on the Minister of Natural Resources to ensure fair rules are in place for residents to have meaningful input on the decision. What is the rush, Minister? Take your time and—

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

CANADIAN ABORIGINAL AND MINORITY SUPPLIER COUNCIL

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to welcome members of the Canadian Aboriginal and Minority Supplier Council to Toronto for their 2011 Diversity Procurement Fair.

The Canadian Aboriginal and Minority Supplier Council works to deliver programs and processes that promote and facilitate procurement opportunities between major corporations in Canada and suppliers of all sizes owned and operated by Canadian aboriginals and minorities.

As part of a range of products and services developed to facilitate engagement, inclusion and utilization of aboriginal and minority suppliers in the supply chain, the annual Diversity Procurement Fair provides a forum for aboriginal and visible minority entrepreneurs to present themselves to prospective buyers while providing corporations with an opportunity to meet and recruit prospective suppliers.

More than one in three Canadians is expected to be aboriginal or minority by 2031. Today, Toronto is close to 50%. Aboriginal peoples and minorities have been

buying and starting businesses faster than ever in recent years, contributing significantly to our economy, and the Canadian Aboriginal and Minority Supplier Council plays an important role in developing opportunities which support their sustained success.

The fair runs from April 13 to 14. I wish them all the best for another successful year.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Rick Johnson: The announcement in this year's budget of a permanent risk management program is good news for Ontario's farmers and farm families. I want to recognize the work done by our government, my colleague the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and Ontario's farm organization leaders. They all deserve to be congratulated for a job well done. This program will give our farmers the predictability, bankability and stability they need to stay on the land and continue to provide us with the good things that grow in Ontario.

Unfortunately, the PC Party, when given the chance, chose to vote against the budget, against risk management and against supporting Ontario's hard-working farmers. But then, look how they treated our farmers when they were in government. They cut the agriculture budget, shut down 42 OMAFRA offices and sat by while farmers left the land. What farmers in Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock and across Ontario really want is an answer for why they voted against risk management.

This budget supports the hard work on the part of Ontario farmers—programs by farmers for farmers. It's one more example of our government helping farmers through difficult times.

HATE CRIMES

Mr. Mike Colle: B'nai Brith Canada recently published its 2010 audit of anti-Semitic incidents. The audit found that complaints of anti-Semitic violence, harassment and intimidation increased by 3% in Canada from the previous year.

All Ontarians have the right to live in a province free from discrimination, racism, intolerance and hate. Here in Ontario, we are committed to fighting discrimination in all forms. That's why I'm pleased that Ontario has taken action to fight anti-Semitism and hate crimes.

We've provided funding to B'nai Brith Canada in the past to support their efforts to strengthen networks, share information among victims' groups, educators and the media, victim service providers and members of the criminal justice system.

To address hate in all its forms, we have expanded Ontario's hate crime extremism investigative team. In addition, Ontario has a team of crown attorneys specially trained in hate crime legislation.

The Attorney General has also committed to ensuring that hate crime requests are brought to him for consideration and decided upon within 60 days so that charges can be laid.

We have also have passed a new law to make it easier for victims of hate crimes to sue offenders for damages resulting from emotional distress and bodily harm arising from the distress.

As MPPs, we have a responsibility to speak out against discrimination and to fight intolerance. As the representative of the riding of Eglinton-Lawrence, I stand up on behalf of my constituents to speak up against intolerance and hatred in all of our communities. I stand proud to be a member of the McGuinty government that stands with our Jewish community, and all communities, to fight anti-Semitism and hatred and to build an inclusive society where everyone in Ontario can live with dignity and respect.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Paul Miller: Well, I'm just going to fly by the heels here. The member isn't here for a statement.

I just wanted to make a comment about yesterday. There was a statement made in the House by the economic minister and the member from Flamborough about all the jobs and all the great work they're doing in Hamilton.

I'd just like to talk about Max Aicher, which employed about 250 people, ex-1005 members. That deal was created when I was at Stelco, long before 2007, and that deal was in the works already, so it wasn't new jobs they created. All they did was transfer some of the guys who were laid off to work in those two plants, which was the 1210 mill and the bloom and billet mill, which I worked in. So I'm well aware if those were former employees who were just reinstated because they'd been laid off. But there are still 900 guys—900 members are still locked out in Hamilton that they haven't done anything for. What they have done is help the company next door, which is a non-union company, but they've done nothing for the union company, which is the former Stelco.

So we're very disappointed in their efforts in Hamilton. Those jobs were already there, and they're taking credit for them and they shouldn't be, because those mills have just started up again over a period of seven years. They were laying dormant, and Max Aicher waited for a downturn in the economy to start those jobs again, and that's how it happened. They simply bought it off US Steel. So, once again, they're claiming something that they didn't do.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BUILDING FAMILIES AND SUPPORTING YOUTH TO BE SUCCESSFUL ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 FAVORISANT LA FONDATION DE FAMILLES ET LA RÉUSSITE CHEZ LES JEUNES

Ms. Broten moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 179, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act respecting adoption and the provision of care and maintenance / Projet de loi 179, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille en ce qui concerne l'adoption et les soins et l'entretien.

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. Laurel C. Broten: I'll make my statement during ministerial statements.

FARADALE FARMS LTD. ACT, 2011

Mr. Martiniuk moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr46, An Act to revive Faradale Farms Ltd.

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): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

ONTARIO ONE CALL ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR ONTARIO ONE CALL

Mr. Bailey moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 180, An Act respecting Ontario One Call Ltd. /
Projet de loi 180, Loi sur Ontario One Call Ltd.

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 member for a short statement.

1520

Mr. Robert Bailey: Ontario One Call Ltd. is a corporation currently operating in Ontario. Ontario One Call Ltd. provides information to excavators and homeowners about the location of underground infrastructure.

This act would require that persons or entities specified in the act become members of the corporation and provide information to it. When a member of the corporation receives information about a proposed excavation or dig, the member is required to mark the location of this underground infrastructure that is in the vicinity of the excavation or dig site, or indicate that this infrastructure will not be affected by the excavation or dig. The act creates offences for failure to comply with the act or regulations made under it.

MOTIONS

ADJOURNMENT DEBATES

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding late shows.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed. Minister?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move that the late shows standing in the names of the members for Wellington–Halton Hills, Nepean–Carleton and Durham be deferred until Tuesday, April 19, 2011.

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

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ADOPTION

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: There is nothing more critical to a child's well-being than knowing that he or she will always have a place to call home.

At any given time in Ontario, 18,000 children and youth are receiving services from children's aid societies. Roughly 9,000 of them are crown wards in the care of the province. These kids come into the care of a CAS for a variety of reasons, but they all have one thing in common: Their best chance of success is with a safe, stable and permanent family to call their own.

Unfortunately, 75% have access orders that, for more than 30 years, have legally prevented children and youth from being eligible for adoption. At the same time, we have so many prospective parents who long to bring a child into their lives to love and support.

That is why I rise in the House today to introduce the Building Families and Supporting Youth To Be Successful Act, 2011, because as a government we must make it easier to bring these children and these parents together.

C'est la raison pour laquelle je prends aujourd'hui la parole devant l'Assemblée pour déposer la Loi de 2011 favorisant la fondation de familles et la réussite chez les jeunes. Parce que, en tant que gouvernement, nous devons faciliter la réunion de ces enfants et de ces parents.

Together with other initiatives being announced today, we're taking an important step toward improving the lives of children and youth in the care of a CAS and making it easier for Ontario families to adopt a child. These amendments to the Child and Family Services Act would remove the legal barriers I mentioned earlier that prevent crown wards from being eligible for adoption. This will make a difference in the lives of thousands of kids who want forever families, who want to come home from school and hug a mom or play catch with a dad.

Adoptive parents and prospective adoptive parents have also told us that finding reliable information, no matter what adoption system they're interested in—public, private or international—is a challenge. With this in mind, we will provide online information that is easy to navigate and guidance about all types of adoption so parents know what option is right for them.

To match adoptive parents with Ontario children who need a permanent home, we will double the number of adoption resource exchanges, forums that help match adoptive families with children needing adoption, from two to four across the province.

Pour jumeler les parents adoptifs aux enfants de l'Ontario qui ont besoin d'un foyer permanent, nous doublerons le nombre de conférences d'échange des ressources en matière d'adoption.

We know that adoption home studies should be completed in a time frame that is clear and without delay. We will reduce the wait-list for home studies and establish timelines.

We will train all CASs to ensure aboriginal children are cared for and stay connected to their culture and traditions through customary care. In fact, customary care will be the central part of the discussion we will be having at a summit on aboriginal child welfare at Fort William First Nation next week.

While we aspire to secure permanent homes for every child in our care, we know that, for some, adoption may not be in their future, and we need to support them into adulthood. Think about it: We know that almost half of Canadians in their 20s live at home and enjoy all the support that comes with that. Yet right now, a youth who leaves the care of a CAS is not allowed to come back for services. The act, if passed, would allow those youths whose CAS care or customary care ended at age 16 or 17 to return to their CAS and be eligible to receive benefits until age 21. We will also make it easier for a youth receiving financial support from a CAS to go to college or university by exempting that income from the OSAP assessment.

These are important steps, but we will work to do more. We have seen many innovative approaches from CASs and we want to build on them. Some CASs are currently providing targeted subsidies to make it possible for families to adopt children in care. We will seek their advice and that of other experts and consider how we can best build on this experience across the province in a fiscally neutral way.

We began transforming the child protection sector and strengthening adoption in 2006. Thanks to the hard work of children's aid societies, fewer kids are now coming into care and more kids are getting the chance to succeed in a permanent home.

Nous avons commencé à réorganiser le secteur de la protection de l'enfance et à renforcer l'adoption en 2006. Grâce aux efforts inlassables des sociétés d'aide à l'enfance, moins d'enfants sont sous notre responsabilité. Par ailleurs, un plus grand nombre d'enfants ont la chance de réussir dans un foyer permanent.

Last year, we increased adoptions in the public system by 21% over the year before. With these proposed changes, we strive to increase that number.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to call on all families in Ontario to consider whether they have room in their hearts and in their lives to give a child a forever family. Today, I call on all members to support this

important legislation that will improve the lives of thousands of kids and families across this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I welcome the opportunity to respond to the minister as she tables this piece of legislation today. In conversations I've had with the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, they've been asking for legislation to remove barriers to allow for crown wards in the province to be adopted for years and years and years. So while I am pleased that we are now finally seeing some action from this ministry on this issue, I would have hoped that we could have seen something sooner.

I had the opportunity to meet with a member of the Expert Panel on Fertility and Adoption who spoke to me about the tracking of access orders within the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. Their report, you must remember, was tabled almost two years ago. It's not a matter of we didn't have the information, we didn't have the details—I believe we could have acted quicker on this. I believe that you could have responded sooner.

At any given time in Ontario, as the minister pointed out, there are, on average, 9,000 crown wards in the system. However, last year only 993 crown wards were adopted. It is primarily because these access orders were not being reviewed in a timely manner that so few crown wards were ultimately able to be adopted. The children's aid societies have families who are screened and wanting to adopt these children, but the review process for access orders was slowing them down.

Because of the access order process, crown wards are turning 18 and aging out of the system without the opportunity for a permanent family.

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It was actually back in 2006 when the Child and Family Services Act was amended to say that access orders should be terminated when children become crown wards. Here we are, five years later, and access orders for crown wards are still an issue, with your ministry saying that the courts have slowed down the process.

I trust that you've spoken to your colleague the Attorney General to discuss ways to streamline the way that access orders are administered and terminated in Ontario. I look forward to seeing this within the bill.

While I look forward to reading and debating this bill, I have to question the timing. Adoption reforms were recommended in June 2009, as I said, by the Expert Panel on Fertility and Adoption, which your government commissioned almost two years ago. I am hoping that you are tabling this bill today because you believe in the work of the expert panel and what they've done and not just because the plight of crown wards was highlighted in a number of media reports last fall. I also hope that you're engaging the individual CASs in this process. They are the ones on the front line with these children and talking to potential adoptive parents.

I find it interesting on page 2, when you make reference to reducing the "wait-list for home studies and establish timelines," because the reality on the street is

that many, many families are being told, “Just pay for your own home study. Just do your own home study, because we don’t have the time or the resources to do it.” To ultimately talk about establishing timelines—I’m going to be fascinated to see how you can actually translate that into legislation.

Of course, probably the most glaring admission that we don’t see in this amended act is any indication of special-needs children. We all understand that the vast majority of children waiting for forever families are actually kids with special needs, and there is no acknowledgment and no solution in this act. Instead of the platitudes that were coming from the minister when she was responding to those questions today during the media conference, I would have hoped that there would be more action on the special-needs file and the ability to assist those children as they move forward, finding their forever family.

I’m happy to debate it. I’m looking forward to it. But there are some errors and some omissions in what I see brought forward today.

Mr. Michael Prue: At the outset, I should inform the minister that this morning I was given a seventh critic portfolio, and it’s this one.

The NDP welcomes the introduction of this new legislation. I want to take some time to study this inch-and-a-half- or two-inch-thick correspondence and legal stuff.

In August 2009, the Expert Panel on Infertility and Adoption released its final report, and those statistics are absolutely staggering. The report estimates that, in 2007-08, of Ontario’s 9,400 crown wards, a mere 9% were adopted. The system did not and does not operate the way it should. In fact, it operates the opposite: It keeps children trapped in temporary and uncertain circumstances.

The consequences of this mess are staggering. The expert panel report states:

“Former crown wards who age out of the system are less likely to finish high school, more likely to become parents themselves at a young age, more likely to be users of the mental health system, more likely to require social assistance, more likely to rely on homeless shelters, to experience poverty as adults and more likely to be in conflict with the law. The long-term costs to society when children do not have permanent homes are staggering. The human costs, in terms of personal suffering and unfulfilled potential, are heartbreaking.”

We listened intently today in this Legislature and we listened intently in the news conference that preceded it, and we in the NDP are concerned that some of the most fundamental recommendations of the expert panel’s report seem to be missing from the legislation. Perhaps I’ll find them in a schedule buried far and deep, and I hope I do.

The minister seems to imply that the provincial adoption agency will be a website. We welcome information, but that is not what the expert panel recommended.

We are concerned that at some point the fragmented nature of the system has to be addressed. We are concerned that subsidies that were talked about by the expert panel are not being dealt with, even though we know that this is a huge barrier and the expert report offers a way forward. We are concerned that the expert panel talks about the need to provide ongoing financial support to families who adopt. It makes sense for the children, and it provides the financial stability that families need in order to be permanent caregivers for these children.

I have watched for the last three and a half years while my colleague MPP Paul Miller from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has worked tirelessly to bring this issue before the Legislature to protect the temporary care assistance that grandparents should be receiving when they care for their grandchildren. Over all these three and a half years, my colleague the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has been working with grandparents to fix the definition of “temporary” in the program so that the supports for these children who need them are there. We wonder, and I hope when I read it that this bill finally corrects the terrible practice the government has followed.

We also see the need for greater oversight of adoption agencies, and we are mindful of what has happened in Cambridge over the last year. We are mindful that families wanting to adopt foreign nationals—mostly children from Ethiopia, in the case of Cambridge—were taken for some \$420,000, and 400 families are without their funds and without the children they had hoped to adopt. We hope that somewhere in the body of this bill there is something that will prevent such occurrences in the future.

To close, we believe that the expert panel was right. We need to create a provincial adoption agency with a local service presence. I hope it’s in the bill. We need to develop tools to manage the adoption system. I hope we find those in the bill. And last but not least—and this is always a bugaboo—we need to provide adequate funding that supports the realities of adoption. If this bill does not have that adequate funding, it will not be the kind of meaningful bill that the people here in the gallery are expecting.

PETITIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It’s now time for petitions.

Mr. John O’Toole: Thank you, Mr.—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Burlington.

LANDLORD AND TENANT BOARD

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Age before beauty, I guess.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we demand that the LTB filing fee of \$170 be reduced to \$45, which is the same amount that tenants

have to pay when they file with the LTB. This is symptomatic of how the Legislature has bias against landlords in favour of tenants.

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

“I am in favour of the LTB filing fee of \$170 being reduced to \$45.”

I agree with the petition, and I will sign it and give it to page Travis.

NON-PROFIT HOUSING

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas tenants living in Toronto community housing deserve to be treated with dignity and respect by all levels of government; and

“Whereas tenants have fears that their homes may be sold and the services to maintain those homes privatized to the lowest bidder;

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

“That the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the government of Ontario do all things necessary to halt the privatization and sale of the homes in which we live; and further,

“That meaningful consultations take place between the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the affected tenants to ensure that our voice is heard and our interests protected in this vital area of public housing.”

I am in agreement, and will sign it and send it down with page Leighton.

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WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O’Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought you had somehow forgotten about me. I’m pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

“Whereas ... wind turbine developments have raised concerns among citizens over health, safety and property values;

“Whereas the Green Energy Act allows wind turbine developments to bypass meaningful public input and municipal approvals;

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

“That the Minister of the Environment revise the Green Energy Act to allow full public input and municipal approvals on all industrial wind farm developments and that a moratorium on wind development be declared until an independent, epidemiological study is completed into the health and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines.”

I’m pleased to sign it, support it and give it to Emma, one of the pages here.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt.

“Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning, a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients”; and

“Whereas,” since October 2009, “insured PET scans” are performed “in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens” of northeastern Ontario.

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Sydney to bring it to the Clerk.

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas supported-living residents in southwestern and eastern Ontario were subjected to picketing outside their homes during labour strikes in 2007 and 2009; and

“Whereas residents and neighbours had to endure megaphones, picket lines, portable bathrooms and shining lights at all hours of the day and night on their streets; and

“Whereas individuals with intellectual disabilities and organizations who support them fought for years to break down barriers and live in inclusive communities; and

“Whereas Bill 83 passed second reading in the Ontario Legislature on October 28, 2010;

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

“That the Liberal government quickly schedule hearings for Sylvia Jones’s Bill 83, the Protecting Vulnerable People Against Picketing Act, to allow for public hearings.”

I obviously support this petition, am pleased to affix my name to it, and give it to page Rafeh.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’ai une pétition des gens de Nickel Belt et de Sudbury.

« Attendu que 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;

« Attendu que le commissaire a le mandat de mener des enquêtes indépendantes selon la Loi sur les services en français;

« Attendu que 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 relève de la ministre déléguée aux services en français;

Ils demandent à l'Assemblée « de changer les pouvoirs du commissaire aux services en français afin qu'il relève directement de l'Assemblée législative. »

J'appuie cette pétition et je vais demander à Devon de l'amener au greffier.

DOG OWNERSHIP

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

“Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

“Breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

“Problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

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

“To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and to implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types.”

As I am in agreement, I've affixed my signature and give it to page Sydney.

TAXATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt. It's very short.

“We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that”—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable member, notwithstanding what may be written in a petition, of the use of names in this chamber. I would remind all members that if they have a petition that specifically lists a name, that they have to use the proper title.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Okay. I didn't think I had said anything.

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

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

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr. John O'Toole: I have another petition here that I think is important—and I'm going to find it. It reads as follows:

“Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine; and

“Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the Oak Ridges moraine; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permit process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

“Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to prevent contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine,” specifically at Lakeridge Road and Morgans Road—and I'm afraid there may be other locations.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt:

“Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints in the areas of hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies and retirement homes; and

“Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate any of these areas; and

“Whereas people wronged by these institutions are left feeling helpless and most have nowhere else to turn for help to correct systemic issues;

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

“Grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies and retirement homes.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Rafah to bring it to the Clerk.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey has introduced a significant tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural goods to food banks, to help provide tax relief to farmers and assist local food banks; and

“Whereas stagnating economic growth and increasing unemployment over the last two years have strained the ability of food banks to support Ontario's most vulnerable citizens; and

“Whereas over 25 million pounds of fresh produce is disposed of or plowed back into Ontario’s fields each year while local food banks across Ontario face an uphill battle as they struggle to assist those most in need; and

“Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey’s ‘A Bill to Fight Hunger with Local Food’ provides an inexpensive and common-sense solution to a critical problem for Ontario’s most vulnerable;

“Whereas if the McGuinty Liberals truly support a healthy Ontario and wish to fight poverty, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should immediately pass MPP Bob Bailey’s bill;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call MPP Bob Bailey’s private member’s bill, Bill 78, the Taxation Amendment Act (Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers), 2010, to committee immediately for consideration and then on to third reading and implementation without delay.”

Of course, I agree with this petition. I will affix my signature and send it down with Leighton.

DOG OWNERSHIP

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

“Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

“Breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

“Problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

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

“To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners’ Liability Act (2005) and to implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types.”

I have affixed my signature and give it to page Devon.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey has introduced a significant tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural goods to food banks, to help provide tax relief to farmers and assist local food banks; and

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“Whereas stagnating economic growth and increasing unemployment over the last two years have strained the ability of food banks to support Ontario’s most vulnerable citizens; and

“Whereas over 25 million pounds of fresh produce is disposed of or plowed back into Ontario’s fields each year while local food banks across Ontario face an uphill battle as they struggle to assist those most in need; and

“Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey’s ‘A Bill to Fight Hunger with Local Food’ provides an inexpensive and common-sense solution to a critical problem for Ontario’s most vulnerable; and

“Whereas if the McGuinty Liberals truly support a healthy Ontario and wish to fight poverty, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should immediately pass MPP Bob Bailey’s bill;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call MPP Bob Bailey’s private member’s bill, Bill 78, the Taxation Amendment Act (Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers), 2010, to committee immediately for consideration and then on to third reading for implementation without delay.”

As I agree with the bill, I affix my name thereto.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRONG COMMUNITIES THROUGH AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 FAVORISANT DES COLLECTIVITÉS FORTES GRÂCE AU LOGEMENT ABORDABLE

Mr. Bartolucci moved third reading of the following bill:

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 Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I will be sharing my time with the member from Etobicoke Centre. But before I start, I want to thank the honourable Donna Cansfield, the member for Etobicoke Centre, the parliamentary assistant, who has had carriage of this legislation from first to second reading, to committee, to clause-by-clause, to studying the amendments, bringing it back for third reading, and will be in charge of this during the third reading debate. I, on behalf of the people of Ontario, just want to say thank you so much to her for her dedication, her determination and her diligence to the task.

At the same time, I want to thank the opposition critics, the member from Burlington and the member from Parkdale–High Park. I don’t know how they’re going to vote on this legislation, but I do want everyone to know that there was a full debate on this legislation, that we not only heard the amendments from the other side, we listened to the members on the other side with regard to the intent of the amendments. At the end of the day, I think the people of Ontario should be very confident that this bill had a full hearing, that there were public consultations before the legislation, that there was public debate during the public hearings, and that people

offered amendments. I'm very thankful for the opportunity to speak about our government's proposed Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act, 2011.

This proposed legislation provides the foundation for our new long-term affordable housing strategy, which will transform housing and homelessness services in Ontario for years to come. The most significant part of this strategy is that it puts people first. It's about what best suits people, as opposed to what best suits government departments. Instead of complicated and restrictive housing services, we are changing the system to better meet people's needs. Instead of several programs with different rules and too much red tape, we will have a much simpler housing system for people to access and also provide more opportunities for people to build a better future.

Through this new strategy, housing resources will be used more effectively, more efficiently and with more accountability, and tax dollars will be used more efficiently in both good and lean economic times.

This strategy will better meet the unique housing needs of local communities, be it in large cities or in rural communities, in the various regions across the province. Through this strategy and the proposed legislation, we are renewing our commitment to work in collaboration with our housing partners, who will have such an instrumental role in meeting the housing needs in Ontario's communities.

As Neil Hetherington of Habitat for Humanity said about our government's work on this initiative, "Thank you for your leadership and this meaningful consultation process and your desire to build a better Ontario. We support the initiatives in so many ways. We support the affordable housing strategy that has been put forward by the government, and we applaud that."

In developing our long-term affordable housing strategy, this partnership with local housing providers has been front and centre. As Sylvia Patterson, the general manager for housing and long-term care for the regional municipality of York, said, "We applaud the province for the process that we've engaged in. It has been meaningful. As well, we believe that we've had an effective stakeholder engagement process to inform the bill."

Through extensive province-wide consultations, we talked to those who use and deliver housing services on the front lines. We heard about the specific challenges that face different communities. While we heard lots of different perspectives and ideas, there were some fairly consistent themes that we heard about Ontario's housing strategy. We heard that it was far too complex. It does not adequately address unique local housing issues, so it needs to be much more flexible to take into account different local priorities. The Social Housing Reform Act limits what local housing providers can do. And we heard that the federal government needs to get more involved and provide long-term support for affordable housing.

Over the last few weeks, the proposed legislation was before the subcommittee of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy. This was another opportunity for Ontar-

ians, housing providers and organizations to provide their views and comment on the proposed legislation. The comments from the many diverse participants suggested that our government is on the right track with this legislation.

I want to acknowledge all those municipal representatives, housing providers, housing organizations and Ontarians who attended these committee hearings and provided valuable input about the proposed legislation and Ontario's long-term affordable housing strategy. Their contributions have helped to shape the strategy and the proposed legislation and they have helped ensure that it will truly meet the housing needs of Ontarians.

As the strategy moves forward, we will continue listening to and learning from our housing partners. We respect their knowledge and their expertise, and I am confident that by working together we will make great strides in the months and the years to come.

I am very proud of our government's approach to developing this housing strategy and the proposed legislation. But this determined commitment to work with Ontarians, municipalities and housing providers was not always there. If we turn back the calendar, we see that previous governments reduced funding to housing by transferring the responsibility to municipal governments, and this transfer didn't include much in the way of any sustainable investment in affordable housing or listening to the concerns of local governments that were delivering the services. The previous government said that they wanted to get out of the housing business, and their actions reflected that. This changed with the McGuinty government.

We understand that safe, affordable housing can help Ontarians build a strong future for their families and their communities. We know that affordable housing can help people break the cycle of poverty and give them a solid foundation to build a better future. The McGuinty government got Ontario back into the business of affordable housing. Our major investments in affordable housing have made an important difference in the lives of hundreds of thousands of Ontarians.

I am proud of our record, which includes:

- investing in the repair and construction of more than 270,000 units of affordable housing;
- providing more than 35,000 rent supplements that are helping low-income Ontarians pay their rent;
- a loan program through Infrastructure Ontario that has saved non-profit and co-operative housing providers \$13 million; and
- providing \$430 million in annual operating funding for housing and homelessness services, which includes, among a number of important programs and services, the province's rent bank, which has helped more than 23,800 people avoid possible eviction and stay in their homes.

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These investments and programs paint a very clear picture that the McGuinty government strongly supports affordable housing. Even as Ontario faces significant global economic challenges that have had a major impact

on the provincial budget, our government did not remove a single penny of these funds earmarked for affordable housing, and despite these challenging times, we continue to work very hard to find ways to support our most vulnerable citizens.

Even with our government's record investments in affordable housing, we know that there is still more work to be done. As we heard in our housing consultation, Ontario can do better, and our government agrees. The long-term strategy and proposed legislation focuses directly on what works best to help people, neighbourhoods and communities.

As Peter Hume of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario said, "Bill 140 turns the page on an era of housing delivery that, in our opinion, just didn't make sense."

Instead of outdated rules and rigid procedures, the strategy focuses on giving those who deliver housing services more autonomy and flexibility. Local service managers, those who deliver the services, will have a more active, strategic role in developing local solutions to the particular challenges in their communities. The proposed legislation, if passed, would support this community-centred approach where housing services are much more flexible, and this approach would allow us to do a better job of helping people in need.

Streamlining the current patchwork of more than 20 housing and homelessness programs, which operate independently of each other and with their own set of rules, is one of the key ways to improve services. Consolidating these programs, beginning with five homelessness-related ones, will give municipalities more flexibility to use funding to meet local needs.

The example I like to use is, instead of being forced to use money for a shelter bed, which could, in fact, be more expensive, provincial government funding could be used to provide more stable, affordable housing, and the remaining funds could be used to provide additional social supports where needed. Here is a way our strategy would provide better services and use taxpayers' dollars more effectively, and, most importantly, put people first.

We've worked hard to remove heavy-handed restrictions and barriers found in the current legislation. For example, we propose to amend the Planning Act to require municipalities to establish secondary suite policies, which would provide more affordable housing options.

We are also strengthening accountability and responsibility through this proposed legislation. We are setting out key provincial interests that must be addressed, along with local priorities, in new local housing and homelessness plans that would need to be developed. The intent would be for these local housing and homelessness plans to complement other local planning initiatives, such as the official plans, infrastructure plans and human services plans. And when developing these local plans, there would be a requirement to consult with the public and with community housing partners.

To ensure accountability, municipalities would need to report annually to the public on the progress being made

under these plans, and we will monitor progress at the provincial level as well, through province-wide performance measurements. By measuring results, we will ensure that the strategy is on the right track and that Ontario's tax dollars are getting results.

While our government is proud of this strategy and the proposed legislation, we will continue to work with our partners to deliver better housing to Ontarians. However, there is one partner that needs to get more involved, and that's the federal government. In the past, Ontario has often partnered with the federal government on housing initiatives. For example, in 2005, the McGuinty government and the federal government signed the biggest affordable housing agreement in Canadian history. However, current federal funding is either short-term or declining, and federal funding does not always represent a fair share for Ontarians on either the basis of population or core housing needs. This is apparent, for example, in the proposed federal funding allocated for the residential renovation and rehabilitation program and the related suite of programs. Canada is the only G8 country that currently does not have a national housing strategy. The lack of long-term, sustainable funding limits the ability of housing providers to plan long-term and fully participate in capital projects that build more affordable housing. In fact, the federal government is decreasing housing funding to municipalities by more than \$166 million over the course of the next 10 years.

Part of our strategy is to work with our federal, provincial and territorial counterparts to join our collective efforts to engage the federal government. The province is working with the federal government to come to an agreement on extended funding, and that includes working to ensure that we get our fair share. The federal government needs to be a full partner, and long-term, stable funding is critical to our ability to support Ontarians in need, now and in the future.

So our government's investments in affordable housing have had a real, positive impact all across Ontario. As Iain Angus, the chair of the District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board, said, [we] "commend this government on its leadership in responding to the complex and changing housing needs of Ontario's most vulnerable citizens."

I am confident that with this strategy we are giving communities far greater and better tools to address housing and homelessness issues for years to come. This is another way our government is committed to building better communities, helping those in need, and making Ontario a greater place to live.

I will now pass it over to the honourable member from Etobicoke Centre and my parliamentary assistant, Donna Cansfield.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to stand today to support the proposed Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act, 2010. This proposed legislation, as part of Ontario's new long-term affordable housing strategy, is another significant initiative of our government, and it's taken to support Ontarians who are in

need. The long-term strategy builds on the remarkable work achieved under the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review, with the province uploading the municipal share of social assistance benefits.

A consensus recommendation coming out of the review was that the province and Ontario's municipalities should work together to build locally managed housing services, services that better focus on positive results for people and simplify the delivery of income-assistance supports.

Ontario's poverty reduction strategy, another one of our government's key initiatives, also identified affordable housing as a key issue. The poverty reduction strategy also concluded that the province needed to work with its housing partners to make it easier for families to find and to maintain affordable housing. Our government then launched province-wide consultations to further hear from those using and delivering housing services. I'd like to commend the member from York West, Mario Sergio, for his work in this initiative, as he did the major consultation prior to this bill.

Throughout this consultation process, our government was clearly committed to working inclusively with the people of Ontario, with local governments and with our housing partners to come up with a comprehensive solution—and comprehensive solutions—to the challenges in our province. As we developed a sound, wide-ranging strategy, it provided a solid base from which to rebuild the affordable housing system.

Over the past few weeks, I've had the privilege, along with my colleague Lou Rinaldi, to again hear from many of our housing partners who participated in hearings held by the subcommittee of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy. The committee heard many clear and thoughtful presentations about the proposed legislation and also about Ontario's new long-term affordable housing strategy. We heard from non-profit housing and co-operative housing organizations and providers, from tenants and homeless advocates, the municipal sector, and from those who build our homes, the builders. We heard about different ways to enhance the legislation. We heard what was good about the bill, and we also heard where there might be gaps that need to be addressed. These presentations provided valuable insight into Ontario's housing system and some very important food for thought.

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As expected, there were many different views that were presented and, of course, not everyone agreed with each other. The ideas that were brought forward to the committee, however, have helped to strengthen the proposed legislation. This will help make our strategy work even more effectively for housing providers, for local communities and, most importantly, for Ontarians who need to use housing services.

The amendments reflect input from our municipal partners and from our housing stakeholders. We've added two provincial interests: supporting economic prosperity; and promoting environmental sustainability and energy

conservation. Local service managers must address these interests in their local plans.

The committee also made several amendments to the legislation affecting the remediation process between municipal service managers and social housing providers. The new provisions passed by the committee incorporate the principles of procedural fairness and foster a favourable resolution of disputes. After hearing some stakeholders at committee express concern over the preservation of social housing assets, the committee amended the language of the legislation to provide additional scrutiny at the provincial level by providing the minister with authority to consent to most sales of social housing projects.

But overall, there was a general sense that this proposed legislation and the new housing strategy were important, positive milestones and that we are heading in the right direction to build a better housing system. At the committee hearings, the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, which represents municipal and social service staff, said that "Bill 140 is the most significant change for housing and homelessness in Ontario since the province downloaded social housing responsibilities to service managers 10 years ago." Those who were around a decade ago and working in the sector know full well what sorts of challenges the downloading created.

The Social Housing Reform Act, 2000, which was to guide and implement the transfer of social housing, was too complicated, too prescriptive and placed too many administrative burdens on those delivering the services. So our government has been working hard, together with our housing partners, to find solutions for the problems caused by this short-sighted approach. We've aimed to develop legislation and a housing strategy that reflect the current realities of the housing system. Our strategy recognizes that local service managers have developed the capacity and the experience to manage and deliver affordable housing services and supports, and they don't need all of the restrictions that have been placed upon them.

Also, at the committee hearings, the Ontario Home Builders' Association, which represents the residential construction industry, spoke in "strong support of Bill 140" and our long-term housing strategy. The association noted that they strongly endorsed "the inclusion of secondary suites in the strategy," as you heard the minister say, and stated, "We applaud the province for their efforts to enhance affordable options." That is so critical to all of those who need housing in this province. It really provides added benefits.

Currently, some municipalities do have restrictions on secondary suites, and in some cases they do not even allow them at all. Through our housing strategy, we are seeking to address this matter and are proposing to amend the Planning Act to require municipalities to establish policies allowing second units in new and existing developments. This amendment would provide more affordable options for lower- and moderate-income households and for elderly parents or for live-in care-

givers. This change would add to the range of planning and financial tools that municipalities currently have at their disposal to help them develop more affordable housing. Municipalities have the local expertise and have always shown leadership in addressing the need for affordable housing in their communities. Now our government is working to support them even more so through Bill 140.

At the committee hearings, the proposed Strong Communities Through Affordable Housing Act was also called “a historic piece of legislation” by the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association. This is an association representing 760 non-profit organizations that provide housing in 220 communities across Ontario. In addition to providing many interesting thoughts and recommendations, the association also recognized that “this government has clearly demonstrated a commitment to the non-profit housing sector with its investment over the past eight years in both new housing and capital repairs.”

The minister spoke about our current fiscal environment. Our government is very proud of our history of making major investments in affordable housing. The minister did provide some of the highlights of our record investments in his remarks.

We know that in a perfect world, we would continue to increase our investments in affordable housing, but the simple reality is that we’re dealing with the ramifications of a global economic recession. Governments everywhere are experiencing higher demands for social supports while, at the same time, dealing with a lower base of revenue. We only need to look to the United States to realize that, in terms of their employment, it’s only come back by 15%. When you go to the United Kingdom, it’s only back at 47%. However, we are at 91%, with 84% being full-time jobs, but we’re just beginning to realize the impact of the recession on getting our jobs back.

Ontario is making good progress in its recovery, but as you hear, we are faced with some very tough decisions. As a province, we need to ensure the sustainability of public services, we need to tackle the deficit challenge and we also need to protect education and health care.

Our government knows we need to streamline government services, but still make them more responsive and work better for the people of Ontario. That is exactly what we’re doing throughout the long-term housing strategy.

We know that the housing system needs to be fixed, so we developed a strategy that will rebuild it from the ground up. The long-term strategy in the proposed legislation provides a very strong foundation from which to begin fixing the problem: to make housing services more accessible and effective by putting people first.

We aim to do more and we aim to do better with the resources we have now. Our housing strategy provides the right direction for how to use future investments.

We will continue to engage the federal government to reverse its trend of short-term and declining funding for affordable housing and create an affordable housing

framework for Canada that includes long-term, stable and flexible funding. This is an absolute prerequisite for all Canadians. I had the opportunity to speak with folks from a number of different provinces, and each and every one of them spoke of the need for the federal government to step up to the plate with a national housing strategy. Getting the federal government back to the table and getting them to commit to long-term stable funding is something that many Ontarians and stakeholders understand is absolutely critical if we want to provide more housing, and more affordable housing, in our province.

There are many key aspects of the long-term strategy in proposed legislation, including the streamlining of numerous provincial housing and homelessness programs. I have to say that we should be very proud of the work we have been doing here in Ontario with the homelessness to homes transition.

I recently had had an opportunity to speak with some folks from Edmonton, and they’ve actually taken our project and are replicating it for the homeless in Alberta. They realize that the work that we’ve been able to accomplish and the fact that there are some 2,900 people now who have transitioned out of homelessness into homes also means they have the support services they need that are critical to sustain them as they grow back into being a part of society. It keeps them out of our ERs and out of our hospitals, and actually gives them the tools and supports they need to live a full life.

Developing our local housing and homelessness plans, such as we have identified with this pilot, is critical to our strategy: enhancing accountability mechanisms, establishing a local review process for social housing decisions and, of course, providing tenants with more opportunities to build personal assets and become more self-sufficient.

The collective result of these reforms is to give people in need better access to housing services, services that will be more tailored to their needs and provide better opportunities to get ahead.

1620

When we talk about all these different parts of our housing strategy, I know it can sound a bit technical. I think it’s important to put that human touch on why reforming the housing system really, truly matters.

When we talk about streamlining housing services and fixing procedures, I think it’s also important to remember that more efficient processes can actually help more people living on the street who might suffer from addiction or mental illness, or it can help people with disabilities who need a home where they can have the necessary supports to live independently and also with dignity. It can also help children who come from families living in poverty and who really need a helping hand so that these children might have the opportunity to thrive in their years ahead.

I’ll give you an example with Habitat for Humanity. They have actually built 1,800 homes. They have very few defaults on these homes, and their record is that every child who has lived in a Habitat for Humanity

home has gone on to post-secondary education: either college, university or training. It speaks to how important a home is to a child for security and for the ability to further their education.

The stable home is the foundation for a strong family, and strong families mean strong communities. That's why the McGuinty government has developed this long-term housing strategy, and that is why, from the very start of this process, we've always tried to focus on: How do we put people first? By updating and modernizing the current system of housing and the homelessness supports, we are creating a system that focuses on better outcomes for our families and for individuals.

Years ago, people only thought of the homeless as being an individual, typically a male, on the streets, but I remember that when we first got involved with Beatrice House there were 1,000 homeless families on the streets in Ontario—1,000. Through this strategy, we can make a difference in their lives and provide those children a place that is secure, that gives them hope so that they in turn have a future.

The housing investments will be targeted more effectively to address the different housing needs in different communities. It won't be a "one size fits all" approach. By enhancing access to stable and affordable housing, we can promote better outcomes related to health; education, as I said; community building; and ultimately our economy.

I would once again like to thank all the Ontarians—members of the public, tenants, municipalities, housing providers and housing organizations—and also the members across the way who contributed so much to shaping the proposed legislation and Ontario's new long-term affordable housing strategy. Your efforts, your commitment and your willingness to work with us to build better communities are greatly appreciated. It really is an essential part of what makes Ontario a great place to live.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I know that we get two responses to this one, but I'm most interested in waiting for the member from Burlington, who served as mayor and is a chair of Halton region. She knows first-hand how bad it has gotten.

I suspect, when I hear the language from the member from Etobicoke Centre doing the work of the minister, and probably quite good work, in fact—but it sounds like their strategy is to blame Stephen Harper. That's what I heard. Really, if she understood the history of Canada Mortgage and Housing, how they devolved it down during the Liberal era—they devolved housing and the financing of housing down to the province and then down to the municipalities. That has been the last 15-years' story on housing.

I have a peculiar interest in this, and I hope to share the time with the member from Burlington this afternoon, because if you look, there's an excellent report called *Where Is Home?* I hope that you've seen it. This is

written by the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association. It's an independent, objective look at something that you failed at. Just get away from this blaming Harper for everything that's not working. Take some responsibility for the last 10 years. I'm beginning to call it the "lost decade." Everything they touch seems to turn to mush.

Hon. John Gerretsen: This is rich, the Tories speaking about affordable housing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. John O'Toole: You know, I can't—the former minister, a former mayor of Kingston, knows himself how poorly things are going—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order, Minister.

Mr. John O'Toole: That's why he's probably not going to run.

Now, if you look at the vacancy rates, that's the real proof here. The rates of people who are on the waiting list have doubled. You should be ashamed.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Okay. Let's take a breather.

Questions and comments? The member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I guess I'll be voice of reason here. I'd like to thank the member from Etobicoke Centre and the member from Burlington and the member from Parkdale—High Park. They all worked hard on this and, naturally, it fell a little short with some of the things we would have like to have seen. Our critic was, you know, happy about some things but not happy about a lot of things.

The NDP welcomes some of the components of this bill but agrees with housing groups that it lacks appropriate funding targets and timelines needed to help Ontarians struggling with housing insecurity, unaffordability and homelessness. The NDP will take a hard look at this legislation, as should all Ontarians, and we will push the government to make the bill stronger and more effective, if possible.

The hundreds of thousands of Ontarians without affordable housing need to be addressed, and all Ontarians who want safe, inclusive and productive communities deserve no less. I could just say that part of the information that wasn't in the bill, which made me very unhappy, was the fact that I fought for three years for grandmothers who adopt their grandkids or take their grandkids in, and the restrictions are still there; they haven't been changed. We certainly would have liked to see those changes made, and it didn't happen.

I would certainly keep pushing to help grandparents who bring up their grandkids, because they're doing yeoman service for our province. I think they deserve the financial help. I mean, they should at least get the same as foster parents or other organizations that support kids. I don't see why grandparents get a quarter of the money monthly when they're on fixed incomes and they're stepping up to the plate to keep their families together. I

would have liked to see more of that in there, and I didn't.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Just a couple of minutes to add my comments to those of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the member from Etobicoke Centre. I just want to go back a bit. When the former minister started the process of consultation, I did attend some of those consultation meetings. I had a couple in my own riding on my own, and then I fed the information up to the ministry.

During the consultation, we heard a lot about some of the financial circumstances that, frankly, the world was under. One of the things we heard loud and clear from the service delivery folks—and I'm talking, in this case, about upper-tier municipalities—was, "Give us some tools for us to work." It's not all about money. Yes, money certainly buys happiness, as the saying goes. But they had a lot of resources that were, frankly, put in a straitjacket and they could not use them—we formed these pillars.

I think that on that component we made a long, long stride. We've heard from those housing providers. I know from the ones in my riding of Northumberland-Quinte West, both from Hastings county and Northumberland, that those are some of the things they really welcome, because I know that with what they have, they can go a lot further.

I'd be remiss a little bit if I don't comment on what the member from Durham said about the lost 10 years. Well, I was in municipal government when they downloaded this stuff with no money attached. They downloaded this stuff and never bothered looking back. I see some of the members on the opposite side who were in municipal government when that happened. It wasn't a pretty sight. It wasn't a pretty sight. You know, it takes a while to climb up the ladder, but we're getting there.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join the debate this afternoon on third reading of Bill 140. I must say that earlier, when my colleague from Durham was giving a response to the speech from the minister and the parliamentary assistant, the Minister of Consumer Services, the grandfather of the eco tax, came flying. My God, someone must have given him a Red Bull; he was just wound right up. I hope that when I'm talking he will allow me to make a point.

1630

But, folks, as everyone will tell you across this province, it's about time this government started to do something with respect to the non-profit housing sector. I want to read something from Where's Home?, the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association report. Interesting: "In ONPHA's 2010 waiting list survey, families and non-senior singles were the largest category of households waiting for assisted housing, accounting for over 77% of

the 141,635 households on waiting lists. Seniors accounted for the remaining 23%."

Because of the decline in employment in manufacturing in Ontario, the unemployment rate was 9.2% in December 2009. And you have to ask yourself, who's responsible for the unemployment rate in manufacturing in the province of Ontario? Well, the people on the other side need look no further than themselves and, as my friend from Durham says, stop blaming Stephen Harper. My goodness gracious.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Stop blaming Steven Harper for your failures—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order. Both ministers come to order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —to operate a successful program in non-profit housing.

The other thing you failed to do: You're talking about a 10-year plan, but you're not attaching the funding. You're telling municipalities to come up with the plan, but there's no money to assist them to do that. Speaker, another Liberal election bill promise.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I really don't like to interrupt speakers to bring the House to order, but I may have to do it the next time.

The member for Etobicoke Centre, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm more than pleased to be able to respond, and I thank the members for their interjections.

It's really nice to have a voice of reason, actually, from the member from Burlington as we were having the conversations during the committee hearings. I know in the past that she has indicated that regional council applauds the province for addressing this issue in affordable housing; she actually stated that from Halton. She also participated in rent-geared-to-income and said that it was about time that the government—and applauded, again, the government. That's the kind of work where, by working together, we can actually make a difference: by recognizing, from the municipal side, the need to move forward on something as significant as housing.

There was no intent for me to blame anybody for the housing issue, especially at the federal level. The intent was a recognition that all of us need to accept some responsibility for those who need housing in our communities, whether that community is in British Columbia, in Wawa or in downtown Toronto. All of us in a civil society have a responsibility to work with and find solutions for those issues dealing with homelessness in our community.

So I applaud the member from Burlington for her support, certainly in the past and currently. I also thank the member for High Park, who put forward a number of amendments when we worked together in support of the bill.

I'd like to say to folks in the House that it's time for to us find some solutions. Please support this bill as we

move forward working with our municipalities, working with our housing providers, working with the people who are homeless to find homes, so that in fact their lives can be different and far more productive than they have been in the past.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity to be able to respond to the critics and ask them to support this bill as we move forward in third reading.

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

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I want to start by thanking the member from Etobicoke Centre for the kind of work that she did on this bill. I know that she came into it later and that a lot of the work had been started, but I want to commend her for the kind of attention that she did pay to the detail in the bill.

I also want to say that this piece of legislation has been a long time coming. There were some great expectations, something that Ontarians, especially those on the waiting lists, industry experts and, I think, all the providers and the service managers and the members of this House—I mean, we were all anticipating what might be in this bill, and we were very happy to see it finally tabled.

So this long-awaited bill that everybody was looking to support, at least until they were able to get back on their feet—I'm talking about the people on the waiting list—the affordable housing plan and this legislation offer just the fine, tiny baby steps moving towards what might be an overall plan, but it certainly doesn't go far enough. It will not eliminate the 142,000 people who are waiting on Ontario's social housing wait-list, and it will still leave many Ontarians hoping and waiting for more help.

I anticipated so much from this plan. I was delighted that the government spent all the time that they did to have the important consultations with many sectors across this province. This is a process that is often rushed through and sometimes avoided altogether by this government, so it was really nice to see them take that part of the process seriously.

Through the consultation process, the ministry listened first-hand to those who knew what was wrong and what was broken with the system. The end result, though, was a little disappointing. For all it set out to be, that was an opportunity missed when we finally received the legislation. For all the talk and anticipation of the long-awaited housing report and this piece of legislation, it sure wasn't the 10-year long-term housing plan that we all expected. This government boasted about the consultations that took such a long time travelling across this province, listening to all the heart-wrenching stories. They even delayed the release of the long-awaited plan because they said they wanted to "get it right" and were doing more consultations. They boasted about the stakeholder involvement.

We had only two days of depositions at the committee, but they were filled with stakeholder recommendations addressing how the bill could be strengthened and

what was missed altogether. They came to tell us what this missed opportunity was.

After that, we had 100 amendments presented at committee. However, the disappointment was that we only had 24 hours to review these 100 amendments. I felt very rushed, and, given the importance of this bill, it was very disappointing to see the time that was allotted to really look over these amendments and do them any justice. There were 24 hours to decipher what these amendments were trying to achieve, who the amendment would affect, how it would affect the individuals or organizations, and then we had to determine the merits of these amendments.

I will tell you that maybe on the minister's side 100 amendments in 24 hours is not an enormous amount of work, because there's a lot of human power that would go into it. However, I know that for myself and my colleague, 100 amendments in 24 hours was a gruelling task and quite frankly disappointing. I know my colleague the member from Parkdale-High Park mentioned this at committee, and my colleagues on the government side did seem a bit surprised that it was only a 24-hour period. So I want to commend my colleague from Parkdale-High Park for getting this very important point on the record.

I should also add that not only were 100 amendments in 24 hours difficult for the opposition parties, but it was extremely difficult and a big strain on the stakeholders. The stakeholders took the time to prepare these tremendous and very informative deputations for our committee, they took the time to come and present them and to answer our questions and concerns, only to be rewarded by trying to filter through 100 amendments in 24 hours and to see if theirs did or didn't make it to the clause-by-clause review. That gave them almost no time to connect with various offices and plead their final chance as to why their amendments should or should not be supported. I know that in my office, we were receiving emails right to the last moment. The whole process begins to erode the democratic process. We just weren't allotted the proper time to deal with this very important issue and follow up properly.

1640

I would suggest that this government really needs to sit back and take a long, hard look at how they are working with municipalities. While the members opposite claim that this bill was aimed at giving municipalities more autonomy, our party put forward some amendments that were presented by our municipal stakeholders, and the government opposed them. It would behoove the government to ensure respectful partnerships with municipalities. The municipalities are doing all the heavy lifting in this case, and they're also carrying the freight in this bill.

I was surprised that the municipality-friendly amendments were opposed by government members. For example, the legislation expects that a 10-year homelessness and housing plan, which we thought this was going to be, and which now needs to be produced by the service managers—they expect that this plan will be produced by

the service managers and be ready by January 1, 2012. AMO addressed this in their deputation and, in turn, asked that the legislation include that the 10-year homelessness and housing plan not be expected until January 1, 2013. I don't think that was an unreasonable request. Creating a 10-year plan on an issue such as this, of this magnitude, takes a long time.

We know it's a task that the government originally said they would undertake, and then, when they introduced the bill, and we were all surprised—no, I think we were really shocked that the responsibility had shifted down to the service managers. I introduced an amendment that would have put the timing of the 10-year plan into this legislation so that there would be no questions, and there would be predictability about an expectation date of January 1, 2013. There would have been the necessary time for municipalities to adjust to this responsibility which they were not expecting and make sure that they could do the best to fit the needs of their own community. Just because this government likes to rush through things, as they did with the committee process of this bill, it doesn't mean they should put the same pressures on municipal service managers.

I want to read a quote from AMO's deputation with respect to the timing of the housing and homelessness plan. This is the quote:

"The current expectation is that all service managers will be ready to go January 1, 2012. We think the government should consider a phased approach. Some municipalities have the planning capacity that can get under way and meet the bill's timeline. Others will need to build or find capacity, which, of course, will take a bit of time."

They continued to say, "Devolution occurred over a nine-month period; so too must this approach be afforded an appropriate time to succeed."

The government is more than familiar with the vast differences between rural and urban, northern and southern, and large and small municipalities.

AMO says again, "Municipalities want to get this right. We are accountable to our taxpayers and the residents of affordable housing in our communities. Appropriate time is needed to transition to this new way of doing business."

Municipalities each have their unique needs and capacities, and we must ensure that they are allotted enough time to meet the needs.

With respect to timing, AMO also addressed that municipalities cannot budget or plan in the absence of knowing what funding options there will be. I will quote from AMO again as I feel they really did a good job in expressing their concerns to our committee:

"The consolidation of over 25 housing and homelessness programs is an underlying concern with the local planning approach. The government must understand that municipal councils cannot plan or budget in the absence of knowing what envelope they will have to spend from for these consolidated programs."

AMO continued by saying, "It is my understanding that the consolidation exercise is partially under way, but

certainly far from being completed. However, local planning cannot be substantially completed or maybe even started until the consolidation exercise is complete and municipalities understand what funding will be available."

AMO is, of course, referring to the ability that service managers are given in this piece of legislation to have the flexibility to use funding for the five homelessness-related programs to best meet their own needs. The current programs are as follows:

There's the consolidated homelessness prevention program. This program helps those experiencing or at risk of homelessness to find and maintain stable housing.

Then there's the emergency energy fund program, which helps prevent homelessness by reducing the risk of households being evicted due to energy arrears.

The emergency hostels program, which provides short-term lodging and a temporary personal needs allowance until an emergency situation is resolved.

Then there's the domiciliary hostels program, which provides permanent housing which supports vulnerable adults who require limited supervision and support with daily activities.

The rent bank program provides outstanding rent directly to landlords on behalf of tenants who, due to emergency or other unforeseen circumstances, are in short-term arrears and facing eviction.

Currently these programs are allotted funding without flexibility, meaning that the allocated funding is to be spent only within each program. This piece of legislation allows funding to flow from one program to another as service managers see fit to best serve their community needs.

The consolidation of these programs needs to be done right. The government needs to ensure that they get it right, because otherwise it could mean destabilizing the entire system. As you can see, there is a lot of work to be done and a lot of decisions to be made before service managers can even begin to put together their 10-year plans.

Further to my point, there's very valid reasoning as to why the government should have supported my amendment to have the date set to January 1, 2013. I want to address another important amendment that I put forward in the clause-by-clause committee process. Subsection 4(1) of the bill lists several matters of provincial interest that a system of housing and homelessness should have. For example, "it is a matter of provincial interest that there be a system of housing and homelessness services that,

"(a) is focused on achieving positive outcomes for individuals and families....

"(g) is co-ordinated with other community services;

"(h) is relevant to local circumstances;"

This is just to name a few.

What I thought was lacking from the piece of legislation was that there was absolutely no mention of the role of a youth-specific program. I think that this is a vital component of a housing and homelessness plan, and

it should be included. Some youth need homelessness accommodation, and I'm disappointed to say that the government did not approve my amendment. Although there was some discussion that they would consider—consider—putting something into legislation down the road, it will, of course, remain to be seen.

The NDP did support my amendment and they themselves put forward several amendments which would have included a system to address crown wards and their needs. These amendments were also opposed.

I want to again, as I did in committee, strongly encourage the government to put something into this legislation that addresses youth-specific programs. We heard many deputations that advocated for this, and I must say that all three parties were quite receptive, so I'm a little baffled as to why my amendment was not supported.

1650

I just want to remind everyone here today about the deputations we heard from individuals who have experienced first-hand the lack of youth-specific programs. Certainly, the central theme was that the lack of safe and affordable housing for youth puts them at extreme disadvantage and prevents them from advancing in life. These youths have already faced many challenges and barriers, such as dysfunctional families. They really, really need someone to stand up for them and ensure that there is some programming so that, in their times of need, the support they need is there. It's an investment for all of us to include the role for a youth-specific program in this legislation. I hope to see something coming forward in the imminent future.

I also just mentioned that while section 4.1 sets out 10 areas of provincial interest, this section does nothing to link housing and the province's interests in health and the economy. I addressed this in my previous debate. Michael Shapcott, the director of affordable housing and social innovation at the Wellesley Institute and co-chair of the Housing Network of Ontario, said, "Poor housing is directly linked to poor health." We heard the same thing from the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association at the committee hearings. I'm going to quote Keith Ward, who said, "Studies have documented the dramatic, positive impact of safe, decent and affordable housing. These confirm what we all know intuitively: Without a real place to live, it is next to impossible to make everything else in your life come together as it's supposed to." He continued to say, "This section," referring to 4.1, "should reflect the province's interest in contributing to positive health and education outcomes for Ontarians and to economic growth." I certainly agree with that. I can't see that anybody else in this House couldn't agree with it.

I was really disappointed to see that this government's long-term affordable housing plan did not include a housing benefit. Although they did make mention of it in their plan, it only said that they could not afford it at this time, and there was nothing further mentioned. I continue to support a move in this direction, as do a long list of industry stakeholders. A housing benefit would help both health and economic outcomes, because it gives people

the flexibility to live where they work and have support systems. That may mean close to work, so that they aren't incurring transportation costs. It might mean in a community close to their children's schools. Regardless, it allows people to have the flexibility to make decisions that serve them best, and in turn, they are happier, healthier and certainly more productive. I feel that a housing benefit is something that adds to the emotional stability of a family's being able to carry on their normal daily life without worrying about whether there's a roof over their head, being able to engage in meaningful employment and being able to stay near support systems in a place where they can be supplemented for their rent.

I will also reiterate that I think it is a far better way to go than to continue to build more structures in places where people have move away from their own support systems and the familiarity of their local community. I think we ought to be investing in people, not just bricks and mortar. To be clear, the idea of a housing benefit is not a long-term support for people. It is there just to help as they need it and will remain until they are independently stable. It's a temporary bridge to get them back on track.

Another point that I want to address is this government's constant dependency on federal funding. They're using the condition for federal funding as a complete cop-out. Regardless of federal funding, the province has a responsibility and a huge interest to fund important programs like housing. We saw this with the poverty reduction plan, whereby the success of the plan is almost entirely dependent on the federal government, and then again with the introduction of the long-term affordable housing plan, also dependent on the federal government.

As I mentioned in my second reading debate, the federal government has been very vocal in saying that they are getting out of the housing business. How many times do we have to hear this? The province knew this long ago, going into the process of developing this long-term affordable housing plan, yet they still say they want federal money. In 2009, even the Ontario Auditor General called on the housing ministry to develop a plan to deal with the "federal step-out." How much more warning do you need?

This government has had seven years to work out something, which, evidently, they have not. As we are all aware, there were no funding commitments to housing in the 2011 budget; again, just a mention that the federal government needed to continue to be our partner.

Bill 140, however, tries to download provincial liability under the federal housing agreement to the municipality—a big risk. The municipal stakeholders were quite clear that this was unacceptable and that section 103 of the bill should be removed altogether. I proposed an amendment that would have done just that, but again, it was rejected. This leaves municipalities liable for any and all costs in the federal agreement. This leaves them vulnerable to that cost, and that cost is totally unpredictable.

As I mentioned in committee, having come from a municipality, understanding how vulnerable they are to

these added costs, it's not acceptable to me that this section of the bill remains. I had hoped that the government would accept my amendment in good faith, particularly to continue to foster the relationship with municipalities.

Bill 140 has omitted the ability for a household to request an internal review of a negative decision with respect to deferral of rent-geared-to-income. Under the former Social Housing Reform Act, households had the ability to request an internal review. I put forward an amendment that would have restored the ability for households to request an internal review of deferrals; however, the government did not support it. My colleague from Parkdale–High Park put forward a similar amendment to section 156, and it was also turned down.

The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs indicated that they feel it is preferable that decisions with respect to deferral of RGI are at the discretion of the service manager, and that there is nothing in the bill that precludes them from agreeing to a voluntary review of these deferral decisions. My thoughts are that if the right to request a review was possible under the former Social Housing Reform Act, it should continue to make sense that that same right remains in this bill. As my colleague from Parkdale–High Park pointed out, while the parliamentary assistant to the minister says that there is nothing precluding service managers from reviewing these decisions, there is also nothing in the legislation that says that they should review these deferral decisions.

I know that we see a lot of autonomy for municipal service managers in this piece of legislation. That's in comparison to the Social Housing Reform Act. I proposed an amendment that would have done just that, but again, it was rejected. This leaves municipalities liable for any costs in the federal agreement. This was concerning to many of our deputants.

There are several examples where the requirement for ministerial consent was removed. I'm encouraged that the government made some efforts to restore some of their oversight responsibility. The housing ministry is, after all, responsible for housing in Ontario, so it only makes sense that they should have some oversight responsibility. They have already passed down the responsibility of creating this 10-year plan. Clause 32(a), for example, was amended to reinstate certain ministerial requirements before shares in the local housing corporation could be issued to the private sector. As an example, clause 34(a) is amended to require ministerial consent before an amalgamation involving a local housing corporation could take place.

1700

A number of deputants came and presented amendments to section 157 of this bill. The section refers to reviews that can be requested by a housing provider. In the current bill, what can actually be reviewed is left to be determined by—guess what?—regulations. As I mentioned in committee, the devil is in the details, and the devil is the regulations. It would have been reasonable to

include what housing providers can request to be reviewed right in the legislation. I believe the government should have supported an amendment and this would have happened.

I think this would have made the legislation far more predictable. I have always been of the mind that when a lot of the detail of a bill is left to the regulation-making process, a great deal of additional things get slipped in, things that often go unnoticed. And do you know what? Regulations are not scrutinized by the public. They're done somewhere far away, and they just appear. The regulations are created away from the public, with no ability to offer real insight and expertise from those front-line workers who know where the regulations will fail if not developed correctly.

Putting these important points into the legislation as opposed to leaving them to regulations—it behooves us to get this right for people, and people will not be involved in regulations. If there is nothing to hide, then I do not see why sections like 157 of this bill cannot be defined right in the legislation. It is more transparent, everybody knows about it and it's up for discussion. As you know, there are no discussions with respect to regulations. I will certainly be watching for these details in the regulations.

I will wrap up, as I know that I'm going to be sharing my time with my colleague from Durham, who also wants to speak to this bill. But there's still a lot of work to be done, and I would have hoped that the government would have accepted some of the opposition amendments to strengthen this bill, because that's what they were meant to do.

We were so happy to see the coinciding long-term affordable housing plan released, but again, it missed what it was originally set out to do. This bill and the plan certainly were a long time coming, and let us not forget, there was a curious delay as well.

The plan does absolutely nothing to reduce the social housing wait-list, which is currently hovering around 142,000 people. This bill does nothing to eliminate the list, either. I think it is a real disappointment that the government side has mismanaged our finances so much that we cannot even talk about investing in a housing benefit. This would be an incredibly valuable program, completely focused on people.

I certainly hope that this government is going to support the service managers as they go through the gruelling task of preparing a 10-year housing and homelessness plan. They need to give service managers the required information about how the money will flow from each of the current homelessness programs, and they need to do that as quickly as possible.

Lastly, I would strongly encourage this government to take the advice of the Auditor General and prepare their own plan to deal with the federal government's "step-out of the housing programs," and without any federal funding whatsoever. It is not acceptable to continue to deflect everything to the federal government.

As I mentioned in the beginning, this piece of legislation was an opportunity missed. We all had great hopes,

but at the end of the day there's still a lot of work to be done before we have a foolproof housing plan that will accommodate all Ontarians in need.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to thank the member from Burlington for the work that she's put into it and, also, respectfully, the courteous and generous way that she represented the member from Etobicoke Centre's work on Bill 140. I'd have to concur that there was a lot of work put into it.

I think the member mentioned as well that the member from Parkdale–High Park, the NDP representative on the committee, also submitted many amendments in frustration.

Let's kind of go back to square one on this. I want to start by saying that we support the bill, but I also want to put that in a frame of reference: We really have no option but to move forward.

All of the independent commentary that I'll refer to today shows what a complete sham—this purports to be doing something, but it's disingenuous. It is not doing what it purports to do. That's the typical thing that we find here. Once you open up the jewellery box, you find out the jewellery has all been taken. It's a little like when you hand someone that diamond ring box, and you open it up and it's empty. That's exactly what it is.

I'm going to legitimize my opinions on this, Mr. Speaker, with your kind indulgence. I'm going to just sort of—there have been a lot of very specific comments with respect to the amendments that were made and the amendments that were ignored.

Here's the real test of their legislation. Bill 140 came as a genesis of the long-term affordability housing plan, long-awaited. The thrust of the plan seems to be a hand-off of the difficult work to local service managers, but there's no money. There's not one nickel to improve the abhorrent wait-lists or for families that don't have housing for up to 10 years, who are waiting for supportive housing.

In fairness, I'm going to read some things that are independent, and I always like to go right straight to the Liberals' briefing notes. This is from the Toronto Star. It's not our leader, Tim Hudak, who is very supportive of building that important social infrastructure.

This is a true report right here. It says, "Affordable Housing Strategy to Simplify Onerous Rent Rules"—landlords and tenants; that's what the Toronto Star says. "Scores of complicated rules governing rents in subsidized housing will be eliminated or simplified as part of Ontario's long-awaited affordable housing strategy, the Star has learned.

"The proposed strategy, being unveiled by Housing Minister Rick Bartolucci in Hamilton Monday morning, will be accompanied by a new housing act to be tabled in the Legislature."

There have been hearings, and they are saying, if you read some of the stakeholders, many of whom were disappointed—this is what I have learned. In fact, let's put that into context.

There was a quote here from Malcolm Hunt. He's the Peterborough city planning director. The member from Peterborough often refers to his great respect in the time he spent there. Here's what Malcolm says: "It proposes greater flexibility for service managers to make decisions about housing. It does not give us more money, but it gives us more flexibility locally." I almost see the grin on his face when he says it: lots of flexibility, no money. You can't do anything. The member for Peterborough has to stand up for that community. He's simply not doing it, obviously.

The amendments were all turned down. It's my understanding there were hundreds of amendments—all turned down. The member from Burlington, I thought, spoke respectfully. There was no anxiety in the House at the time. But we're levelling with you now: You didn't get it done. You aren't getting it done, and it's just before the election.

This thing is going to be implemented through regulation, and there isn't a minister over there who has any input into the regulations—not any.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: The nice minister over there—I don't want to be unkind.

Here's another quote; this is a recommendation from a report. I'm trying to keep abreast of this issue because I know they just downloaded it to the municipalities without one nickel. This is the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association's recommendations to the budget, and here's what they said.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: There's not a nickel in there.

Here's what they say. I'm quoting from page 1 of that submission, recommendation number 1: "With the introduction of Ontario's long term affordable housing strategy (LTAHS) and Bill 140, the government is poised to bring about significant changes to the housing and homelessness sector. In particular, the greater flexibility" to be granted to the local managers "will allow for more effective planning and creative problem-solving... Service managers are encouraged by the policy direction of Bill 140 and look forward to working with the government in the development of the legislative details, regulations, and implementation policies."

1710

They'll be waiting a long time, because there isn't a nickel in this. It says here, "Noticeably absent in the strategy however, is a commitment to sustainable funding for the homelessness and housing sector. Without the tangible financial resources to enable program delivery and improvement, program success will be diminished. Ontario's municipal governments already provide considerable investments into the housing and homelessness sector, and look to our provincial partners for the necessary support to maximize the LTAHS's effectiveness."

So they're basically all saying that it's a hand-off. They're all saying, "Show me the money."

Let's put this into a frame of reference at the Premier level. They ran on a program—I'm going to my real

notes here, the ones I wrote myself. Their plan in government—just looking to follow up on, when someone promises, how they delivered. They had the poverty reduction task force. Now, I would put to you, Mr. Speaker—you've had quite a bit of time here—and to the member from Burlington, who's had quite a bit of time as a mayor, a regional chair and as an MPP, that we all know the important infrastructure of shelter and housing for poverty reduction strategies. I have spoken on this—in fact, I meet with people in my riding and try to be an advocate on their behalf. But when you're dealing with someone who says one thing and does completely the opposite—it's the diamond ring box. Open it up, "Oh, the diamond's been taken." The poverty reduction task force is just one example.

The aging-at-home strategy is another example. They're all strategies. Aging at home—there's no home care. They meant to say "aging alone." That's what they meant to say.

There's another one here. They actually stepped in a little while ago into regulating retirement homes.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Finally.

Mr. John O'Toole: See, they don't get—long-term-care homes are funded by the province. In fact, long-term-care-home funding per bed is \$48,000. Seniors today are being—that's what it costs. Look in your budget. Now, in retirement homes, there's not one nickel of provincial money—not one nickel. In fact, they're going to cause the price to go up because now they're going to have standards, which is agreeable, but there's no money for it. So who's going to pay for it? The residents.

Here's what long-term care for them is: You pay.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, it's \$48,000. You haven't created any long-term-care beds, but you've created retirement beds. How convenient.

Now, retirement homes today—and this is for the viewer at home—many of them are very good. I went into quite a few of them, actually, when my mother-in-law was looking for a home. She moved out of her home because she was becoming frail, but still a wonderful woman. And they're mostly women, so this is an unkindness to women as well.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a direct assault, I would put to you. There's no long-term-care beds being built.

Here's the deal. The average cost of retirement homes—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: You'll get your time. The average cost of retirement homes—do you know what they are? Are you interested in learning anything? Listen up and you'll learn something.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. John O'Toole: The cheapest ones that I've found are about \$40,000. There's no care. There's meals, clean bedding, housekeeping, electricity, heat, hydro. Those

will all be going up, because when electricity goes up, they'll be paying more. When heat goes up, they'll be paying more. Now that they've got regulations in, they'll be paying more. So it's \$40,000, up to about \$70,000, for a retirement home. Not one nickel of Premier McGuinty money—not one nickel. So when they discharge you from the hospital—in fact, a lot of people over the years have convalesced in hospitals. Now they have a strategy: It's called the wait-list strategy, which is early discharge. They're discharging you from hospital—it's called early home. They've got some name for it from the LHINs. Here's the deal: Quite honestly, they're discharging people to their home. There's no home care, or there's a few hours of home care, and then they say, "Well, you should go into a retirement home." Well, to get \$50,000—the seniors are listening now—out of your RIF or your LIF; to get that \$40,000 or \$50,000 to spend on that rent for your long-term-care bed, because you're paying, you have to take about \$75,000 out of your RSP, because it will be taxed, see? So don't let them fool you. Aging at home is a shell game.

The strategy is a shell game as well for the poverty reduction task force, because shelter is the most important fundamental requirement in infrastructure and what they're doing is handing it off to the municipalities. It's shameful. In fact, I'm going to try to stick to my notes, because I've become quite engaged in this and concerned about how people are getting the wool pulled over their eyes. The only thing I've heard as an excuse for why they can't do it is that it's Stephen Harper's fault. That's what they say: "It's Stephen Harper's fault." I heard them say it, both the Speaker as well as the member from Etobicoke Centre, who's a wonderful person. She should have been Minister of Education, to be honest. I knew her when she was involved in education. She was excellent.

"The bill comes on the heels of the government's long-awaited report. The thrust of the plan seems to be the handoff of difficult work to local services. The bill speaks in the language of making housing services more flexible and relevant to communities, a laudable goal, but does little to reform the existing system, which is in disarray and does nothing to support community housing services. Arguably, they're already underfunded." They heard that from all the deputants, all of them, and have done nothing.

No province in Confederation spends less on housing than Ontario. It's like tuition. They all talk about education. We have the highest tuition in Canada. How come the people aren't getting onto this stuff? The highest tuition, education minister. They're spending more on PD days than they are on special-needs children.

Ontario holds approximately 152,000 families who are waiting an average of 10 to 12 years or more for affordable housing—10 to 12 years. The children will be growing up in poverty.

Look at the economy—and I've got some statistics on this, too. In their economy, they've had an average of 9% unemployment. People on social assistance or employment insurance: That is about 3% to 4% higher than the

average over the previous 10 years. I'm not even politicizing it; I'm saying, "That's the evidence."

When you look at the evidence, affordability in housing right now is also a serious problem. I'm saying that 50% of all tenants in Ontario pay over 50% of their income in rent today, some as much as three quarters. That's not sustainable; certainly if they're unemployed or have a job loss.

The bill contains, as I've said many times, no funding, no housing targets or real guidelines to the service managers. In fact, I say this; this came up during the hearings. In this bill, the government abdicates an enormous amount of responsibility over community housing to local service managers. We heard from the member from Burlington, our critic and a person I have great respect for, that those 100-plus amendments over two days, we were given 24 hours to read and interpret the implications of those amendments—and, in fact, create them—and all of them were voted down. They aren't listening and weren't listening.

This bill was first introduced on November 29, 2010, and I read that one. This is the more recent, amended version of the bill: 97 pages. On March 8 it received second reading, and we're in the midst of third reading now. This thing is done.

Now, if you look at the bill—Mr. Speaker, this is important, and you know this too from your years here. This bill, the way it's structured, I believe there are 15 sections to it? Yes—there are 12 sections. Now, if you look at it, every one of the sections—this is the tragedy of it all. It will never see the light of day. Even the members here won't even get any word in on it, government or opposition. It's all being dealt with in regulations. In fact, you can read section 1. I can read the very first section and everything would be done in regulations by some—but there's no money in it, see? This will take a long time to implement. It's another stall mechanism.

1720

I thought the amendment from the member from Burlington was a very, very reasonable amendment, because they had given the service managers a deadline of implementation of January 1, 2012. It's already 2011. Actually, April, May—they can't get this done. The member from Burlington moved a reasonable amendment—nothing outlandish or controversial—to give it one more year to implement it properly. No.

Then, in the middle of all this discussion on this important issue of housing, there's an election. Now, they're going to go to the election and they're going to say that they've made this great step forward—moving forward, which is which is a term they use all the time. It's absolutely shameful.

Several times in committee, government members declined to provide housing benefits or unit guidelines. There is a certain disrespect inherent in the bill that claims to provide housing services while abdicating responsibility for the very topic they're talking about. They're handing it off. Everybody is saying that, even the reports in the media. I could read lots of them, but they

haven't given me enough time here to speak. I may ask for more time. I may, but we'll have to see. I like to make sure I finish. Often, I run out of time.

If there's no place in the budget for substantive action on social housing, then the intellectually honest thing to do would be to say as much. Don't try to tell people something that isn't accurate. It conveys contempt for Ontarians when the government clothes this admission in the disguise of a comprehensive policy. Man, oh, man, some of the words here—I've been here 15 years and I'm starting to read between the lines quite a bit here. Show me the money. All these grand—look, if you're not going to do it, don't try to give the illusion that you're doing it. It's almost like Houdini is in cabinet over there.

The government's retreat from accountability is not just a funding issue, it's also an issue of principle. Many times in committee, government members declined to add guidelines or definitions to assist in provincial oversight of local housing projects. They call it flexibility. I would say, "Who cares?" That's my own word here. "It shows disrespect" is a more appropriate way to phrase that.

Not only is the government offsetting the problem, it is refusing to be involved in the decision-making process, or indeed even making guidelines available to service managers. They fast-tracked this thing. There's no time to get it right, to even take an active role in directing any sort of housing policy. So they've done all these consultations and they come up with a fancy long-term affordable housing plan, but you open it up and it's the diamond ring box: You open it up and there's nothing in it. What a tragedy. They get away with it. I don't understand how they get away with it. It's just beyond me. How many times can you be fooled?

Look, if I'm wrong, stand up and refute it. I get so full of anxiety because I'm trying to stand up for my constituents in Durham, as is the member from Burlington, the member for York North, our leader, Tim Hudak. They criticize us for being so direct and so frugal. Well, we know that if we're wasting money, it's actually the taxpayers' money that we're wasting.

Certainly, the bill doesn't make life any easier for housing providers in the community, or, more importantly, their citizens who need respect and to be treated fairly. You can criticize us all you want. This is your bill. It doesn't get it done. In fact, everything I've read from all the social housing—I could get off onto more notes here if you want. The co-op housing—what they said about it. We heard what the municipal social services sector said about it: "It's a shell game." Basically, that's what they said.

Here's the one I said earlier, Where's Home? This is from the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association. I should read some of the statistics in here, which would really set you free.

I read the Toronto Star article, and here's another one here from the housing network. It fails to meet the five basic tests set out, says the housing network. It fails completely the five basic tests in housing. That's basic-

ally what's repeated throughout most of the literature on this: It fails all of the fundamental tests. Is it a social housing strategy that helps people? The answer, convincingly, unfortunately, is no. I'm trying to be kind here, because I could be a bit more ragged about it, but I'll try not to be.

Here's what the co-op housing federation had to say. These aren't my notes; these are real statements from real people. This is from the Co-Operative Housing Federation of Canada on Bill 140, their briefing notes. They're not mine but I do read what people send me. "Shortcomings of Bill 140;" I'll just read it.

Some of the good members—Mr. Phillips is retiring; a great person, he served the province well. I have a lot of respect for him. It's not meant that way. It's more or less saying, "Look, don't say you're doing one thing and do another." That's wrong. I'm not sure that he had a role in this.

"While there are a number of potential gains in the legislation that we have outlined above, the overall thrust of the new statute is to give municipal service managers more flexibility and control in the oversight and administration of the housing program. Even in some of the areas outlined above, where co-ops are hopeful for improvements, a lot of the details are dependant on what the regulations ... say." The devil is in the details, as the member from Burlington said.

"As well, in some cases, the act itself is rather permissive, giving service managers options of using their own judgment to suit local circumstances." That doesn't sound like a program with any great kind of direction to me.

"Major concerns:"

The "bill reduces authority of housing providers and gives control more to municipalities." Downloading, that's what it is.

"One of the two stated purposes of the act is 'provide flexibility for service managers and housing providers' ... Some examples where Bill 140 reduces protections for co-ops compared to the SHRA—the Social Housing Review Act—"include:

"A requirement that service manager act 'reasonably' has been removed in some places.

"The requirement that breaches be 'significant' is taken out in several areas.

"A single-year deficit versus an accumulated deficit is now considered a breach."

They go on. Co-op housing is where there's a shared ownership provision, which I think is an important one. I would be supportive of that, the pride of ownership. If we can support that in any way—ours would be to the shelter allowance side, not on the bricks and mortar side so much. That's pure flexibility. That's the flexibility that's needed. Often, people have to relocate for work, but they need a home. I think, working with them, it's evident that a lot of work has been put into this. Even the members of AMO were upset. In fact, they were quite critical in the hearings. I don't know how they're getting away with this.

I'm going to go on here a little bit more. I probably will need more time, Mr. Speaker.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No? They're not going to—I would seek unanimous consent for probably another hour, perhaps.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Again, we won't push it; no, no.

The government has declined, in this bill or in any other, to engage tenancy issues in a helpful way. A number of issues facing housing providers remain outstanding in Ontario, particularly regarding the prohibitively long negotiation period for landlords seeking to remove offending tenants and the similarly drawn-out hearing period.

We heard in a question the other day how there's balance in the Landlord and Tenant Act. There's anything but balance. That's what I'm hearing today. You drive landlords out of the business because there's no reasonable balance. You've tipped it the other way now. I would say that's what I hear consistently. Landlords are reluctant to get into the business of creating rental opportunities for people in those situations. We support a more balanced Residential Tenancies Act; I can say that. Our leader talks about that all the time: affordability and options for people are important.

The bill also provides an opportunity to address other pernicious community and social issues which have not benefited from this government's mismanagement. In other words, these are people who have been left out. There's a whole group of them who have been left out. In 2009, the Premier committed to reducing poverty by 25% in five years and we've seen little progress. In fact, once again, that's where they blame the federal government. It's tiresome. The rhetoric is predictable, it's inconsistent and it's disingenuous. Everything that doesn't work—whether it's transit or Toronto or Rob Ford, it's always Stephen Harper's fault.

1730

Premier McGuinty should not take credit for anything because he takes no responsibility for anything that doesn't work. You can't have it both ways. To only take credit—it's like a spoiled kid taking credit for anything that works and blaming somebody else for everything that doesn't. Whether it's the victims of crime that's been on the agenda for four days—the Attorney General acts like a snob, like he's the only one who even cares. He's probably going to run for leader, as far as I can see. He's acting up quite a bit. He said the other day that he's the only guy who knows the right answer; that's what he said.

In fact, social assistance in this province has fallen below the rate of inflation. They take great credit in it. Long-term care: Residents of retirement homes will now pay the full cost of the residency. Long-term care in the province: \$48,000 per bed for the cost; retirement homes: not one nickel by the province—not a nickel. They regulated it. That's going to be passed on to the residents. It's actually going to increase the cost of retirement homes.

They've run out of money. Some 20% of all they're spending: They're borrowing from your future. The 10% reduction in your heating bill: They borrowed a \$1-billion bond to be able to give that rate back. It's tragic.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, you did. If you don't know, you shouldn't say anything. If you do know, then you're not telling the truth.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: John, tell the truth.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm giving it to you right here. I'll send you the documents, Lou. You're going to need them during the election. You stick to racetracks.

Our support is accompanied by serious concerns. Giving communities flexibility does not necessarily mean forgoing a role in community housing entirely, which this bill does. It walks away from it. There ought to be a balance, as many deputants in the committee noted. They were summarily ignored.

Moreover, it is our concern that there's a kind of intellectual dishonesty in the bill. By insinuating that this bill, which is presumably the result of months upon months of public policy research and consultation—all those expense reports that aren't filed, out at hotels and meals and all that—is anything new or comprehensive—Ontarians will not be fooled by this bill.

We're supporting it because the intentions are right, but there's nothing in it. There's no money. It seems that, through this legislation, the government is seeking to claim progress in community housing that it has not earned, just before an election. That should give us real pause when we consider the kinds of people we want representing us on this very important issue.

I think the work done by the member from Burlington and the member from Toronto, from the NDP side—

Mr. Paul Miller: Parkdale.

Mr. John O'Toole: —Parkdale—High Park; that's right—worked very sincerely and hard on this bill on behalf of the people who are less fortunate than all of us. What did they get in return? The reports I read say that they failed on all five points, by any measure. That's in a report that's objective and independent. I've got a copy of it here. In fact, the Toronto Star printed it, too. It says, "There are some important new ideas ... in the plan," but it fails on "five key tests set out by the Housing Network of Ontario, a provincial housing coalition."

My remark on this? You fail. It's a tragedy. You spent so much time and money on it. It's a huge bill; it's fairly large in terms of bills. You've downloaded it to municipalities, with not one nickel. You haven't given them any regulation framework to deal with. The bill itself is forcing them to have a plan by January 1, 2012, which is about five or six months away, with the election and all the disruption. The member from Burlington asked for an extension on that, and you even voted that down.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the members from Burlington and Durham, especially the member from

Burlington for adding her expertise to the committee, with her municipal experience at many levels, which is very good.

I'll just read a comment here. This is a report on what the Metcalf Foundation, the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association and the Daily Bread Food Bank say about this bill:

"According to the food bank's 2008 survey of its clients, the average food bank client paid 77% of income on rent and utilities. When people have to pay the rent, they go without food. Forty-two per cent of the people in the food bank survey said they had gone without food for a whole day at least once during the past year....

"The cost of housing is much higher in larger urban centres. Yet the housing benefit that people on welfare receive is based on the same formula no matter where the recipient lives. This proposal suggests a way to address that disparity....

"Welfare rules and practices are partly responsible for inflation at the low end of the rental market. Some landlords inflate rents to match benefits, and both the poor and the government pay for it. There are ways to change welfare practices so this can't be done so easily....

"Social housing—housing that charges rent geared to income—is a very limited resource in this province. It represents only 5% of the total housing stock and 18% of the rental units. The waiting lists are many years long.

"There is no housing-related income program to help the working poor in Ontario. Thousands of working families in our province pay over half their income on rent." We propose "a housing benefit that would extend to the working poor and help to stabilize them in the workforce. It would also create a new, transitional mechanism for people moving from welfare to low-paid work, easing the housing burden while they attempt to escape from the welfare trap."

The government's own summary of its consultation indicates that participants called for the creation of an affordable housing benefit payable to individuals. It's a shame that it's not included in this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I would like to take a couple of moments and just speak to the facts around Mr. Harper and the Canadian government. Under the social determinants of health and the Canadian facts—just let me share this with this House—housing is a public policy issue because governments have a responsibility to provide citizens with the prerequisites of health. Canada is signatory to numerous international human rights agreements that guarantee the provision of shelter. Canada is routinely identified by international authorities as not fulfilling those commitments.

So they may want to get out of the business of housing, but you know what? You can't inhale and exhale on these issues. You either believe in working for your citizens or you do not.

I haven't even addressed the whole issue around aboriginal housing, both on-reserve and off-reserve, and the

fact that if you go to the social determinants of health and the responsibility of the Canadian government—and you look at the fact that aboriginal peoples are four times more likely to be living in crowded housing than non-aboriginal. The issue there is that the life expectancy of aboriginal peoples is five to 14 years less than the Canadian population.

Does this government have a responsibility in housing? They sure do. It's part of public policy—as I said, a civil society. You must invest in your people. You must acknowledge those who have less and need to be supported, whether they're on-reserve or off-reserve, whether they come from a variety of other cultures. It's a responsibility once they land on our shores, as Canadians, to work together to find adequate and affordable housing.

And it is definitely the responsibility of the Canadian government. So I'll take it back, and I do blame Mr. Harper for not doing his job.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to rise again. I'm shocked at the member from Etobicoke's ad hominem attack on the Prime Minister. Of course, during a federal election, it seems they have imported their partisanship into this House as well.

It would appear that the provincial government is not responsible for the issue of affordable housing. They just seem to want to lay the blame at the feet of the Prime Minister. Good Lord, the alternative that we would be looking at is Michael Ignatieff as Prime Minister. Wow.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He's temporarily visiting Canada, and the member for Etobicoke wants to see him as Prime Minister of this country? Has he got a green card or a visa? What is he here on? I don't even know, because he only comes here—I think he said what he likes about Canada—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke said in an interjection that comments should be about what the speaker said. I think it's time that I would agree with him.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's a very good point, and I did say that. You picked up on that.

Well, if I go back to that, the comments from my colleague from Durham are something that I would suggest the members on the opposite side of the House pay close attention to. The one thing I'll say about the member for Durham—and I could say many things, but I will say this: He does his research. He doesn't stand up in this House and just fly off the cuff and make off-the-cuff comments or remarks. He does his homework. He does his research. He sees the gaps that you're leaving, and you're not addressing the real issue. It's election time. That's what you guys are addressing.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I had a chance to listen to the member from Burlington and the member from Durham for almost an hour.

The member from Burlington I respect a lot, and she'd know better than anybody else. She was in municipal government, and she knows exactly how much the Conservative government did download on the municipalities across the province of Ontario. They cancelled the affordable home strategy. They didn't invest much money on an affordable strategy. They didn't do anything. They downloaded ambulances and child care, the affordable homes and many different things.

Also the member from Durham—probably he forgot. He was in government when they cancelled 500 affordable homes in the province of Ontario. They didn't invest money. They opted out of the investment in affordable homes.

I'm glad to be part of this government. Since we got elected in 2003, we've invested more than \$2.5 billion in affordable homes. We fixed and also built more than 60,000 units and created more than 50,000 jobs across the province of Ontario.

We're still in the game because we believe strongly in our people. We believe strongly in our responsibility as a government to support the vulnerable people among us. Affordable homes I think is vitally important for the people of Ontario, for struggling families and people who need support. That's why we keep investing in affordable homes. That's why we bring this bill forward to enhance it, to give us a chance and the ability to keep investing in affordable homes. I hope the members opposite will come forward and support this bill because this bill is important to reform and the government's ability to invest more and to continue to support the vulnerable people among us.

I know the member from Burlington spoke about her amendment in the committee. I'm glad to be part of the government. At least we have a committee. We send bills to committee. We listen to the people and we try to adjust as much as possible to support and strengthen the bills.

Again, thank you for allowing me to speak and comment—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

The member for Burlington, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I would like to thank my colleague the member from Durham for sharing my time and making the critical points he did in his presentation. I would also like to thank the members from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Etobicoke Centre, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and London–Fanshawe.

As I said in my original speaking notes, this bill was being anticipated with great hope that there would be a homelessness and affordable housing plan delivered by the province with provincial interests in there. Instead, after almost two years of consultation and developing of the plan by the staff and then a delay in releasing the plan, what happened was that an expectation of some-

thing big was created, and when the plan was delivered, it was anticlimactic. It felt empty. It felt like a hand-off. It felt like a cop-out and a pass down to municipalities, an expectation that the federal government has to pay.

Well, you know what? We have a responsibility to the citizens of Ontario as leaders and elected officials in our own province, and that's not recognized in this bill. It goes around in circles. There's no depth to it. Even though the stakeholders came and said, "Yes, thank you very much for this plan," they also said, "We hoped for more."

That's what I hope the government realizes and will be reflected in regulations that give this bill some extra depth. Things that don't appear in this bill and that should have perhaps will be seen in the regulations.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I believe we have unanimous consent to stand down the third party lead.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Paul Miller: During committee hearings, housing advocates identified a number of serious shortcomings of the bill, and I'll give you the examples:

- its failure to set concrete targets or provide funding to ensure progress in reducing the current shortfall in affordable housing faced by many Ontarians;

- its failure to recognize access to affordable housing as a basic human right;

- its failure to protect against the selling-off of the social housing stock to the private sector, which will reduce access to affordable, good-quality housing;

- its lack of provision to allow municipalities to set the targets for affordable housing in new developments, that is, inclusionary zoning;

- its increased power to service managers, for example, to take over co-ops, which will make it more difficult for housing providers to deal with challenges and continue to provide badly needed affordable housing; and

- its lack of fair and independent process for housing providers and tenants to appeal service managers' decisions.

The NDP proposed many strong, reasonable, doable amendments to address the above omissions and weaknesses in the legislation; almost all were voted down by the Liberal majority on the committee, again. Not much was gained through any amendments except requiring ministerial approval before transfers, with some improvements to the processes of takeovers—for example, accumulated deficit language—but this government caved to municipalities on other issues.

Former UN rapporteur on housing Miloon Kothari said that without critical amendments to prioritize the needs of vulnerable groups, to include firm goals and timetables for the elimination of homelessness and to independently monitor and review progress, Ontario would fail to meet its obligations under international

human rights law to fully ensure the right to adequate housing.

Overall, we recognize the steps that this bill does take. Rent-gear-to-income rule changes, for example: Those who receive income from other sources need to report only once a year—a good improvement. There will be flexibility of waiting lists. Requiring municipalities to allow second units in existing houses, for example, basement units: That's a good proposal. But much, much more needs to be done.

I will go over the problem we face: Ontario's serious housing crisis. A book released recently, titled *Persistent Poverty: Voices from the Margins*, outlines the extent of the housing crisis: 1.3 million Ontario households are precariously housed, that is, they pay more than 30% of their income for housing; 120,000 Ontario families live in overcrowded housing; 80,000 Ontarians live in substandard housing requiring major repairs; and an additional 140,000 households are on affordable-housing waiting lists in Ontario, a number that has increased by 10% from 2009 to 2010.

Housing insecurity is rising because energy costs have gone up 50% in the past decade. Rents have increased faster than inflation. Incomes of tenants have stagnated or declined. Half of renters do not have enough money to pay for their housing and other necessities, such as food, medicine, transportation, education and so on.

The authors of *Persistent Poverty* spoke to hundreds of people struggling in poverty and insecure housing from across Ontario, people like Jacob, a young man in Toronto, who said this at a recent community meeting held by the interfaith coalition on social assistance: "A bachelor apartment costs \$600, maybe \$700 a month in Parkdale. Rooming houses are terrible. People steal your food, mess up the bathroom, get drunk and bring friends home. My socks and underwear were stolen from the laundry. How do I pay a high rent on my ODSP of \$1,092 per month? It would be worse if I were receiving just \$585 a month from Ontario Works. What am I supposed to do? Am I supposed to steal?" Why should Jacob have to face a life like this?

Then there's Harry, a middle-aged man from Brantford, who said: "If I can become homeless, there is not another person in the world who cannot become homeless. Even people who are wealthy are very close to being in poverty: one death, one broken relationship, one loss of a job. There are not a lot of choices for housing, and it often means living next to people" who are doing drugs.

This government's record on housing is abysmal. They talk about their historic investments in housing. Well, let's take a good look at the history. In 2003, the McGuinty government promised to build 20,000 new affordable housing units in three years. As of October this year, seven years later, the government will have funded only 15,000 units and built only 11,500. In other words, the McGuinty government has funded about 1,900 units a year, about one fifth of the 10,000 units a year that that housing groups say is needed to make a dent in homelessness and underhousing.

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Now they are standing by while federal funding is reduced. In 2009, the Auditor General called for the Ontario housing ministry to develop a plan to deal with the federal phase-out of funding, but the McGuinty government still hasn't got one. In fact, the operating budget for housing was cut by \$187 million this year and has been stagnant since 2003. The reality is that, in 2010, after seven years, more than enough time for the McGuinty government to do something, the housing crisis continues in Ontario. In fact, the housing crisis in Ontario is the worst of any province in Canada. According to the Wellesley Institute, one of the most respected sources of information on housing, Ontario has the highest housing costs of any province. In Toronto, one in three households spends 30% or more of their income on housing, the worst record among metropolitan areas across Canada. High housing costs force individuals and families to choose between paying their rent and mortgages or paying for necessities such as food, medicine, energy, child care, transportation, clothing, education and, of course, hydro.

According to the Daily Bread Food Bank, high housing costs are the number one reason why visits to food banks in Toronto cracked the one million mark this year for the first time ever. Worse, a record number of Ontarians visited food banks in 2010, 400,000 in the month of March alone.

Ontario also has the worst record among all the provinces in terms of affordable housing investments. Last year, again using Wellesley Institute numbers based on Stats Canada, Ontario spent \$64 per capita on affordable housing, only half the provincial average of \$115 per person. On a per capita basis, the government of Saskatchewan spent almost four times as much. Worse, the government of Ontario has downloaded more affordable housing costs than any other Canadian province. Cash-strapped Ontario municipalities lack the revenues to meet the growing housing needs across the province. Lack of access to affordable housing is an affront to the dignity of all Ontarians.

The need for action is so obvious, it's almost painful. Access to safe and secure housing is a human right. The lack of affordable housing in Ontario is no less than an assault on the human rights of our citizens. Those were the conclusions of the 2009 report by the United Nations special rapporteur on the right to adequate housing after he toured Canada and found that housing rights are being eroded here.

Homelessness and a lack of affordable housing is costly to individuals, communities, the economy, and our country and province. The Wellesley Institute outlines some of these costs in a report called *Precarious Housing in Canada*.

According to the Conference Board of Canada, housing unaffordability negatively affects Canadians' health, reduces their productivity, limits national competitiveness, and drives up the cost of health care and welfare. In fact, the economic cost to society of housing insecurity and homelessness far outstrips the cost of solutions.

In 2008, a report, *Breaking the Cycle: Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy*, stated that poverty in Ontario cost the provincial and federal governments as much as \$13.1 billion a year.

Other jurisdictions are moving ahead with well-funded affordable housing strategies, but where is Ontario in this? The British government stepped up its national housing plan with the *Building Britain's Future* initiative of 2009, which included a \$3.1-billion investment in new homes and ramped up support for social and private rented homes.

We know that funding from the federal government for affordable housing is drying up. NDP MP Libby Davies has been spearheading a bill to put in place a national housing plan, which passed second reading but now awaits the outcome of the federal election. The bill won the support of NDP, Liberal and Bloc MPs. It would require the federal government to consult widely with provinces, territories, municipalities, aboriginal people, community groups and private sector interests, and report back to the Commons with a comprehensive national affordable housing plan that meets the Canadian international housing rights obligations.

But Ontario can't wait for the federal government to do something. It must also act, and with an urgency that they have not shown since being first elected. It took Ontario a year to launch hearings, and it was six months late in reporting back on the hearings.

Overall, housing groups were united in what they called for in the housing strategy. The Housing Network of Ontario declaration was endorsed by Habitat for Humanity Canada, the Social Planning Network of Ontario, the Wellesley Institute and 450 other community and housing groups. It sets clear yardsticks for what needs to be included in an effective housing strategy for Ontario. It sets out five tests which include: bold targets and sustained funding, including a minimum of 10,000 affordable housing units a year; a clear measurement of progress, including specific targets and timelines for reducing affordable housing waiting times; action to improve housing affordability for low-income people, including a new monthly housing benefit; and reformed housing legislation, including stronger rent control and inclusionary zoning at the municipal level.

How does this bill measure up in this situation? Listen to what groups have to say. The Housing Network of Ontario:

"The Ontario government has proposed some new legislation and administrative procedures that are useful and important, but the essential items for a long-term affordable housing plan—targets, timeline, and most of all funding over a multi-year period—are missing. It's like they've put up the scaffolding, but then forgot to give the workers the tools that they need to get the job done.

"By the end of this fiscal year, capital funding for new affordable housing is set to shrink to zero. Investment in building new homes and repairing existing rundown housing not only helps the people living in that housing,

but also provides a solid boost to the economy, including jobs and even additional tax revenue for the government.

“The government’s promise to more effectively measure affordable housing and issue annual reports is helpful, but without specific targets, timelines and funding, it’s hard to provide accountability for results. Thousands of Ontarians took part in public consultations last year, calling for sustained funding to build at least 10,000 affordable new homes annually and better maintenance of existing housing; a universal housing benefit; support services to make housing truly affordable and accessible; changes to housing legislation; proper accountability; and clear ways to measure progress in the fight against housing-related poverty.”

I could go on but I’m running out of time. I’d just like to finish by saying that yes, the three members from all parties of this House worked hard on this, but certainly it falls short of the expectations of a lot of the groups that

deal with poverty and housing in our province. We certainly would like to see more initiatives from the financial aspect of this bill. It falls far short of the expectations of a lot of people in this province, and that’s unfortunate.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. Khalil Ramal: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I said in my response that the Conservatives cancelled 500 units. The correct number is 17,000 units. That is a correction for the record.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Members are allowed to correct their record.

It being very close to 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 9 of the clock on Thursday, April 14.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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Joe Dickson, Sylvia Jones
Amrit Mangat, Yasir Naqvi
Michael Prue, Mario Sergio
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
Wayne Arthurs, Aileen Carroll
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

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Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
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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
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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

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