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of Debates
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**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 22 March 2012

Jeudi 22 mars 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 22 March 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 22 mars 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AGGREGATE RESOURCES ACT REVIEW

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Standing Committee on General Government review the Aggregate Resources Act and report to the House its observations and recommendations with respect to strengthening the act. In developing such recommendations, the committee's focus shall include, but not be limited to, the following areas: the act's consultation process; how siting, operations, and rehabilitation are addressed in the act; best practices and new developments in the industry; fees/royalties; and aggregate resource development and protection, including conservation/recycling.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy has moved government notice of motion number 21. Shall the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

FAMILY CAREGIVER LEAVE ACT
(EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
AMENDMENT), 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE CONGÉ FAMILIAL
POUR LES AIDANTS NATURELS
(MODIFICATION DES NORMES D'EMPLOI)

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 21, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 30, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver leave / Projet de loi 30, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé familial pour les aidants naturels.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: I am pleased to stand on behalf of the PC caucus with respect to this bill, Bill 30, the Family Caregiver Leave Act for workers. I have listened intently to the debate that has happened and occurred in this House on this issue—very intently. I think it's an important issue for when people have loved ones who are ill. I

think the sentiment is that we should do everything in our power to help.

But one of the things that I had heard in the debate over the last little while had to do with respect to the fact that the government has created a bill, they proposed a bill, that is intended to provide some relief, but they actually want the official opposition, the PC caucus, to pick up the phone and call our federal cousins and effectively help them implement a bill that, for all intents and purposes, is flawed.

Now, I have to ask about the competence of a government that can not only ask us to pick up the phone on their behalf, but they can't even pick up the phone, dial 10 digits and call them themselves. I don't understand how it's possible for a government to not be able to dial 10 numbers on a telephone, pick up the phone and ask for themselves. I say that with particular reference, because over the last little while we heard this governing party across the aisle making reference to and picking fights with their federal cousins.

I kind of know why they don't want to pick up the phone. It's like, you know, Mr. Speaker, maybe when you asked a lady on your first date: You call them up, you were a little nervous about it; you might have had some fear, some anxiety, and you might have had that anxiety because of the fear that those people or your potential date, potential girlfriend, might say no. That's why there's some anxiety.

So what do you do? You ask someone else to ask that person for you, in the event that they might say yes; or if they say no, it might not feel as bad. It might not hurt as much because you heard the no indirectly, and you know that person is going to be somewhat gentle in letting you know that you've been denied the request of something very important.

So I think I actually figured out why they can't dial the 10 digits: It's either pure incompetence, an inability to look up 10 digits in the phone book, or it has to do with the fact that they have some anxiety because they know the answer is going to be no.

Why might that answer be no? I think we know the answer to that, too, Mr. Speaker. Because over the last eight years, since 2003, federal transfers to the province of Ontario have increased by about \$8 billion—\$8 billion. It's not some small amount where you'd expect that if I asked for a couple extra million or \$100 million or whatever this is going to cost, I might say yes. It's \$8 billion—billion. This is an astronomical figure: \$8 billion, Mr. Speaker. And we know what \$8 billion has actually bought in the province of Ontario. It's bought a \$16-

billion deficit, going on \$30 billion. So revenues have increased; transfers to the province of Ontario have increased. Ontario, for the first time since Confederation, has become a have-not province, a have-not province, and the Minister of the Environment knows. You know that we're finally getting equalization payments to the tune of billions upon billions of dollars.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.
0910

Mr. Rob Leone: We are finally, finally successful in coming to Confederation's welfare payments. We're receiving welfare payments from Stephen Harper's government in Ottawa.

Interjection.

Mr. Rob Leone: It's not a handout.

That's why they're afraid to pick up that phone, because they know that if they ask for yet more money, the answer is going to be no. And that's the issue here, Mr. Speaker. They've come up with a policy that has some effect. It touches at the heartstrings of people right across the province of Ontario. I know we've all had loved ones we wish we could spend more time with in their final days to help them feel better, to help lessen the pain. So on the face of it, reading a title like the "family caregiver leave for workers act" kind of feels good. It feels great, actually. We're actually helping people do what they want, and yet what will help people actually do what they want is the money to leave work, to maintain a sense of income.

So in effect, Mr. Speaker, this policy is basically a smokescreen. It doesn't get to the heart of what I think the bill wants to do, because there's just no money for it. There's no money in Ottawa to spend here in the province of Ontario, more than they already have. And this government has sunk us in such a deep hole, \$16 billion—Don Drummond says it's going to \$30 billion. The size of our debt has almost doubled in the last eight years. There's just no money. And every time we see a new policy from that side of the House, we have to reach deeper and deeper in our pockets to actually make sure it happens.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Like for that new hospital in Cambridge?

Mr. Rob Leone: What about that hospital in Cambridge, Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: You must want it.

Mr. Rob Leone: Well, you know, you raise an interesting point, because it was your government and your party that actually made lots of promises of hospital expansion projects right across the province of Ontario to either retain or gain Liberal seats. And consistently what we've seen is a pattern of lack of accountability, of promises made and promises not kept. That's the story of your government over there, Minister. I'm proud to speak to that any time you want, so keep heckling if you wish, because that's the reality.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister of the Environment, come to order, please.

Mr. Rob Leone: It's a good thing you called the Minister of the Environment to order, Mr. Speaker, because he raises the important issue of the fact that promises are made and never kept. I actually would consider this bill part of that. You see that this bill is supposed to do these great things for people, but they actually want Ottawa to help them implement it. To me, that's not a promise made and a promise kept; that's a promise made and a hope that the other party and the other government in Ottawa actually keeps it. So that's a great problem with that, Mr. Speaker.

Let's talk about a few issues that might arise on this. Certainly there's a flaw in the implementation of such a bill that we've seen from almost every policy that's come on that side of the House, where you try to see what the need is, where the need exists; you create a policy; and then it falls far short of achieving its objective. That happened in the case of this bill, I think, because you can't ask a person to take some time off and put their livelihood on hold in order to accomplish what I think they want with this bill.

We've seen it with other things, like the Ontario tuition grant, which speaks to the fact that there are hundreds of thousands of students in the province of Ontario who are paying tuition, like every other student in the province of Ontario, and about two thirds of those students aren't even qualifying for the Ontario tuition grant on the basis of all the little rules, the qualifications, to actually be able to successfully receive what this is. It looks great: You get a nice hashtag, you put up a nice website and you tweet it. But it doesn't achieve the objectives they set out. In fact, it is a promise made and a promise not kept, something that we've seen over and over again.

We obviously have to talk about some of the effects of this bill on what we see in the greater and broader economy. This involves, I think, a lot of employment and labour law, of course, which is an interesting topic as well, because if anything, other than the fact that we've seen a multi-billion dollar deficit in the province of Ontario—a crisis that, if left unchecked, we're not far from becoming the next Greece, all right? If we compare that crisis with the other crisis which is relevant to this discussion—the jobs crisis, the employment crisis in the province of Ontario—we really can speak, I think, to the problems inherent in what we're doing.

So let's talk about that employment crisis. We have folks in our labour force who, each and every day, have a desire to work, have the skills to work, even have the experience to work, who simply can't find that work: almost 600,000 Ontarians—600,000 Ontarians—who cannot find work in the province of Ontario. In fact, our unemployment rate in the province of Ontario has been greater than the national average for more than five years—five years, Mr. Speaker. It's a job crisis, I think, of epic proportions.

We used to be the proud province, the economic engine of Confederation, a province that has, for generations, provided a wealth of employment. In fact, my parents—and I've spoken about this before—came to the

province of Ontario in the 1960s because they wanted to provide a better life for their kids and their grandkids. That's what drew people to the province of Ontario for generations. They came here because they could provide that better life for their kids and their grandkids. I think that we're losing that. And rather than addressing that core issue of having jobs that feed families—jobs of the future—we are talking about a bill here that does neither. It does not provide the kinds of employment opportunities that our young people desire. It doesn't provide the opportunities for families who have been struck with financial hardship because maybe their factory closed down or their office has moved and relocated or simply gone bankrupt.

We need to have some policies, concrete policies, to address those core concerns and to address the fact that we have a serious job crisis in the province of Ontario. Unless we're talking about that, unless we're spending 20 minutes—which I've been allotted today, and I thank this Legislature for giving me the opportunity to speak to this for 20 minutes. Unless we're spending time debating those issues—how we can jump-start our economy, how we can reignite private sector employment growth once again in the province of Ontario—I think we're doing a disservice to the people of this great province, to the people who elected us in this Legislature to do the work, to solve the pending problems that we face in our society.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about priorities, our priorities should be not only in fixing that fiscal crisis, but they should also be about fixing our jobs crisis, finding reasonable solutions to those competing problems—problems that, if we worked collectively together, I think we could actually solve. That's what I think the goal should be.

Rather than spending 20 minutes on those issues, maybe I can spend a bit more time talking about the real proposals for private sector job growth and for getting our fiscal situation back on track.

We've long advocated in this party, since we started in October, an unwavering commitment for a public sector wage freeze that would provide a couple of billion dollars in savings, until we get ourselves out of this fiscal situation, this crisis that was created, not by us in this party, but by them in that party—\$2 billion.

0920

We're also talking about reforming the arbitration system to try and provide some relief to not only the provincial government, who has to pay wages, but to our municipal partners, to our colleges and universities, to our hospitals—which the Minister of the Environment has said recklessly they're trying to abandon some of the commitments that they already previously made.

These are some solutions that will provide a reasonable response to the fiscal situation, the fiscal crisis, that we find ourselves in in the province of Ontario.

We've also made commitments on the jobs side, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we have a commitment to retraining individuals who have lost their jobs and to get them in a position where they can find gainful employment. By

2021, we're going to have about a million people in the skilled trades—a million people in the skilled trades who—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I believe in the standing orders, 23(b)(i)—if you want to consult that section in the standing orders. It appears that the member from Cambridge may be drifting somewhat, so we want to get it right back on the bill, Mr. Speaker, if you please. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The member from Cambridge, I would ask you to confine your remarks to the bill that's in front of us.

Mr. Rob Leone: Certainly, Mr. Speaker. I do take that point of order under good consideration from the member for Peterborough, particularly because when he speaks in this House, all he does is really talk about Peterborough and with little reference to whatever bill we're talking about. But, Mr. Speaker, I'll go back to the report—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Just representing my constituents.

Mr. Rob Leone: And certainly, as the member for Peterborough says that he represents his constituents, I do the same thing for mine, Mr. Speaker.

But I think this does speak to the bill. What I've talked about does speak to the bill, Mr. Speaker. It is in order to have the kind of social policy that we want, like the family caregiver—whatever it's called; Bill C34—if we are here to talk about those issues, I think we have to make sure that we have the fiscal capacity to enrich our social safety net. We just don't have that anymore, and that does speak to the bill, Mr. Speaker. It does speak to the bill, because that's exactly what we need. Without having that ability, bills like this—that look great on paper, that have nice titles, that touch at our heartstrings, that really make us feel that we are doing something positive for the people of Ontario—really become simply a smokescreen, really become an opportunity to have a nice title, to make us feel warm and fuzzy, but at the end of the day, don't really focus on what we're trying to achieve. That is, in essence, what I'd like to suggest on that point. I think that getting our fiscal house in order is very important, and I think that that's very true.

I want to sort of end on a very personal note, Mr. Speaker. I want to say that when I first read the title of the bill, it reminded me of last fall when my grandfather passed away, and it reminded me of that because I, like many of my family members—my cousins, my brother, my parents, my aunts and uncles, and my grandmother—we spent a lot of time in that hospital by his bedside, waiting for him to pass away. So I was very hopeful, Mr. Speaker, that although I had the opportunity to spend that time—and we took turns—I worried about the people in that hospital hallway that didn't have the time, where their parents or their grandparents or a sibling was about to pass away, and they just were essentially dying alone. I want to know how we can collectively work on a solution that enables those people, in their last few moments

on this earth, to actually talk about and spend that time and lessen the pain and comfort those who are about to pass on, Mr. Speaker.

I was very hopeful that we were going to see something in this bill that would allow them to get to that step. Unfortunately, I don't see that. Unfortunately, I disagree with the fact that they want Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition to pick up the phone rather than doing it themselves to enable that. On that basis, I have some serious reservations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'll be sharing my time with my colleague from London-Fanshawe.

It is really a privilege and an honour for me to speak on Bill 30, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, in respect—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Sorry, Michael, this is a two-minute hit.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I did say questions and comments, not further debate.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Then I will continue on with what I was going to say. I will just change it back. It's a rookie mistake.

I share some of the views with my colleague here. I understand some of the concerns that he has with the actual bill. It's a similar bill to something that the government of the day actually introduced a little while back, where it helps some but really doesn't address the core issue and does not help the mass. That is really something that we really need to get a hold of in this House and really need to put a real effort going forward to bringing the benefits to all Ontarians—not just some, but all of them.

It is so important that we seize these opportunities that we have, and this is another one of those opportunities. A little while ago, we had the opportunity, and we still have an opportunity, to help our seniors in our communities by providing them—all of them, not just some of them—with real benefits, real opportunity for them to help enhance their way of living.

This, again, is that opportunity that we have in front of us, where we need to implement the proper checks and balance in order to help all Ontarians—everybody: full-time, short-time, part-time, all employees. And we really need to make sure that this makes it easy for them, so that we have a definite role between “What is the employer expecting from the employee? What is the employee expecting from the employer?” so that they can go and address the compassion that they need for their family member. This is where we really need to go with this bill and we really need to take the opportunity to do it right.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and I'm glad to join the debate and comment on the family caregiver leave. I just want to remind people what we're talking about this morning, and I wanted to comment on something that the member from Cambridge spoke about.

He began his comments being rather flippant and, I would venture to guess, even insensitive to people who are struggling with this issue. But he ended on such a really telling comment with regard to his grandfather, and I wanted to offer my condolences. It's a very difficult issue when somebody you love is dying in hospital or struggling with a very serious illness. None of us know what will happen when that occasion happens, what kind of time we'll have, how we'll react.

Certainly, I want to remind people what we're talking about. It's about job protection. We've done a lot of consultation and we've talked with people like the Ontario Home Care Association, the Canadian Home Care Association, the Ontario Caregiver Coalition, the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, the Alzheimer Society of Ontario and the Canadian Cancer Society. These are organizations that approached us prior to the election, asking for the possibility of providing leave for those caregivers who are struggling with juggling family commitments, a job and all of the surrounding extraneous issues that tie up your hands when what you need most is time—time to be with the person that you love.

Certainly, the member from Cambridge made it painfully clear how much that struggle was within his own family. It happens across this province and I really would encourage members to provide constructive, helpful suggestions. We had it previously from the NDP side, offering some suggestions with regard to definitions. I appreciate that kind of constructive dialogue. I would encourage everyone in the House to think about how we can make the bill better. I encourage it, and I respect the interests of this debate to inform that legislation going further.

0930

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to comment on the speech by my colleague from Cambridge as well.

I want to touch on the comment of the Minister of Labour. She said, “What people need is time.” Well, there's a saying that is much older than this Legislature, and it's “Time is money.” There's not a nickel in this bill. There's not a nickel in this bill to help those people who are looking for that time off for a family person who is ill under the Family Caregiver Leave Act.

Speaker, without dollars attached to it, it's meaningless. In this day and age, people are struggling. Eight weeks off without pay is not something that people can look forward to in this day and age. Eight weeks off without pay? Some people don't even have eight weeks of savings. So when you think about that—

Mr. John O'Toole: They don't even have a job.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They don't have a job. Well, if they don't have a job, they're not going to get time off, but—you don't get time off from something you don't have; I understand that. But the reality is, eight weeks off without pay is not something that people can afford.

But do you know what this bill is all about? It's a deflection from the sad reality of how this government

has failed. This bill is designed to do one thing. They should have sat down with the federal government and said, "Is there something we can do with regard to family caregiver leave with respect to people who are ill?" No. They would rather bring out this bill. They're going to bring out this bill, and when this bill passes, as it most likely will, they will then go out on the hustings and blame Stephen Harper and the federal government because there's no federal money to pay for their promises. I mean, this is just so characteristic of the Dalton McGuinty government since it has been in office—

Mr. John O'Toole: Spend, spend, spend.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Spend, spend and hope somebody else is going to pick up the tab. It's time that they actually took responsibility.

I don't have time right now. I hope I have time to speak to this bill later, but let's talk about Ornge. You want to talk about abdication? Let's talk about Ornge.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments? The member from London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker, and good morning to everyone in the House.

I want to thank the member from Cambridge for his presentation today, my colleague from Algoma—Manitoulin and the Minister of Labour for her comments with regard to some of the productive input that they've had on this bill from our side of the House.

If I recall, it was the member from Nickel Belt discussing the definition of the medical person who would actually be authorized to sign the certificate and authorize the condition, perhaps, of the patient who might need the family loved one to be looked after, determining whether it's a serious medical condition. That is very important because part of that process is going to be getting that certificate.

We need to clarify, as well, how that certificate will be obtained with regard to the financial issue. Will the employee be expected to pay for that certificate? And if so, we have to think about—the people who perhaps are going to use this eight-week leave are going to be people who are in precarious jobs. They may not have that extra \$50 to pay for that certificate, and with that eight-week leave without pay, that could be a very big strain, that extra \$50. So I would hope that someone who is in a precarious job, should they find themselves in that unfortunate and sad situation, is able to take a week or two, or whatever up to the eight weeks, if they're able to scrape by and make that financial sacrifice for that time. But we don't need to add to that if they are willing to try to get to that stage to help their family members and add to that other certificate cost.

So I would urge the government, when we're at committee, to really look at that as well and define that as well, where that would come from. If anything, I hope that there wouldn't be a cost.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: Can I get a response, Mr. Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Cambridge, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rob Leone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to begin my response by thanking the member for Algoma—Manitoulin, the Minister of Labour, the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke and the member for London—Fanshawe for their comments.

I want to thank the Minister of Labour first off for those condolences and warm wishes. I appreciate those comments and concerns.

But I want to address a remark that she made in terms of the beginning; I may have been a little bit insensitive. I think the picture that I was trying to draw is that this is an issue that I care about quite a great deal. What I find problematic—and maybe I can use the word "insensitive"—is that the people who are going to rely on such a policy aren't going to be able to benefit from it because there's simply not the money to do it.

I think the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke made the point quite clear that, during the next election, if this does not succeed or this does succeed and it doesn't get enacted, the blame's going to lie on Ottawa. This is a pattern we've seen over and over again.

So rather than being insensitive, what I'm trying to suggest is how we can be a little bit more constructive, how we can actually implement this bill so that people can have a direct benefit from the province of Ontario, and recognizing that does involve the expenditure of funds. If we were in a better financial position and fiscal position today, we'd have the funds available to produce a policy that I think would have some meaning to the people who are affected by the passing of a loved one, a close relative, a mother, a father, grandparents, brother or sister or very close friends. That is what I'm trying to get at in my remarks.

So rather than being insensitive, I hope those comments were considered to be constructive.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? Further debate? The member for Etobicoke—Centre.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I'm—

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The people who are speaking next are the NDP.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Nobody stood.

Mr. John O'Toole: Nobody stood?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Nobody stood.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would the member from Durham please—I recognize the member for Etobicoke Centre.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise, and I know we'll all have an opportunity to share in the discussion on this particular bill. I'd like to raise a couple comments, first, probably from a personal perspective involving work that I had the privilege of participating in but also from a

broader perspective of why this bill is particularly important at this time within our aging community.

A lot has been said about the relationship with the federal government, and I must admit that I have a very good relationship with my federal member, and the discussions around how we've dealt with employment insurance, for example. The inconsistencies with which Ontarians are dealt with in comparison to other jurisdictions such as Alberta—he is very, very empathetic with those. I suspect it would be exactly the same because this bill was put in place, in fact, to respond to a federal bill that was put in place on compassionate leave to help us deal with some challenges that folks are facing.

Interestingly enough, I just spent an afternoon about a week or a week and a half ago with the CEO of a very large pharmaceutical company who has actually put this into place in his business practice already. He has recognized that there are challenges with the people who are working in business trying to struggle with and deal with the end of life care in particular or a catastrophic situation in their family. It's interesting: 40 cents of every dollar we spend in Ontario goes to the federal government, so I have no difficulty asking them to be a partner in helping us as we deal with some emerging and challenging issues, especially in our aging community. I think that they have a responsibility to work with us. You have to have lived on another planet not to realize that the challenges of this fiscal situation, regardless of what government you're involved with, are that we have to find new and innovative ways to deal with those challenges that face us.

Interjection.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'd like to speak about the challenge. People say this is up to eight weeks. It's not eight weeks necessarily—it could be or maybe two days. So let me draw on my personal experience and chat with you a little bit about the end-of-life palliative care that I've been involved in for over 20-some-odd years, first as a volunteer coming out of my church, so it gave me an opportunity to work directly with families.

0940

Some 93% of all the people who are at end of life want to die in their own home. They do not wish to die in a hospital. In order for that to happen, you need support services in place. You need to be able to provide respite to families who are caring for those loved ones. You need to be able to provide medical support, and that's what palliative care or a hospice would be able to do and actually does do right across this province. They're able to provide the kind of spiritual support, respite support, intellectual and physical and psychological support to the families as they're struggling with end-of-life care.

But what's most important as a volunteer when you go in and you're with the families is that you recognize that, at some point, that individual wants to be with that person as they are nearing the end of their life. So how do we provide a mechanism that allows that to happen? It may be up to eight weeks or in fact it may be a couple of days or it may be a few hours. The one thing about the

human spirit is that we cannot definitively say when someone is going to die. What happens is that we give them a time frame and then they may or may not die within that time frame. That person who is there with that loved one needs to know that they can stay with them without any repercussions of leaving their job for a few days or a few weeks. That's exactly what this law is planning to do.

I think my colleagues across the way have identified a number of issues that can be discussed within committee and need to be addressed. I agree with you. For example, who determines the medical leave in terms of the payment? But I think the most important part is, how do we as a civil society deal with an aging population who are dealing with these catastrophic events in their life, such as death? And how do we help the families? If you want to look at the economic reality, a hospital bed costs \$1,800 a day; to stay in a residential hospice is about \$465. To stay at home is relatively less than that; it's just you're looking at the medical care at the end of life. Why wouldn't we put those supports in place to help folks deal with something that is so traumatic in their lives? Why wouldn't we provide them the choice? Because that's what it is: It's a choice. Nobody is saying they have to do it. But it gives them a choice of which to do.

When I listened to the CEO, he said that one of the things he discovered with his particular employees was that they were so stressed out over what was happening in their private lives that they weren't productive in their business lives. So he was prepared to give them that kind of support so that they could deal with that tragedy or the event that was occurring and then come back. He had a better employee for it, because they understood that he understood their need for compassion. He understood their need to be with someone at end of life. He understood that they needed to be able to have that relief that you do have when you ultimately say goodbye and you're not rushing from your business to do it; you're beside that person, holding their hand as they leave their life.

You know, we forget about this. I'll use my own example. I've been married 44 years. That's a long time, and my Bill is pretty important to me. I would like to think that if something happened to Bill that I would have the opportunity to be with him at the end, or vice versa, with no implication. I maybe have that option by virtue of what I do. But if I was in business and I was forced to take only my holidays and I had exhausted them, or there were no opportunities and that employer said, "It's either you leave or you're toast; your job is gone," and I need that job because I have children at home, then what recourse do I have? None. And the existing leaves do not supply the kind of support mechanisms that this law will actually give to those folks.

So to me it just makes a great deal of sense to be able to ask how we can help people at the time of need. It's interesting, when end of life occurs, sometimes you have to go to the hospital because of medical intervention issues. But even then, you want to be with that person 24-7. You don't want to be there all night and leave to try to

go to work the next day. You want to have the peace of mind that you're with that person, whether it's your child or whether it's your husband or your partner or your parent. And remember that today in our society, parents are torn between the aging parent and the younger children in their families. They have obligations as well. There are only 24 hours in a day.

You need the kind of support that allows you and gives you permission to do the things that are required in order to support that family. And you can't do everything. You do everything you can, but you cannot do everything. You need to be able to find the time, and this is what this bill gives you. It gives you up to eight weeks of relief from your business to be able to do that. People say, "Oh, well, you know, all the business will collapse, the world will go to hell in a handbasket," because some people are going to take end-of-life care.

I actually heard someone suggest yesterday, which was disconcerting, that if they had a bad cold, they'd take time off. Now, think this through. This is unpaid leave, so nobody is going to take it unless they need to take it. Nobody is going to take it unless it's at that time of life where there's medical evidence that is required for them to be with that individual. I think it's actually disrespectful to suggest that someone would just have a cold and take the time off. After all, people have to work, and I think that was identified here.

There was another suggestion to just pick up the phone and bring it to the feds. The federal government does have a responsibility. I mean, they put \$1.2 billion into the tar sands, in the oil and gas industry in Alberta; certainly they can help out with compassionate care leave. Why not? All our tax dollars come together, so I think it's really important that we work together to find the solutions that are really important if we, in fact, are going to deal with the issues that are facing an aging society.

Go off the end of life and go into a situation where you are a working parent, two parents working, four children, and suddenly your son or your daughter gets leukemia or they break their leg in an incident or they're in a catastrophic collision in a traffic situation. Those parents need to be with that child. There's no question in my mind. Family comes first. Family must come first as part of a civil society.

We, as government, must support that family. That's the other part of civil society. We have a responsibility and an obligation to say to people, "What is it we can do to help you?" Whether they're people with different abilities, whether they're people who are going through extraordinary changes in their lives, whether they're people who are dealing with end-of-life or catastrophic situations, we have a responsibility just as human beings to help each other. As government, we have a broader responsibility, a fiduciary responsibility, that says, "What are the things we can put in place that are enabling these people to do the things that we believe in fundamentally as individuals?" That's this kind of policy. This piece of legislation actually says that we're going to help people

deal with things in their lives that they have very little control over, and that we're going to give and provide for them the kinds of support mechanisms they need.

As I said, it's interesting, because it's really just based on what the federal government is doing. They've already recognized this in their compassionate care protection leave. It's exactly the same and all we're doing is complementing that.

Yes, there will be situations that I think will arise that will be difficult, but either you look at something as what is the art of the possible or you look at it as what you can't do. I tend to be someone who says, "What is it we can do? What is practical and reasonable?" I'm not suggesting that everything is possible; it's not. As I said earlier, we do everything we can; we can't do everything. What we can do is work together very collaboratively with one another to look at this bill and to say, "Where are the gaps? What is it we can do better? What have we missed?" That's the whole idea of going to committee, ultimately going out to consultation, putting in those amendments and finding the things that will make a difference for the people we ultimately want to serve.

I've spent over 20 years with end-of-life care and I can share with you how important this bill will be to those people who are impacted and affected by end of life, whether it's your grandparents and you want to spend some time with them—because today, in this global world, our children are not always with us; they are all over the world. Many of our new families to Canada do not have extended families. They don't have the people to come in, so they rely on hospice to support them at end of life. That's maybe when they have one or two.

But the other is that we also have an aging population. In my particular area, just in one portion of my riding, one small portion of the Mississauga Halton LHIN area, by 2013-14, the number of people over the age of 85 will grow by 71.2%. I call it a tsunami. This is a real challenge.

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Then we forget, as well, about people who have comorbidity issues. Now we're living with Alzheimer's and dementia, but we also could be living with Alzheimer's, dementia and cancer, so it's even more important.

Bless the folks who have been able to help our people with different abilities, disabilities, to live longer, but they too are getting comorbidity issues. We need to put in place the mechanisms and support systems for families to help them as they struggle with this challenge, regardless of whether it's a short-term—hopefully, it's always a short-term—or an end-of-life situation.

I actually believe everybody in this House feels this way. I can't see where they can't. You can put out all the economic reasons you want, but at the end of the day it's not about dollars, it's about people. It's about a standard of life that we all aspire to. It's about the care that we all want to give. It's about the support we believe in for one another. That's what this is about.

You can do the economic argument, and I can give you the dollars on the other side to say it's much cheaper

to support this, as that CEO of that pharmaceutical company did. It was much cheaper for him to be able to support this because he had a better employee that was more productive, once they had had that situation dealt with in their family. But that isn't why he did it. He didn't do it because it was economical for him. He did it because it was the right thing to do, to help and support his employees. He cared enough about the people that worked for him.

Well, I care enough about the people in Ontario to find ways and means to support them in any way that I possibly can, and I think this is a good example of what we can do. I really do. I know that there's been a lot of—well, there's not one nickel attached to this. We go on and on—again, it's the nickel. Sometimes it's not the nickel. Sometimes people are prepared to take those few days off and forgo the nickel in order to be with the person they love at end of life. Sometimes they need to hold the hand of that child in the hospital as they're struggling through an operation. They don't need the nickel. They're prepared to forego the few dollars that they would receive. It won't be easy, and I wish there were other opportunities. I will continue to work with my federal partners to find those opportunities.

But, really, when you think about it, that nickel wouldn't be my first—I wouldn't say, "Gee, I can't take eight weeks off—or two days, or four days or a week—because I'm not going to get paid for it." I'm going to say, "Thank you that I've got a job to go back to, and there's some job protection so that I can be with my child, my grandparent, my husband or whomever in a particular time."

I think the nickel argument is a poor argument; it rings hollow in my mind. It would be interesting to ask those people who are dealing with end-of-life crisis whether the nickel was that important to them or not. I would share with you what's far more important: that they have the opportunity to have that person die where they choose to—be it at home, a hospice or a hospital—with people around who support and love them, surrounded by those people that care for them and, also, with the dignity that is required, that all of us must support for end-of-life care. There's no question in my mind that that is part of who we are and what we need to be able to do.

I know there was also a discussion about picking up the phone and dialling. I used to say, "Pick up the phone. I'm very ready; just work with me." I would like to think that when I phone my federal member, he answers the phone—and actually he does answer the phone—and we do work together. It doesn't mean we always agree on every situation, but we do share the same constituency; we do share the same concerns. We may have different approaches on how to resolve them, but at least we work together to try to resolve those approaches.

It isn't a matter of them and us—not on this situation. There may be others, but not on this situation, because all of us have grandparents, all of us have had families, husbands, partners, children; all of us have been touched, one way or another, by the situation of end of life or a catastrophe.

I had an example where my son was very seriously injured, and my husband was still in Africa. Had I been a working mom, I would have needed some time to be able to spend with my child as he went through some very significant challenges at Sick Children's Hospital. That would be a relief for me to know that, at the end of it, I still had a job to go to and that some employer wasn't going to say to me, "Too bad, so sad." There will be those situations, possibly, where an employer might have done that. I'd like to think that they'd be more like the CEO of the pharmaceutical company that said, "I value my employees, and I really can and will make a difference in their lives by helping them out and recognizing the challenges in their communities and in their own personal lives."

So, Mr. Speaker, for me, it's a part of who we are. I think it's a little bit in the DNA, if you like, in the House that we all care, and we all want to be able to support one another and make a difference, and I think we have an opportunity to do so.

I think we also have an opportunity to listen to one another to make this bill even better. I think that's part of our obligations to each other, because nobody should be able to stand up and say, "I can't support supporting people who need some time," whether, as I said, it's two weeks, three days, four hours—who knows?—or up to eight weeks, so that they're not feeling threatened that they don't have a job to go to at the back of it.

One of the areas we didn't touch on, and hopefully, my colleague from the other side, from the NDP, will, is the distance issue. We forget that not everybody lives south of Highway 7 and that when someone has a parent, for example, who is in the north, they travel great distances to be with that individual. You don't want them travelling back and forth. You want them to be able to stay with that person and to be able to care for them. That's a whole other situation.

I used to look at that one particular riding in Kenora, and I called it geographically insane; it was so large. But I was just thinking—just think of the challenge of someone who has a parent who is ill, who would try to struggle, going to support a parent who is ill and then back to work the next day. I mean, it's virtually impossible, and not just the geography—add the weather. So, it makes so much sense.

My plea to my colleagues is, how do we work together to make this bill even better than it is? How do we help the people of Ontario at the time they have some greatest need, and how do we do it with the kind of compassion that I believe each of us has inside of us?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I just want to straighten it out. First of all, Tim Hudak and this side are in support of this intent. However, we would expect it will go to committee.

I have to clarify a number of things that the previous member—who was a minister—said, which are wrong. You cannot take single days off to take your mother, or

other person conflicted, to the hospital and then return to work the next day. You have to take them off in weekly blocks, which is the first error.

Right today, in law today, under the Employment Standards Act—I worked in personnel for 10 years. You should be familiar with the Employment Standards Act: today, pregnancy leave, parental leave, family medical leave, donor leave, personal emergency leave, declared emergency leave, revisited leave. This is an extension in the existing law under the Employment Standards Act, which is a federal component, and it's the family medical leave established in 2004, which provides up to six weeks of entitlement. Your bill establishes eight weeks. If you're trying to make the federal government pay for it, why don't you harmonize with the federal government?

You're trying to act like you're doing this magnificent, compassionate motherhood stuff, which we all agree with. Don't imply that we don't. The way they go about it, Mr. Speaker, is so ham-fisted, it's troubling. The real issue here is they've politicized—they promised this in an election, and they still haven't got it right.

It's the same as the Ornge ambulance event. They took a very good idea and ruined it. That's what they did. They took a very good idea on renewable energy and ruined it. Now people can't afford to pay the electricity; it's so expensive because of the commitments they've made for expensive renewable options.

This is simply a case where the leadership doesn't know what they're doing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to thank the member from Durham for a little bit of clarification on some of the contents of this bill. I awoke last night to the voice of the member for Durham on the legislative channel, who was clarifying—

Mr. John Yakabuski: I hope it was on television.

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Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yeah, it was on television. He had stated that, potentially, this bill offers leave if a family's animal was sick, and then he clarified that, indeed, it didn't offer that type of protection. I mean, of course there are questions about the coverage of this bill—and he's chuckling because he knows he said that. Of course we all have questions. I think we're all in agreement of the intent, but it has implications in terms of employers' ability to let some people go, the ability of people to actually afford to take this leave.

One of the things that I think it focuses on and tries to do is mandate some morality with our Employment Standards Act; the fact that if one of your employees' family members is sick, you should be afforded some leave to go take care of them. I don't think anyone would disagree that that's important.

But there are other aspects within our Employment Standards Act in terms of wage theft, where employers actually aren't paying their workers for the work they do, that has completely left the focus of this government.

They understand, they know it's out there, yet no remedy is found to ensure that workers who actually work on an hourly basis get paid the wage they're supposed to be paid. Should we not focus on that as well? I hope that the Minister of Labour has a plan to focus on that. Of course, it would ensure that folks who get into this scenario would at least have the money that they're due to be able to afford to take some leave.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I wanted to compliment the member for Etobicoke Centre for her thoughtful, instructive debate. It's not unusual for the member for Etobicoke Centre to do that. That's pretty typical of her. She provides a thoughtful, non-partisan view of most legislation in this House. She's always done that and I appreciate that she did that this morning again. I think she wants to reassure Ontarians that the one thing that they need most, which is time—that this legislation is designed to have that debate come forward and help us manage an issue that we all struggle with from time to time.

When you have a sick or an injured family member, this is a struggle that you have going forward, and I appreciate that she provided that perspective in the House this morning. I realize we've had some comments from the other side that have been not as constructive as they could be, but I appreciate that the member from Etobicoke Centre encouraged everyone to bring forward constructive suggestions, as did the member from Nickel Belt previously.

She spoke a little bit about the kinds of practical suggestions that I've been talking about. At the time, she spoke about the value of nurse practitioners and how we need to bring them forward. Those are the kinds of insights that help inform better decision-making when we talk about legislation and that's what I would encourage all members to do.

We want to give working Ontarians the one thing that they need. They need some time to care for sick or injured family members. They want time to be with their loved ones; it's a matter of compassion. It's the right thing to do for Ontario families and I would encourage the opposition to find constructive ways to amend the legislation so that we can do what we all have, I think, acknowledged this morning: Address an issue that we all struggle with when somebody in our family is ill or is diagnosed with something that is very serious. That affects everybody in the family; there's no one that remains untouched, whether you're a politician or not. We all are brothers, sisters or daughters, and we all have someone that we care about. This is about doing the right thing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to respond to the member from Etobicoke Centre. Obviously, we share the same kinds of views with regard to societal compassion and the opportunity to provide for people in those times of greatest need. But I think that, having said

that, we also have to look at some of the practical restrictions that this bill provides.

One of the things is that it strikes me on first glimpse that it's another example of the kind of gesture politics that this government prides itself on where certainly there's the impression of the kind of concern for each other that is expressed in the bill, but there's no money. The ability of people to be able to set aside no pay for up to eight weeks is something that is really, I think, quite unrealistic. So, as I say, while it gives all the right impressions—and, obviously, we have no quarrel with the intent of the bill.

Also, just for the sake of putting it on the record, no one has come to me, as their representative, to ask for the potential of eight unpaid weeks. What they have come to me and asked about is the fact that the government has made a commitment, through the Auditor General's pre-election report, to a significant decrease in funding the issues on long-term alternative care beds, on CCACs. These are also vehicles of compassion for all of us.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Etobicoke Centre: Response.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the minister and the members from Essex, Durham and York-Simcoe for their concerns and for their comments.

I mean, in essence, what we're saying is if you've got some good ideas, bring them forward and let's work together to find a better bill. But I don't think the intent of the bill should be changed. You can talk about the CCACs and those other challenges that are there, and they're going to continue to be there in an aging population. But what we're actually talking about here is helping people at end of life. I've only had 20 years in end-of-life care. It's restrictive, and I've dealt with individuals. But I can tell you that I have had people who say, "I wish I could have stayed with my grandpa. I wish I could have stayed with my child."

Right now, if my daughter were diagnosed with cancer, the law says that I could get up to 28 or 26 weeks if the doctor says she's going to die within that period of time. But if she doesn't, because it's that human spirit that we don't know—I can tell you of so many times when the doctor has said, "This is the end: next week, today," and it doesn't happen—then we have to find a mechanism that allows the people to be with their folks at end of life, and that's what this bill is all about.

If, in fact, the member from Durham is unhappy with the bill, I say don't vote for it. If it's so difficult, that's fine. But I would like to think that all of us, by working together, can find a solution if we want to, to be able to say we can make a difference in the lives of a lot of folks. That's sort of what this bill is proposing.

Is it perfect? Are there things to do? Can we do more? Absolutely. Should we? Of course we should. And I would like to think that, again, the responsibility of this House is to continue to challenge and to look to how we can work on behalf of the people of Ontario in a far better and more productive way than we have by debating this bill in a more pejorative way.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'm pleased to talk to Bill 30, an Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver leave.

I was very encouraged by some of the comments that the member from Etobicoke Centre had actually indicated, that the points that we've highlighted from the NDP are going to be considered and taken seriously and looked at when we go into committee to have those discussions in order to enhance this bill for it to be effective, in order to bring the changes that we need for all Ontarians.

She talked also about having a choice and giving that choice to the individual to take the leave. Under certain circumstances, that choice is easy—in a perfect world, where we all have great CEOs, where we all have great employers, where the relationship is fine and everything is doing great.

I'd also like to inform the Speaker that I will be splitting my time with the MPP from London-Fanshawe. Thank you very much for that, my friend from Essex.

It's great to have that relationship with your employer, but unfortunately, it's not the reality. I hear from friends across the way that they do have that relationship with their employers and that they've never heard of a denial ever happening. You always hear that the doors are open for employees to walk into their employer's office. "We have an open door policy. Come on in. Let's have that discussion." Well, I'm sorry, you know. Stop living in the bubble, because it's not the reality.

1010

Sometimes, yes, the door will be open and you'll walk in, but unfortunately, as soon as you walk out, the door slams behind you, and that's where the relationship between employer and employee starts deteriorating, and that's where the unease starts happening. That's where the issues for the relationship start breaking down, and the walls get built, the fences are there, and the mechanism, the relationship, is now gone and destroyed. It takes a very long time in order to build that trust once again. It takes a very long time for an individual to build that relationship up again, if that door remains open.

So we really need to make sure that we have those mechanisms in place, and that there is a clear explanation of what the role of the employer and employee are so that there is no discomfort when you're going through this process and you're asking for this leave.

I'm also happy, and we're open to the idea that—yes, there is a long distance between communities in northern Ontario. If I heard my member from across the way correctly, there might be a premium for long travel. Maybe that's something that we should discuss over in committee as well. That would also be nice to see. But in essence, this bill is a good bill. It is an essential bill. It's positive, but it just doesn't go far enough. It just doesn't go far enough, and we should be able to get it there.

Again, I was encouraged by the member's comments that we will be discussing this in committee. That's where

we need to bring this to—to committee—to get those discussions, to have a good, effective bill that will help all Ontarians. That's where we need to go with this.

Again I want to reiterate that there have to be proper checks and balances here so that we know what the roles of individuals are when they're asking for this leave, so that there is no discomfort and that the employer knows their rights and the employee knows his or hers as well.

There were some concerns with this bill that were raised in regard to how far does it go in regard to who gets the entitlement to the leave. I need to stress something from my particular constituents that I've heard for many, many years now, because I've been in—we've all been in the job of serving our communities. But I just want to highlight one particular point. Under subsection 4(2)8, it says, "Any individual prescribed as a family member for the purpose of this section." And above, there are seven definitions of individuals who are family members.

Well, in northern Ontario, where we don't have large communities, where my next-door neighbour just happens to be a quarter-mile down the road, and it turns out that she's not the spouse, she's not my stepbrother, my father; she's not my cousin, aunt, uncle: She's a woman who's on her own who needs care. I'm her neighbour. As far as I'm concerned, that's a family member to me. That is important, and that is not covered in this bill. She is part of my family. I am the only family that she has around her. Her children—her entire family is in southern Ontario. She's alone. She needs care as well, and she's being left out here. The constituents need the ability to care for her. Let's not forget about her because CCAC does not always get to those locations.

Another point that was raised by my colleague from London—Fanshawe is that when we're going to be asking for this leave to our doctors—and I believe our doctors and our nurse practitioners have that ability to define what the illness is, for us to take the time off, or the need to take the time off. However, there's always a fee attached to that. There's always a time that you have to wait to get to that doctor, because it's not always that easy. I'm sorry; in northern Ontario, sometimes it takes anywhere between three weeks to maybe four, five, six, seven weeks in order to get that appointment. That time will seethe and will create more friction because the employer is waiting for you to justify the time you need to be off.

Again I understand that in a perfect world we all have great CEOs, we all have great bosses, but get out of that bubble; it's not like that for everybody in this province.

Ça fait que je veux toucher un peu sur la nécessité de ce projet de loi. Est-ce qu'il est nécessaire? Absolument. On ne questionne pas qu'il est nécessaire, ce projet de loi-ci. Les communautés dans le nord de l'Ontario et à travers tout l'Ontario, oui, ils en ont besoin. C'est essentiel à leur communauté. C'est essentiel à leur vie. Et puis, tout le monde devrait avoir la chance de prendre le temps qui est nécessaire.

I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker; you look like you're going to rise. I'll give you the—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time for debate has expired.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House now stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let's just keep it that happy. Introduction of guests.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to recognize the members of the Grain Farmers of Ontario, who hosted a great breakfast here this morning in the legislative dining room. The members in the gallery are the chair of the Grain Farmers, Henry Van Ankum; the CEO, Barry Senft; and board member and grain farmer from Kent county Mark Huston. I want to thank them for coming to Queen's Park today.

Hon. James J. Bradley: It's my pleasure to introduce this morning, from the Niagara North Federation of Agriculture, the president, Albert Witteveen, as well as Ken Durham, Robert Bator, Torrie Warner, John Sikkens and Cathy Mous. Welcome.

Mr. Peter Shurman: It's my great pleasure to welcome to Queen's Park today a young man, Noah Alter, from Associated day school. He is job-shadowing me. He comes from the great riding of—no, not Thornhill—Eglinton—Lawrence.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome members of the South Central Federation of Agriculture who are joining us at the Legislature today. It's a big group, but there are a few of the local presidents that I would like to specifically welcome: Roy Shuker from Hamilton—Wentworth is here; Joe Schonberger from Niagara South; Vic Janulis from Norfolk; Nick Huitema from Haldimand; Steve Sickle from Brant; and Norm Richardson from Halton.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to have everyone in the Legislature give a warm welcome to the Perry family: Gillian and Don and their children Ashton, William, Meghan and Leanne. They're from the beautiful community of Midland. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to welcome Karen Philp, the executive director of the Canadian Patient Coalition. Welcome, Karen.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, this morning it gives me great pleasure to introduce to the Legislature my mother, Lena Fedeli, and my mother-in-law, Mrs. Erma Kelly.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: It's my pleasure to introduce six members of page Ammaar Jan's family: Arif Jan, Shahla Jan, Meryam Jan, Zara Jan, Nash Jan and Dawn Jan. Ammaar is our page captain today. Welcome.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm pleased to welcome today, from the Canadian Patient Coalition, Emily Wills, Harlon Davey and Joanna Valsamis.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to welcome Megan Perry from Trinity—Spadina to Queen's Park today. Megan is the wife of Jason Kuzminski.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's a pleasure to welcome an association with the Grain Farmers of Ontario, who are here today visiting us at Queen's Park. They offered a wonderful breakfast to members of the Legislature this morning, again reminding us that farmers continue to feed families and they continue to feed members of this Legislature. So I'm particularly happy to welcome them here today.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm glad to welcome members of the Canadian Patient Coalition. This is Cindy Anthony, the executive director of the Aplastic Anemia and Myelodysplasia Association of Canada; Wady Dyson—the last name is a little hard—Nierszhauss, who is a member of the board of directors of the Canadian Pain Coalition; and Karen Philp, who's the executive director of the Canadian Patient Coalition. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions?

I'm taking a chance here, but I want to personally welcome the member from Nipissing's mother for being here.

I want everyone to know and put them on notice that I'll be inviting all of your mothers and fathers and relatives.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, how did you know that?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You had that look on your face.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, my question is to the Premier. A key foundational principle of parliamentary government is ministerial responsibility. It is considered a foundational principle because it's one of the cornerstones of our parliamentary system of government. According to Bagehot, ministerial responsibility begins with parliamentary scrutiny. He argues that "If a minister does not know what is happening in his or her department, that person will be quickly exposed. Once exposed, it is the expectation of Parliament that the government find a replacement."

My question to the Premier is this: Can he tell us if he considers the doctrine of ministerial responsibility a foundational principle of our parliamentary system of government?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy Premier?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the best Minister of Health Ontario has ever had.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you. The member opposite raises a very important issue, and that issue is one of ministerial responsibility. It's very clear that the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Order. All members, come to order.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker.

The issue of ministerial responsibility is, of course, a vital one, and I do want to acknowledge that the auditor did, in his report, say that we could have done a better job. I completely accept that. I agree with the auditor.

I also want to acknowledge that I consider my responsibility to be fixing problems in my ministry as I become aware of them, and that is exactly what I have done at—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: The minister's responsibility under the doctrine of ministerial responsibility is to resign. That is her responsibility. She has already proven that she is incapable of overseeing even the smallest portion of her multi-billion dollar ministry.

The question we have to ask is, if she couldn't exercise accountability and oversight of that small portion of her ministry called Ornge, how many other Ornges are there spread throughout that entire ministry? I want to ask the minister: Does she know that?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I understand that the member opposite has a role in opposition to do exactly what he is doing. He is doing his job; I am doing my job.

I think it's important to listen to what the Auditor General had to say, because the Auditor General is an independent Auditor General, and what the Auditor General has written is, "The ministry has recently taken substantive action to address many of the issues raised in this report. Certain issues will take additional time to resolve in the most cost-effective manner...."

The Auditor General himself reports that we have taken substantive and concrete action. I take the Auditor General's word as—his is the advice that I take, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: The Auditor General's report is an indictment of this minister. That's what it is. The Auditor General clearly said that this minister failed to exercise her responsibility, and the very fact that this minister is refusing to take responsibility is sending a message to the thousands of public servants in this province, and especially under her ministry, that those at the top don't have to account and don't have to have consequences for their lack of responsibility. It is, I suggest to you, Minister, an insult to the oath of office that the minister took and is undermining the respect of this Parliament.

Interjections.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I have taken significant action when it comes to Ornge, and that is action that has been recognized by the Auditor General. The Auditor General said, "When they replaced the board of

directors”—that was my action—“When they replaced the board of directors, we noticed a total—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —change at Ornge. If we were to ask for information, it was a tough time getting it prior to the new leadership. The pendulum has gone so far the other way that everyone at Ornge is falling over themselves to be co-operative and to provide information.”

The actions that we have taken have been recognized by the Auditor General, if not the member opposite.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. Yesterday’s report by the Auditor General was a condemnation of all that has occurred under your watch. The Auditor General confirmed that you and your ministry officials ignored for three months his explosive draft report about an abuse of public dollars by those at Ornge and serious concerns about patient safety instead of taking decisive action. It confirms that this minister turned a blind eye and allowed the scandal to develop, fester and grow.

So I ask the minister, given the auditor’s scathing report about your failure to uphold your responsibilities and duties of office, will you assume responsibility and finally, today, be held accountable and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the member opposite has raised an issue that I would like to address. The Auditor General did release a draft report to the ministry in September. I think most people in this House remember exactly what we were all doing in September. We were on the campaign trail. The ministry was operating in a caretaker role. It would have been completely inappropriate for the ministry to share that report with a person who was a candidate in the election, Speaker. I was not sworn in.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have now gotten to that point where I cannot hear the answer. Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the member opposite knows as well as anyone in this House that when a writ is dropped, the responsibility of the minister changes, and that the ministry is in charge of the operations.

When I was reappointed as Minister of Health, Speaker, in late October—by then I was sworn in—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary question?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Mr. Speaker, my question is again for the minister. It’s certainly disappointing, I’m sure, for the public to hear the minister state that she had absolutely no responsibility for the report that she was provided with by the Auditor General.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: She said she was on the campaign trail.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: She was too busy on the campaign trail.

I would say again to you, it is about a minister in this case who has failed to uphold the duties and responsibilities of her office; it is about a minister who is now ignoring the historic principle of ministerial responsibility and accountability.

So I ask you again today, will you do the honourable thing? Will you resign?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the Auditor General did make it very clear that we could have done a better job. I completely accept that observation by the Auditor General. But I do object to the opposition’s characterization of my activities because when I was sworn in as health minister, in October, I was shortly thereafter briefed, and within weeks, we had a forensic audit team in at Ornge. We had people combing through all of the records at Ornge. That investigation has ultimately led to an OPP investigation.

Speaker, within weeks of becoming minister in October, I took decisive action. We have seen the results of that action, and the auditor—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member from Durham will withdraw.

Mr. John O’Toole: I withdraw that you would—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member does know better. The member will withdraw.

Mr. John O’Toole: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Speaker, again to the Minister of Health: It’s beginning to look more and more like a cover-up. We know, according to the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

The member will withdraw.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I do so.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Finance will stop.

Final supplementary.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Mr. Speaker, we know that the minister and the Premier’s office were informed last January about what was going on at Ornge. It’s time to stop pretending that she did not know.

She has completely lost the confidence of the public. So I ask you again: Will you do the right thing? Will you assume ministerial responsibility and accountability, and resign?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the auditor was very clear in his report: that we have taken substantive action to address the issues that he identified at Ornge.

The Auditor General had serious issues with access to information at Ornge. We had problems as a ministry getting access to information. That is why we have taken the action we have. That is why we have a new performance agreement in effect right now. That is why I have introduced legislation to strengthen transparency and oversight to ensure this does not happen again.

I take my responsibility very seriously, Speaker, to the people of this province. What they want is for me to fix Ornge and get on with the other challenges—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. Yesterday, the Auditor General told us that he provided that draft report outlining the problems at Ornge to the ministry in September. Now we've just confirmed with the clerks' table that the cabinet stays in effect, charged with all of their responsibilities, during an election campaign.

Interjections.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: So my question, Speaker, is to this minister: Why were the concerns—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will allow the member to ask her question.

1050

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. My question is, why were the concerns that were raised in that draft report dismissed and not addressed by the minister?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the action that we have taken, in quite short order, speaks for itself. We have completely new leadership, a new CEO and a strong new board. We have a new performance agreement in place. We have introduced legislation that will tremendously increase transparency and patient safety. We have taken decisive steps. The Auditor General acknowledges that success and it's time for me to continue on with my other responsibilities—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it's very, very clear that this minister had a heck of a lot of information available to her and did nothing about it for far too long, yet she is constantly claiming that she's as shocked as anyone at the mess at Ornge. But she's been acting shocked for over a year. In November 2010, she told a committee on estimates, "We will do the work required to get answers to the questions you've raised about Ornge."

That was in 2010, Speaker. What exactly did the minister do for that year? And what did she do since September, when the draft report confirmed the concerns that had been being raised for over a year? Why does she think she should keep her job?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. I do know, as everyone recognizes, that it's rather heated. I will tell you that I've been hearing some words being used that are unparliamentary that I cannot assign to individuals. That is not the reason why one would do that. All members are supposed to hold themselves to that high standard, and I ask that it be done.

As for points of order, any point of order during question period is not the convention and will be heard after question period. As for us—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Bring it down. And I don't need a comment in the middle of my sentence.

Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the Auditor General is a highly respected officer of this Legislature. I think all of us are united in our respect for the Auditor General. The Auditor General has done a thorough audit of Ornge. He released that audit yesterday. In his report and in his press conference, he acknowledged that we have made significant, substantive, concrete changes at Ornge that go a long way to addressing the concerns. I have introduced legislation in this House. I hope that all members of this Legislature support that legislation to strengthen Ornge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Auditor General described a scheme whereby Ornge used government-backed debt to purchase a building and then leased it back to themselves for a healthy profit. This scheme was described in a letter sent to the minister in January 2011, Speaker—well over a year ago. The auditor said that that scheme should have raised a red flag. Why did the minister ignore that flag, and why does she still think she should be keeping her job?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I have said, the actions that we have taken to strengthen oversight at Ornge have met with the commendation of the Auditor General. My responsibility is to fix problems as I become aware of them. My responsibility also is to lead the transformation of our health care system that is essential for the protection of universal health care in this province.

I have released an action plan; I am now implementing that action plan. Earlier this week, I introduced a complete reform of how we fund our hospitals. That is the important work that we are doing as we move forward.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Health. The Auditor General pointed to a various number of signs that there were serious, serious problems at

Ornge. A number of signals were there—serious waste, serious risk to patients. Time and again, this minister ignored the red flags, which, the auditor said, “should have been questioned much earlier.” Why did the minister ignore all of this and why, once again, I ask, does she think that she should be keeping her job?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I respect the work of the Auditor General. I accept his findings, Speaker. I take full responsibility for any actions I may have taken that contributed to this. But I can tell you that I moved quickly when I became aware of the problems at Ornge.

We have entirely new leadership; we have a new performance agreement; we've called in the forensic audit team; the OPP has been involved. These are strong and decisive actions, and I have yet to hear from the opposition what more they think I should be doing to fix the problems at Ornge. They are playing a political game; I understand that. The partisanship is evident in this House, Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We've only seen the tip of the iceberg at Ornge, but it should be enough to sink this minister once and for all. For over a year the minister said that she was concerned. Then she spent a year approving shady business deals, property flips and hidden salaries that belong more in a gangster movie than they belong in our health care system. For more than a year she ignored the warning signs—warning after warning after warning—even about patient risk. Why does she think she should still be the Minister of Health for the province of Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The reason I think that I should continue on as health minister, Speaker, is because I have addressed the issues at Ornge. But that is only part of my responsibility. A larger part of my responsibility is to manage a \$47.1-billion budget. But more importantly, it is a health care system that people rely on. When a loved one gets sick, you need the health care system to be there for you—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I would ask: If the minister can't manage a \$135-million ambulance scheme, how can she handle a \$47-billion Ministry of Health?

Speaker, the most frustrating and anxiety-producing issue for me is that this minister knows it is an important time for our health care system in this province. Patients are very worried that the system will not be there when they need it. We need to make some smart changes if we're going to get ready for the future. This minister has lost all credibility to do this, to manage this change because of the failures at Ornge. So, considering that she has lost all her credibility, will she finally do the right thing and actually resign?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite has identified exactly the most urgent issue in our health care system today, Speaker. It is: How are we going to drive the change in our health care system that we must do if

we are going to be able to protect universal health care? That is why I released the action plan in January. It is all about getting best value for the dollars we spend in health care; it's about focusing more on prevention and wellness; it's about faster access to stronger primary care; and it's about making sure that people in this province get access to the right care in the right place at the right time for the right price. It is my total focus to transform the health care system—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This House will take a 10-minute recess.

The House recessed from 1100 to 1111.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is to the Minister of Health. It was rather shocking to hear the minister say that the campaign—election—got in the way of her doing her job and assuming her responsibilities as Minister of Health. She confessed in here that she wasn't able to provide the oversight to Ornge in response to the auditor's report. I would remind the minister that, according to the Executive Council Act, you do hold office at the pleasure of the Lieutenant Governor, even during a writ.

Will you now acknowledge you are not aware of your responsibilities, be held accountable and resign?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you. Minister of the Environment, come to order.

Minister of Health?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker.

The member opposite knows full well that when the House is dissolved, when we are in that interim period between the writ dropping and the new cabinet being sworn in, there are limitations on the activities of ministers.

I can absolutely tell you that when I was sworn in as minister in October, after the election, I was made aware of the issues that were examined by the auditor and I became aware that the auditor was having trouble getting information from the people at Ornge, so I called the Auditor General and I asked him about that. I told him that I would do what I could to help get the information he was looking for—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Well, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister: The minister is still the minister during the election writ period. The minister is still responsible, the minister is still accountable, and it is very disappointing to stand in this House today and for her to acknowledge that she was not able to assume that basic responsibility because she was too busy campaigning.

I ask you, Minister, do the honourable thing, acknowledge you failed in your responsibilities and resign.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Health?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Auditor General has acknowledged the substantive action that we have taken to change the leadership, to change the protocols, the transparency and the oversight at Ornge. The auditor specifically says that the ministry has taken substantive action to address many of the issues raised in this report. Certain issues will take additional time to resolve in the most cost-effective manner, Speaker.

The Auditor General himself acknowledges what we have done to address the issues that have been raised. I can tell you that I fully accept the auditor's report. It is unacceptable what transpired, and that is why we are taking the actions that we are taking. We have a new, stronger performance agreement that is now already in effect; we have new—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Health. Yesterday, the Auditor General drew particular attention to the millions of dollars of fees paid to one law firm. Of course we know now that this is the law firm of one Alfred Apps, the former president of the Liberal Party of Canada. Yesterday, the auditor described how those very lawyers stonewalled his investigations, a scheme created by a Liberal government that was paying millions in legal fees to the—of the Liberal Party of Canada and in order to keep Ontarians in the dark on this very scheme.

Mr. Speaker, it's clear that in order to get to the bottom of the scandal that happened at Ornge, we have to start at the top, and the top starts with you, Minister. Will you submit your resignation today?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I was very pleased yesterday to introduce legislation on this very issue. We have introduced legislation that amends the Ambulance Act to provide much stronger oversight at Ornge, a much more transparent operation. This reinforces changes already in effect through the new and amended performance agreement. Speaker, we will be bringing in quality improvement mechanisms at—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland will come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —Ornge, just like we have done in our hospitals, to ensure that we are measuring and improving quality of care. There will be a patient advocate that will ensure that patients' voices are heard. We will continue to improve the quality of care at Ornge and improve the fiscal—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: These weren't just warning signs; they were warning billboards and flashing lights begging for attention, yet a detailed January 2011 memo sent to the minister's office discussing the web of for-profit companies at Ornge was ignored. Countless whistle-blowers were disregarded, and a draft auditor's report discussing threats to patient safety given to the ministry in September was completely dismissed.

When did this minister start to care? When it showed up on the 6 o'clock news. It is clear, Mr. Speaker, that the majority of this House has lost complete confidence in this minister and the ministry, and of course the members of this province have lost confidence in the minister. Will you do the honourable thing, Madam Minister, and submit your resignation today?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, it sounds to me like the member opposite will be supporting the new legislation that I have introduced because it addresses some of the issues that he has raised in that question. The new legislation does protect whistle-blowers. The new legislation allows the minister to appoint a supervisor to Ornge. It is a power that we have in our hospitals. It is one that is exercised only in very unusual circumstances, but I can tell you, had I had the power to appoint a supervisor at Ornge, I would have exercised that power. The new legislation will give us the oversight, the transparency and the ability to act.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment, it would be helpful if you did not heckle while your member is answering.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And any other comments that are made while the Speaker is standing.

Ten seconds.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The new legislation, I think, is worthy of very careful consideration by all members of this Legislature.

1120

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, my question this morning is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, the feed-in tariff program has been a focal point of Ontario's clean energy economy. Ontario's investments in clean energy are creating jobs and cleaning up the air we breathe, ensuring that our children and grandchildren have a bright and healthy future. In addition, our clean energy economy has brought forward over \$27 billion in private sector investment and created over 20,000 jobs.

Minister, I know that with these uncertain economic times, families are concerned that the FIT program will not be sustainable. In my riding, my constituents are concerned that the gains we have made will be erased. Minister, what is being done to ensure that Ontario's FIT

program remains strong and stable in these uncertain economic times?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I thank the member from Peterborough for the question. We did make a commitment to clean up the air, to bring on clean energy and to develop a strong, stable, clean energy economy here in the province of Ontario. The member from Peterborough has correctly outlined the progress we've made. Today I spoke to our clean energy strategy by speaking to the review we've conducted over the past couple of years, a review which will make that sure we can continue to build projects. We've streamlined the approvals. We've listened to communities, to farm organizations and to others. We're going to prioritize projects which have broad-based support. We're going to be able to build them faster and continue to strengthen our clean energy economy in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Minister, for that comprehensive answer. I know that my constituents in the Peterborough riding will be pleased to hear that the release of Ontario's feed-in tariff review will have a positive impact on Ontario's clean energy economy, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the program.

Minister, Ontario's clean energy economy has attracted over 30 manufacturers to produce clean energy technology in Ontario. As a result, Ontario's clean energy economy now employs over 20,000 people. It's not dirty money at all, Mr. Speaker. Minister, these jobs are important to Ontario's economic future.

Minister, it's important for the FIT two-year review to ensure that Ontario's clean energy economy continues to thrive, prosper and create jobs. Can you please share with this House what is being done to ensure that the long-term success of these jobs in the clean energy economy is protected?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member from Peterborough is right. Families and businesses are looking to the future. They want to know where the jobs for the future come.

You know, I was at Ryerson University this morning and speaking with some undergraduate and graduate students, and it's amazing, the projects that they've not only been working on, but they're working with private sector and energy partners to commercialize that research. That's the future. Over the next decade, the annual investment in clean energy is going to double from about \$200 billion to \$400 billion. Our clean energy strategy will make sure that with that strong energy economy here in Ontario, Ontario families and Ontario businesses will be able to benefit from the jobs as we sell our products and innovation around the world.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, clearly this side of the House believes in ministerial responsibility, and clearly at this point, you do not. When I was Minister of Health, I stood down—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: —from my ministerial responsibilities. I resigned on a matter far, far, far less serious than this Ornge scandal; in fact, quite a trivial matter now. And we had a couple of other ministers who did the same on rather minor matters. We did so because we believed the parliamentary doctrine of ministerial responsibility is fundamental to our system of democratic government in this province. It is the glue that holds you accountable. It's the glue that holds the system together.

When we have high and mighty cabinets and high and mighty Premiers, the only thing that the electorate can ask is that a minister step down and be accountable for the actions of her department, and in this case, for her own actions. Minister, will you do that?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. I can assure all members of this House that I take my responsibility as minister extremely seriously, and I do take my responsibility to the entire health sector extremely seriously.

We are in a time of transformation in health care. We're having to make some tough decisions about how we're going to protect universal health care and at the same time continue to improve the quality of care.

I think that the people of this province expect me to exercise my responsibilities as minister to ensure that they and their loved ones get access to the care that they need—to excellent care—in a timely manner, in a cost-effective way. That is my focus as minister.

I have absolutely addressed issues at Ornge. We are continuing to do that work. But I will not lose sight of my responsibility to the entire House—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Minister, you have lost sight of your responsibilities. You've lost sight of why you're here. You've lost sight of any accountability to the people of Ontario. You've lost sight of the providers in the health care system, the staff at Ornge, the pilots. You've lost sight of our democratic system.

You're in danger of thumbing your nose at 500 years of parliamentary democracy by refusing to step down. What makes you, your cabinet and your Premier so superior, so high and mighty, that you can thumb your nose at 500 years of tradition in this province, in this parliamentary system? People have died for this system. They've gone to war for this system. You thumb your nose at them as if you're not accountable to them. Resign today. Do the honourable thing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the Auditor General released his report yesterday. It is a report that I've read carefully—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I was pleased to see, Speaker, that while—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Complete your answer.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the Auditor General did, as he does, offer some very constructive advice on what we need to do to remedy problems at Ornge.

He also acknowledged that we have taken concrete, substantive steps to address issues that were raised in the report. I'm very happy to tell you that we will be acting on each and every one of the recommendations in the Auditor General's report. I think that is what the people of this province expect me to do, and that is what I intend to do.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

The Auditor General's report on Ornge paints a disturbing and shocking picture of the Ministry of Health failing to protect patient safety. What I'm hearing this morning disturbed me to the core. How can it be that the minister chose to campaign for her seat rather than protect patient safety at Ornge? How can she say this to this House? She has to resign. Will she agree?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Health.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thought the 10 minutes would have been enough.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. The member opposite has raised issues about patient safety. I want to assure the public and the members of this House that patient safety is the number one issue at Ornge, Speaker. When we put in place a new board, I was very clear with them that the number one priority was to look very closely at patient safety protocols, how they are measuring patient safety and how they are reporting issues related to patient safety.

1130

I can tell you, Speaker, that I have visited Ornge bases. I have spoken to those front-line paramedics who were very pleased to show me the changes that had already been made as a result of the new leadership as it pertains to patient safety.

There is no question that patient safety is the number one priority of the new board. I am delighted that Dr. Barry McLellan, the CEO of Sunnybrook Hospital, is leading that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: What I'm hearing doesn't make sense. We have an Auditor General's report that is delivered to the Ministry of Health. The Auditor General's

report clearly states—it's in the paper—serious patient safety issues. We hear on one hand that patient safety is number one. Why was there no action? She was the Minister of Health. She had the responsibility in September, and nothing happened till after it hit the media.

This lack of action put patient safety at risk. She has to go, Mr. Speaker. She has to resign.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Auditor General specifically referred to what he called a sea change at Ornge when new leadership was put in place—what the Auditor General noted.

Now, the members opposite may have their own opinions. I'm listening very carefully to what the Auditor General has to say. The Auditor General said, "When they replaced the board of directors, we noticed a total sea change at Ornge. If we were to ask for information, it was a tough time," getting information. But the pendulum has swung "so far the other way that everyone at Ornge is falling over themselves to be co-operative...."

It is a new era at Ornge. Patient safety is the number one consideration, and that's what should be, Speaker.

WATER QUALITY

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, today is World Water Day. World Water Day draws attention to one of our most valuable resources: clean water.

Clean water is crucial to our well-being. Conserving water supplies and protecting our water quality is essential to ensuring the health of our families, our communities and our economy. Ongoing research, testing and evaluation of the current drinking water system throughout the province are crucial to the improvement of our current water technologies.

Speaker, through you, would the Minister of the Environment speak to some of the initiatives under way that continue to support excellence in the water sector through training and education?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I can tell the member and the House that, through the Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act, a key part of our Open Ontario plan, we are driving innovation, creating economic opportunities and promoting water conservation.

Innovative Ontario companies are already leading the way, employing 22,000 people in the clean water sector. We want to help foster new and innovative water technologies to encourage people to use water more efficiently. In doing so, we can strengthen our economy by helping industry tap into the \$400-billion global water technology market while protecting our vital water services.

The 2011 Ontario budget outlined the water strategy and announced funding of \$30 million over three years for community demonstration programs and municipal water sustainability planning and to support education and public awareness of water conservation.

As stated during the recent throne speech, it is our government's goal to become the continent's water

innovation leader by 2015 and work with environmental experts and community groups to develop and introduce a Great Lakes protection act.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Water technology also plays a fundamental role when it comes to the types of everyday products we purchase for our households. Families want to make green choices when it comes to buying products, especially products that use water.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of the Environment, can he explain to the House how Ontario is helping families not only conserve water but also save money?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Excellent question. Our government is helping families conserve water and save money through the labelling of water-efficient household products that they can buy. The new WaterSense label identifies household products, such as faucets, shower heads and toilets, that use 20% less water. Using less water protects Ontario's natural resources—that reduces demand on water heaters so people save money on their energy bills.

Under the program, Ontario manufacturers can now get water-efficient products certified and labelled “water efficient.” Water-efficiency labelling builds on Ontario's expertise in clean water technology and makes the province a leader in water innovation to help address global water challenges.

We all want to do our part for the environment and make green choices when purchasing products. This new labelling system ends up doing just that.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Minister of Health. Earlier in question period, the minister seemed rather confused about her obligations under the Executive Council Act. You hold office at the pleasure of the Lieutenant Governor even during a writ.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment, come to order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The minister stated earlier today to this House that she wasn't responsible as health minister during the writ.

On September 22, the London Free Press covered a story that starts with this: “Dropping a home turf election bombshell, Ontario Health Minister Deb Matthews revealed Wednesday the Liberals will raze London's South Street Hospital.”

Let me quote from the minister, “It's great news,” said Matthews to the London Free Press. “I'm pleased as the health minister and as the MPP ... I've been able to give it the attention it deserves.”

She couldn't give attention to Ornge because she was making an election announcement in her own riding to benefit her. Who should we believe? The minister on September 22 or the minister of today—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Please be seated. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'm reminded of former Speaker Peters as he urged us to look at the carvings in this Legislature—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland is now warned, and only once.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —to understand our responsibilities. The opposition is the hawk, I believe, to keep us accountable; government is the owl to keep wise.

I understand the partisan nature of today's question period. I understand that the opposition has a job to do, and they are doing that job.

I also understand what my responsibility is, and my responsibility is to ensure that our health care system is strong, so that the people who need health care get access to the care they need, when they need it, as close to home as possible.

I have addressed issues at Ornge. There is more to do, and we are doing that. Part of that is the legislation—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, she's caught in her own web of deceit. She is now a minister of convenience.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The members on the government side will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And the opposition.

The member will withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn, Speaker.

This speaks to the minister's credibility in cabinet. She was spoon-fed a 30-page briefing about Ornge in September. It raised alarm bells to everyone who listened, but her. Even the Auditor General said she knew about the problems in Ornge when she was making campaign announcements in her own riding. She did nothing.

She is incompetent. She has lost the respect and the confidence of her ministry. She's lost the respect and confidence of this House and, more importantly, she's lost the respect and confidence of the people of Ontario. She needs to resign.

Interjections.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

I will acknowledge that that's the best part of this so far: You've been able to comply to that. Say it twice, you're down. I thank you.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the auditor's report, of course, we take extremely seriously. As we do with every Auditor General's report that comes, we learn from what the Auditor General has found. That is

absolutely true of the report that was released yesterday. The Auditor General, as I have said, acknowledges that we have already taken substantive, concrete action to address issues at Ornge.

The auditor also raises some serious concerns about the former leadership. We also agree with that finding; we faced the very same challenges. Former leadership at Ornge hindered the Auditor General in obtaining the information he needed to fulfil his duties.

The changes at Ornge open up that process—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Health. It's a very sad day for Ontario, really, and there's nothing funny about this concern that we're addressing.

The minister has indicated that she wasn't on top of her file during the campaign because, again, the campaign came first. Not only was she making announcements in her own hometown of London but, quite frankly, she was also making announcements as Minister of Health in downtown Toronto—at Toronto Sick Kids, no less.

On September 18: "Sick Kids is the place where they discovered the cystic fibrosis gene, and it's where they invented Pabulum," said the Minister of Health. "Supporting the Research and Learning Tower and bringing together these talented researchers under one roof is ... where discovery happens."

Well, we're discovering, Mr. Speaker, what's happening at Ornge. We're asking the minister now, once and for all—she didn't take responsibility. Will she take responsibility? Will she resign?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have taken full responsibility and I have made significant changes at Ornge. We have a completely new board in place. We have a new CEO in place. We have a new performance agreement. I have introduced new legislation. I sent in a forensic audit team. The forensic audit findings led to my ministry referring this issue to the Ontario Provincial Police. The Auditor General himself acknowledges the sea change in leadership at Ornge, and so do the front-line paramedics, the pilots and the front-line staff that I have met with.

Things have changed at Ornge. I take my full share of responsibility for the findings in the Auditor General report and I am acting on every single one of those recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Actually, looking ahead, the reality is, still, Ornge will be exempted from freedom-of-information rules, Ornge will still let executives line their pockets with limited health care dollars, and Ornge will not be able to be called before the government agencies committee. So nothing's going to change, Mr. Speaker.

Absolutely nothing is going to change under this minister and with her ministry. She hasn't taken responsibil-

ity, she's not going to take responsibility. Will she at least do the honourable thing and resign and let the Ministry of Health get on with their work?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite might think that this legislation doesn't change anything, but she's completely wrong. I would urge her to read the legislation, to understand that the changes are significant and real, and will make a tangible difference to Ornge people. The people who rely on Ornge to get the care when they need it expect us to do our job. That is why I have brought in this legislation that will give us significantly more oversight.

One of the changes in legislation is that under the former performance agreement, we could not change that performance agreement unilaterally. Under the new legislation, we will be able to unilaterally change the condition under which we relate to Ornge. It will allow us to send in a supervisor. That's a significant change and a power I wish I had—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order.

New question.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, in 2005, our government, together with both opposition parties, passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, or the AODA. I'm very proud of the act and the positive changes that it has helped bring to Ontario to make our province more inclusive for everyone, regardless of their abilities.

The customer service standard came into effect for Ontario businesses on January 1 of this year. Minister, can you outline what this standard means for businesses and consumers?

Hon. John Milloy: As I've often said, I think all members in this House, on all sides, should be very proud of the AODA, which was passed in 2005 and outlined a series of reforms that we'd bring to make Ontario fully accessible by 2025.

As the member mentioned in her question, the customer service standard has come fully into effect on January 1 of this year. What it means is that those businesses who deal with the general public—restaurants, stores and businesses of that nature—have been asked to come forward and develop a standard to deal with individuals with disabilities.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this is about changing a culture and a mindset. It's about looking at how businesses, restaurants and other places operate, making sure that those with disabilities can be accommodated. It may be as simple as rearranging the stores, making sure staff have training on how to deal with people with individual disabilities, or—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you, Minister, for that response. From where I was before I was elected, I know how positive these changes are on our communities and for all our constituents that require some of these changes. I'm happy to hear that businesses are complying, because I know, at the time of the act, there was some question with respect to what the requirements were going to be.

Although bringing in the legislation was unquestionably the right thing to do for Ontario, what other impacts has the act had on Ontario? Through you, Speaker, to the minister: What are some of the economic benefits of providing accessible services?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Stop the clock. Order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask the members to come to order. Start the clock.

Minister.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I think people recognize that following the AODA, there's obviously a good in terms of corporate responsibility, but it's also good in terms of the bottom line. There have been numerous studies that have been done, one by the University of Toronto, for example, which has shown that in terms of both tourism and retail, there's a potential for billions of dollars in additional business in the sense of making your place of business accessible to people with disabilities.

In terms of tourism—people coming to Ontario, as well as people here—there is a huge untapped consumer base which is in the best interests—as I say, the enlightened self-interest—of businesses—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

MEMBER FOR YORK CENTRE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On a note for our guests that are here: When we can indicate to you, when we do come together as a group to celebrate one of our own—I'm sure the House will join me in offering Monte Kwinter a happy birthday. He's 81 years old. If I—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, stop heckling. If I have my information correct, it is two years shy of an Ontario history record in the House.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order for Mr. Kwinter.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I hate to correct you, but on January 26, 2013, I will be the oldest member ever to have served in the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On this occasion, the Speaker does stand corrected. But thank you and happy birthday.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands adjourned until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1151 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce, in the members' east gallery, a name that many people here will recognize. From the city of Toronto, I'd like members to recognize Sarah Thomson, a former mayoralty candidate and a former Liberal candidate in the riding of Trinity–Spadina.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to the recent news that the government is backtracking on its hospital expansion projects that they promised leading up to the 2011 general election. Time and again, we've seen promises for hospital infrastructure made before an election and quickly abandoned afterwards. As hospitals are the most important provincial institution in many communities, it is disappointing that they are at risk due to the government's constant bad spending habits on priorities that do not align with the people of the province of Ontario.

I have always been concerned that the government was going to break their promises regarding these showy announcements. This is why, four months ago, I introduced a private member's resolution to hold the government accountable by having them table a set of detailed plans for hospital expansion projects. The government refused to produce these documents, and it is clear that the reason the government didn't respond to my motion and table these details surrounding the hospital expansion projects is because they didn't want to table their back-of-a-napkin seat-saver plans.

It is clear that this government knew full well that they wouldn't follow through with the hospital expansion projects but pushed ahead with the announcements anyway. The government needs to come clean with Ontarians. They need to tell them what hospitals will be cut and table the detailed plans that the members of the governing party said that they would table. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: On March 25, members of the Greek community from around the world celebrate Greece's National Day of Independence. March 25 is observed both as a national and religious day of celebration for Greeks. It is a national holiday commemorating Greece's war of independence from centuries of Ottoman rule and is also considered one of the holiest days for Greek Orthodox Christians, celebrating the Annunciation of the Theotokos.

Greece's desire for self-determination was fuelled by Greeks who chose to follow in the tradition of self-government enshrined in ancient Greece, the world's first

democracy. Thousands of years of culture and history have since embodied the modern state of Greece.

The Greek community here in Ontario has thrived for over 100 years, contributing immensely to the political, economic and social fabric of our province. Be it in business or in academia, Greeks have always played an important role in shaping our province's civic and cultural institutions. Today at Queen's Park, I had the honour of participating in the Greek flag-raising ceremony where we celebrated Greece's rich history and statehood.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge several distinguished guests from the Greek community who are here with us this afternoon: Consul General Dimitris Azemopoulos; Nikona Georgakopoulos, the president of the Greek community; and Bishop Christoforos of the Greek Orthodox Church.

Mr. Speaker, using my best Greek possible, Zito É Ellas, Zito to Ontario, and Zito O Kanadas.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Rod Jackson: Today, I'd like to recognize an initiative in my community that truly understands the importance of small business in Barrie. The Creative Space is a new generation, co-working environment that gives freelancers, start-ups and microbusinesses the opportunity to work and collaborate in a creative environment.

It's the first initiative of its kind in Simcoe county and is connecting all types of creative, young businesses to each other under one roof. Each business must also demonstrate their commitment to the community through positive efforts of social, environmental and cultural change—certainly things that contribute to the fibre of our communities.

Small business is big business in Barrie and, indeed, in Ontario and the rest of Canada. More people are employed by small business than any other segment in our economy. We need to ensure that the small business with four employees this year can be the business that has 10, 15, 20 employees next year and the year after that.

Next week, our office will combine efforts with Creative Space to support small business in our community and give them information that will help them grow—information about things that the government has available for them through their different agencies.

I'd like to thank Creative Space for their efforts and their support to create jobs in Barrie—one of the highest unemployment rates in the country.

DEATH PENALTY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Many of my constituents have contacted me with concerns regarding recent events in India. On March 31, India will end its quasi-moratorium on the death penalty by hanging Balwant Singh Rajoana to death.

I have always been proud of Canada's unwavering commitment to human rights in regard to its position on the death penalty. Canada's stance echoes that of the United Nations, which has called for a moratorium on the death penalty. The death penalty undermines the dignity of life. Amnesty International describes the death penalty as the "ultimate denial of human rights. It is the premeditated and cold-blooded killing of a human being by the state. This cruel, inhumane"—and barbaric tradition—"and degrading punishment is done in the name of justice."

Canada should seize on this opportunity to reiterate our stance on human rights and support the global abolition of the death penalty. With a \$1.3-billion annual trade between Ontario and India, we should encourage India to move in the right direction towards a greater, more democratic society and a more free and open society and encourage the same humanitarian values that we have here in Canada. It is imperative that we urge not only India but all nations in the world to support the United Nations' moratorium on the death penalty and to abolish this brutal and archaic practice, which sanctions the state to take a human's life.

PICKERING MUSEUM VILLAGE

Mr. Joe Dickson: I rise in the House today to acknowledge a special part of our local heritage in my riding of Ajax-Pickering. Located in the hamlet of Greenwood, Pickering Museum Village educates and entertains thousands of visitors annually. Take a step back in time and explore the 19 beautifully restored heritage buildings, mostly from the early to mid-1800s. You will see a working blacksmith shop, general store, schoolhouse, steam barn, chapel, and period gardens and orchards.

Our provincial government contributed almost \$300,000 to restore the Brougham Hotel, located on the grounds of Pickering Museum Village, and I was proud to attend that opening. That was approximately one third of the entire project cost.

Later this evening—tonight, Thursday—the Pickering Museum Village Foundation will host their 14th annual general meeting and prepare for another successful season. Plans are currently under way to secure funding and to plan for further expansions, including a brand new theatre, kitchen and visitor service centre.

I look forward to seeing Pickering Museum Village grow as they continue to boost local tourism and keep our heritage alive and well, thanks to the village foundation, the Pickering mayor, all of city council and all residents of Pickering.

THISTLETOWN REGIONAL CENTRE FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I rise to address the government's announcement earlier this week to close the Thistletown Regional Centre in Etobicoke and transfer

the children's mental health services offered there to local mental health agencies in the community.

1310

This is a very specialized facility that treats some of Ontario's most vulnerable: clients with complex mental health, behavioural and development challenges. And what we've been hearing is that there simply aren't options in community services that can accommodate the needs of those served by Thistletown.

We in the Ontario PC caucus are mindful of the need to optimize health care delivery to provide value for money, but we seriously question the ability of the system to address the needs of the 400 children and youth who are in day programs and the 15 individuals who live at Thistletown.

The process is slated to take place over the next two years, so we fully expect the Minister of Children and Youth Services will be able to monitor progression, and we expect that his ministry will provide regular and rigorous assurances that quality of care is not compromised at any point. As PC critic for children and youth services, I will certainly be demanding those assurances.

BIRTHING CENTRES

Mr. Bob Delaney: Ontario is creating birth centres, where mothers and their babies can receive great care at good value. Its part of our plan as a government to deliver more care in our community and outside of hospitals.

This week, the province announced plans for two birthing centres as pilot projects. They'll be run in partnership with Ontario's midwives, who attended more than 15,000 births last year. This will give mothers more choices, while providing good value by letting hospitals focus on high-risk care.

I guess, in this vein, I'm particularly proud to have played a role in the recent phase 2 expansion at Credit Valley Hospital, which doubled their maternity suite. That will enable us in Mississauga to provide more care for high-risk cases.

This proposal is part of Ontario's action plan for health care, which is going to move more procedures out of hospitals, providing the right care at the right time and delivering value for taxpayers.

Ontario is taking action to improve women's health centre options now, with new ideas like birthing centres.

This Ontario government has a plan to strengthen universal public health care by improving the way we serve mothers and help build families with good, sound, common sense ideas like birthing centres.

HOME CARE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I rise today in order to continue on what we raised here in the House yesterday, and that is the chronic problem we're having in the northeastern

region when it comes to CCACs, and I have to believe it's the same in other parts of the province.

We have literally tens of people calling every week in our Hearst office, tens of people calling in to Kap and Timmins complaining that the CCAC has been reviewing their assessment as far as need and has been reducing the amount of hours they're getting in order to be able to stay at home.

I think that not a member in this House doesn't understand that the better we're able to care for people in their homes, the better we're able to make sure there's a better health outcome, but the more money we save, because they don't have to be in a hospital or they don't have to be in a long-term-care facility.

Now, we met with the CCAC last Friday. We had a long conversation, specifically about all the cases, or at least some of the cases, that we had at that point, and they have endeavoured to do a review of these particular cases. However, the problem is this: There is \$116 million in the pot for northeastern Ontario, and there's more need than there is dollars. So the CCAC is saying, "We're going to reassess people so we can move services to those who are more in need and in need of more acute care."

I understand why the CCAC is doing it, but there's a whole bunch of people who are getting their services cut, and they're going to fail. They're the ones who are going to get sicker, and they're going to end up being back in hospitals and long-term-care facilities.

I call on this government in its budget to hopefully rectify that issue, so we don't have people going into hospitals and long-term-care facilities when not needed.

SEPTIC SYSTEMS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Municipalities in my riding are joining together with a common voice to oppose a recommended change to the Ontario building code, part 8. That change would require denitrification, phosphorous removal and tertiary treatment for on-site septic systems within vulnerable areas deemed to be significant threats to drinking water sources.

Even the North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority opposes the proposed changes for tertiary treatment systems, because it is a blanket approach to reducing the significance of such threats, especially given the new building code requirement for mandatory inspections of these same systems.

These systems are significantly more costly than conventional septic systems and can result in rural home owners in parts of this province being forced to sell or walk away from their properties.

I want to read the resolutions passed by the councils of both the city of North Bay and the municipality of East Ferris directed to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing:

"Be it resolved that the proposed changes to part 8 of the Ontario building code recommended by the Ministry

of Municipal Affairs and Housing requiring the installation of tertiary treatment systems for new or replacement septic systems within vulnerable areas, as described in the drinking water source protection assessment reports, where septic systems are deemed to be a significant threat not be approved.”

The township of Chisholm passed a similar resolution supporting the comments from the North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority.

I ask the minister to reconsider this proposed change.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The following members have given notice of their dissatisfaction with the answers to their questions given by the Minister of Health today. These matters will be debated at 6 p.m. on March 27 and March 28: the member from Nepean–Carleton, the member from Simcoe–Grey, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, the member from Newmarket–Aurora, the member from Parkdale–High Park and the member from Essex.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ONTARIO FORESTRY INDUSTRY REVITALIZATION ACT (HEIGHT OF WOOD FRAME BUILDINGS), 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA REVITALISATION DE L'INDUSTRIE FORESTIÈRE DE L'ONTARIO (HAUTEUR DES BÂTIMENTS À OSSATURE DE BOIS)

Mr. Fedeli moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 52, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 with respect to the height of wood frame buildings / Projet de loi 52, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment en ce qui a trait à la hauteur des bâtiments à ossature de bois.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I do have a short statement.

Ontario Forestry Industry Revitalization Act (Height of Wood Frame Buildings), 2012: This bill amends the Building Code Act, 1992, to provide that the building code shall not prohibit a building that is six storeys or less in building height from being a wood frame construction.

Speaker, this does not prevent the code from imposing requirements on or prohibiting specific classes of wood frame buildings.

TAXATION AMENDMENT ACT (PAYMENT OF THE ONTARIO TRILLIUM BENEFIT), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES IMPÔTS (PAIEMENT DE LA PRESTATION TRILLIUM DE L'ONTARIO)

Mr. Prue moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 53, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 with respect to the payment of the Ontario Trillium Benefit / Projet de loi 53, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts à l'égard du paiement de la prestation Trillium de l'Ontario.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Taxation Act, 2007, is amended to provide that an individual who is entitled to receive the Ontario Trillium benefit for a particular year may elect to receive the benefit in a single payment rather than monthly.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

VOLUNTEERS

Hon. Charles Sousa: Today I rise in this Legislature to proudly support and promote the Volunteer Service Awards program—a time-honoured tradition in this province. These awards form the cornerstone of Ontario's recognition of our volunteers and the tremendous work they do in our communities. Each year, almost five million volunteers give their time and their heart to make Ontario a better place to live. They coach teams, they care for the elderly, and they mentor new Canadians. They organize charitable events, and, through their service to organizations and their neighbourhoods, they have a positive and direct impact on our quality of life. That's why we take time to give volunteers the thanks they deserve.

This year, 48 Volunteer Service Award ceremonies will take place in 35 communities across the province, beginning in Stratford on March 22 and ending in Kingston on June 27. Over 10,000 volunteers will be recognized and receive a stylish Trillium pin. Mr. Speaker, I know that many of my parliamentary colleagues will honour their constituents by attending these events. For those of you who have not had an opportunity to attend a ceremony or have not attended one in a while, I strongly encourage you to do so this year.

I also urge my colleagues to nominate deserving volunteers in their communities for our various recognition programs. There's the Ontario Medal for Young

Volunteers and the June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for Volunteerism. Ceremonies for these will be held throughout and during National Volunteer Week from April 15 to 22.

We will also begin our sixth annual ChangeTheWorld Ontario Youth Volunteer Challenge at the same time. For 2012, we hope to get 25,000 youth volunteering for those three weeks.

Let us recognize, celebrate, and support Ontario's volunteers and continue to nurture the volunteering tradition now and in the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ENSEIGNEMENT COOPÉRATIF

CO-OP EDUCATION

L'hon. Glen R. Murray: Aujourd'hui, j'invite tous les membres de l'Assemblée législative à se joindre à moi pour célébrer la Semaine nationale de l'enseignement coopératif qui a lieu du 19 au 23 mars. C'est une merveilleuse occasion de souligner que les programmes d'enseignement coopératif apportent une importante contribution à l'expérience d'apprentissage des étudiantes et des étudiants universitaires et collégiaux de la province. L'enseignement coopératif allie la théorie et la pratique, et offre aux étudiants une formation et une expérience excellentes en milieu de travail. Il profite aux employeurs, aux étudiants, aux collectivités, à la province et aux établissements d'enseignement.

Co-op placements help build strong working relationships with employers and provide students with a source of income. They also give our students a competitive edge in securing jobs in today's challenging job market. According to a 2009 study by the University of Waterloo, co-op students earn the highest salaries and get the most prestigious jobs after graduation, compared with their non co-op peers. In some cases, they earn up to 22% more money.

Mr. Speaker, our government is helping to build the most highly skilled and educated workforce in the world, ready to meet the demands of the new economy. In Ontario, we have more than 50,000 co-op students in partnership with 31 colleges and universities across the province. Students are gaining great experience in a variety of industries, including finance, electronics, resource, and manufacturing.

I'm proud to say that Ontario has thousands of employers involved in hiring co-op students, including Research In Motion, Toronto Hydro, Rogers Communications, Arnprior Aerospace, Cisco Systems, TD Bank Financial Group, Cancer Care Ontario, the Hospital for Sick Children, Mount Sinai Hospital, The Weather Network—which we particularly enjoy these days—Rockwell Automation, and the Toronto District School Board, just to name a few. Thanks to these great partners, students are graduating with skills that employees need.

Le gouvernement de l'Ontario appuie fermement l'enseignement coopératif au niveau postsecondaire.

Il fournit des subventions de fonctionnement aux collèges et universités qui offrent des programmes d'enseignement coopératif. Le crédit d'impôt pour l'éducation coopérative aide les employeurs qui embauchent des étudiants inscrits à un programme d'enseignement coopératif dans une université ou un collège de l'Ontario.

Le Régime d'aide financière aux étudiantes et étudiants de l'Ontario fournit un soutien aux étudiants, y compris à ceux qui sont inscrits à des programmes d'enseignement coopératif. Plus de 13 millions de dollars sont investis dans des projets du Programme apprentissage-diplôme dans toute la province. Trente-deux nouveaux projets ont été approuvés en 2011 et 2012. Il s'agit d'une importante augmentation par rapport aux six projets entrepris lors du lancement du programme en 2004 et 2005.

Chaque année, le gouvernement de l'Ontario embauche également 280 étudiants en enseignement coopératif par l'entremise des divers ministères.

In partnership with the Canadian Association for Co-operative Education and with Education at Work Ontario, together with colleges and universities across Canada, we celebrate the success of co-op students and graduates. I encourage all employers and local communities across Ontario to invest in co-op education and consider hiring a student, especially through the summer months. Doing so will help contribute to the growth and prosperity of our province.

Mr. Speaker, I call on all members for their support for National Co-operative Education Week. It starts March 19 to 23. Thank you for your attention.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

CO-OP EDUCATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is my pleasure to respond on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Of course, as the education critic, I think it's important for this House to recognize, as much as we're doing great work at our colleges and universities to encourage young students to take part and participate in the process of co-op, that it's also being done in our high schools across Ontario, and that's a great thing.

Co-operative education has been working in Canada for well over 50 years. There are over 800,000 young Ontarians and young Canadians that are actually participating in the co-op program, with no sign of slowing down.

As many of us know, a co-operative education is one that integrates a student's academic studies with work experience. The usual plan is for the student to alternate periods of experiencing career-related fields with their studies. I bet you that if I asked every member of this assembly if they've ever had a co-op student, they would all agree. Those who don't, they don't realize what they're missing. You get great gems that come into your office from time to time, and I want to mention one in

particular that has come into my life as a young fellow. His name is Ben Keller, and I know right now he's actually watching from my constituency office in Nepean. Can everybody say hello to Ben?

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's really important that you've done that. Ben has Asperger's, and his mother and father approached me a few years ago, as well as his teacher, to come work in my office. Now I've employed him as a university student, and I know the minister must be very proud of that, because he's currently going to Carleton University where he's studying Canadian politics. We are talking about him today because Ben is all things political. He's all things economic. He's all things about everything we do in this House, so it was a natural transition for him to actually come to my office, and then work as well with our federal member.

So I want to just say to all the students that are out there, whether they're in college or university or if they're in high school: There are opportunities out there for you. To all the members of this assembly, I say: There are opportunities for all of us as well, because you never know what you might find in a co-op student in Ontario.

VOLUNTEERS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm really pleased to rise this afternoon on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus to recognize the importance of the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards and to thank the almost five million Ontarians who volunteer every year in a variety of areas.

Volunteers truly are the backbone of our community. They coach our children, they deliver meals to the frail elderly, they work in hospitals, and they also support our religious and cultural institutions. They do this without any expectation of thanks or acknowledgement. They do it just because they see that there is a job to be done and it's the right thing to do. That's what active citizenship is all about.

1330

But I think it is important that we do take time to recognize their accomplishments and their years of service. I can honestly say that attending the volunteer service awards ceremony in my community every year is probably one of the most satisfying things I do as an MPP, because you have the opportunity to hear about what volunteers are doing in your community. As you know, Mr. Speaker, people are recognized for years of service, from five to 10, 15, 20 and so on, up to 30, 40, 50 and sometimes even 60 years of service. In our area, the room is always packed, and it is astonishing to see the number of years of service that people have contributed—the number of people with 50-plus years of service is truly astonishing.

I'm told that in 2012, over 10,000 Ontarians in over 47 communities are going to be receiving Volunteer Service Awards, and they will be recognized by their local

communities. In closing I would just like to extend a heartfelt thank you, on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, to all the volunteers who contribute so much to their communities across Ontario. They truly are what makes our communities great.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr. Michael Prue: In response to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, I stand fully in support of what the province is doing around volunteers. We have about five million volunteers in this province, who contribute up to 800 million volunteer hours every year. Without them, I don't think that many of the organizations they serve would be able to exist, and certainly without them Ontario would be a much poorer place.

They provide opportunities that only a volunteer can do. Only a volunteer can give that face-to-face comfort to someone in a nursing home. Only a volunteer can deal with children in a way that the child will actually know this is a person who is trying to help them, not because they are being paid but because they love it. Our volunteers help the elderly, they help people with disabilities and they help children. They work on the environment: This is the spring, and you're going to see them all out there on cleanup days around municipalities and on the streets and highways of the province. They help municipal governments—certainly most municipal governments would have a very tough time meeting their municipal programs without the help that volunteers provide.

In these times of austerity where certain programs may not continue to exist, I commend that this one is continuing for this year, and I hope, given the small amount of money that is involved, that it will continue to exist and to roll out in the face of the economic downturn that the government is finding itself in. It is important for the recognition of these people and organizations that come forward. But what is also almost equally important is that it highlights these people and organizations to the community, so that others who are not volunteering now or who may consider volunteering see this wonderful opportunity and will come forward and give of their time and of their talents as well.

I just want to read out some of the volunteers and organizations from my riding that will be recognized at the Beaches–East York and Scarborough awards ceremony on March 26. The volunteers include Richi Bachan and Luisa Bachan, who are each getting 10-year awards; E. Elongo is getting a five-year award; Johanne Forbes, a 40-year award; Whitney Goodfellow, a five-year award; Alex Parucha and his wife, Corazon, each 25 years; and Kirsten Parucha, who I'm sure is probably a relative, is getting a youth award.

Some of the organizations are the Sai Nilayam Spiritual Organization, Girl Guides of Canada, Warden Woods Community Centre, Filipino Parents Association and, last but not least, the Filipino Canadian Veterans Legion Inc.

This is just an example, these ones from Beaches–East York. There are going to be 107 groups like this, from every riding across the province. Please, if you have an opportunity and if you can make it, go out and say thank you to the people who give of themselves for the benefit of our community.

CO-OP EDUCATION

Mr. Michael Prue: I also have to respond today to the Minister of Colleges and Universities on co-op students and training. You know, every year we have tried in the past to get a co-op student. We've not always been successful, but this year we've got a co-op student from York University. He's studying to be a social worker, and we got him. His name is Curtis. Curtis is absolutely amazing. Curtis has to do 700 volunteer hours in our office in order that he can get his degree at the end of the year.

Over the course of the last many months while he has been in our office, it is remarkable to watch this young man. It is remarkable to see the kind of work that he can do, the dedication he has to the work, the enthusiasm that he brings with him every single day to our office. He has learned to help people who have housing problems, employment problems. He has helped people navigate through government in order to obtain benefits. He has helped people who have problems in the medical sphere. And all of this is in order that he can better understand the career and the role that he has chosen for himself upon graduation.

I know he is going to make his 700 hours, and I know at the end he's going to get a glowing report from me. But if that were not enough, Curtis, in his time off, even though he is spending 700 hours with us, spends most of his free time helping put up homes with Habitat for Humanity, because he believes with all of his heart that if we can solve the housing problems of the people of this city and of this province, we can solve great problems of poverty and those things that he wants to dedicate his life to, in the help of ordinary people. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

PETITIONS

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mr. John O'Toole: It's an honour and a pleasure to read a petition to the Legislative Assembly on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. There was a meeting last night in Cartwright, and this is the petition. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Cartwright High School is an important part of the Blackstock and area community; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised in the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that, 'Rural schools help to keep communities strong'; and

"Whereas schools in rural areas are community places; and

"Whereas Cartwright students, families, friends and staff have created an effective learning experience that emphasizes a community atmosphere, individual attention and full participation by students in school activities; and

"Whereas the framework of rural schools is different from urban schools and therefore deserves to be governed by a rural school policy; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government found \$12 million to keep" school swimming pools open in Toronto "but hasn't found any money to keep rural schools open in communities such as Blackstock"—the Minister of Education said it's not true; well, I challenge her;

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

"That Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Education support the Cartwright High School community and suspend plans to close Cartwright High School under the school board's accommodation review process until the province develops a rural school policy that respects the value of smaller schools in rural communities of Ontario."

I'm pleased to sign it, support it and give it to Emma, one of the new pages here, from Oakville.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further petitions? The member from Hamilton–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you. Close.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry generates \$2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario;

"Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by Ontario's horse racing and breeding industry;

"Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;

"Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates \$1.1 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in the province for OLG;

"Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government \$1.1 billion per year and threatens more than 60,000 jobs;

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

"Call on the government of Ontario to protect the \$1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program; direct OLG to honour the contracts with racetracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program."

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this and will sign my name to it.

1340

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I have a petition today to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

“Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada;

“Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bioartificial kidney;

“We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bioartificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States.”

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to my friend the page here.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas global climate change is the most serious threat facing humanity and poses significant risks to our environment, economy, society and human health; and

“More than 97% of scientists working in the disciplines contributing to studies of our climate and all national science academies accept that climate change is almost certainly being caused by human activities mainly due to the use of fossil fuels; and

“The objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change...is ‘stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system’; and

“Climate scientists are now warning us that limiting global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees” Celsius “is essential; and

“Ontario has a clear responsibility to reduce our emissions given that our per capita greenhouse gas emissions are among the highest in the world; and...

“The best research today indicates that energy demands are decreasing and that sufficient potential energy from a diverse supply of renewable sources exists to meet Ontario’s current and projected energy demands;

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

“Immediately prepare a plan that requires that 100% of Ontario’s stationary energy be from zero-carbon sources before the end of 2023, with a timeline to be audited annually by the Auditor General and published reports.”

I couldn’t agree more, Mr. Speaker. I’ll sign my name and give it to Felix to be delivered to the table.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My offices continue to be inundated with phone calls and concerns and petitions with regard to the Bluewater centre. Today I read to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the closure of the Bluewater Youth Centre will have a negative economic impact on Goderich and the surrounding area; and

“Whereas there is a need to deal with overcrowding in the Ontario correctional system; and

“Whereas the federal Bill C-10, Safe Streets and Communities Act, will increase the population in the Ontario correctional system over the next four years; and

“Whereas the Bluewater Youth Centre would need very little retrofitting and the staff would need minimal retraining to open as a medium-secure correctional facility which could hold more than 200 beds required by the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services; and

“Whereas specialized treatment programs within the correctional system such as drug treatment, mental health issues, could be offered with the skilled support staff currently in place; and

“Whereas we believe that this is the most economical way to add an additional 200 beds to the Ontario correctional system, as the building is in place and staff are currently hired to run such a facility;

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

“That the government engage in meaningful community and employee consultation in order to find alternate uses within the youth services or correctional services system for this facility, thereby preventing job losses and economic hardship for an area already badly impacted by plant closures and tornado damage.”

I agree with this petition, and I’m pleased to give it to Nicholas to take to the table on my behalf.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I’m pleased to submit a petition on behalf of the horse racing industry and breeding industry in Ontario, members of which will be gathered outside of the Windsor Raceway today in protest against the government’s decision to kill this industry. Although I can’t be there with them today, I’m certainly standing in solidarity with them in this House. I’m pleased to submit the petition that reads:

“Whereas the Ontario horse racing industry and breeding industry generates \$2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario;

“Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by Ontario’s horse racing and breeding industry;

“Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks

and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;

“Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates \$1.1 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in the province for OLG;

“Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government \$1.1 billion per year and threatens more than 60,000 jobs;

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

“Call on the government of Ontario to protect the \$1.1 billion of revenue the government receives annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program, direct OLG to honour the contracts with racetracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program.”

I'm proud to affix my name to this petition, and I'll submit it with Hassan.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition this afternoon to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We, the undersigned, residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

“Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada;

“Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bioartificial kidney;

“We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bioartificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted in several centres in the United States” of America.

I agree with this petition and will give it to page Emily.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

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

“Whereas the Ontario government” has made PET scanning “a publicly insured health service...; 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 Health Sciences North, “its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

“We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through” Health Sciences North, “thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens” of the northeast.

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

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Rosario Marchese: “Whereas 700 affordable TCHC homes are in danger of being sold off to the private sector;

“Whereas the sell-off will reduce the diversity of neighbourhoods and lead to an increasingly divided Toronto;

“Whereas the sell-off will further reduce the inadequate supply of affordable housing for the 80,000 households already waiting for affordable housing;

“Whereas the sell-off will require the displacement of thousands of men, women and children from their homes, schools and communities;

“Whereas there are a range of other options to deal with the repair shortfall that exists, including drawing on Infrastructure Ontario loan funds, seeking support from higher levels of government, investing in retrofits to reduce utility costs, and partnering with non-profit and co-op housing providers;

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

“We urge the Minister of Housing not to approve the sale of the TCHC units, but instead to work with the city of Toronto and TCHC to explore more just, sustainable and economically viable ways to address the repair backlog in TCHC’s scattered housing stock.”

I support this petition very strongly.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

AFFORDABLE ENERGY AND RESTORATION OF LOCAL DECISION MAKING ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR L'ÉNERGIE ABORDABLE ET LE RÉTABLISSEMENT DE LA PRISE DE DÉCISIONS LOCALE

Mr. Hudak moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 42, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 and the Environmental Protection Act with respect to renewable energy / Projet de loi 42, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité et la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement en ce qui concerne l'énergie renouvelable.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation. Mr. Hudak.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Speaker.

Today I rise on my private member's bill, the Affordable Energy and Restoration of Local Decision

Making Act, because I believe fundamentally that affordable energy is a building block of a strong economy and a strong province of Ontario, the kind of Ontario that meets the priority expectations of Ontario families: excellence in education; dependable and quality health care; world-beating infrastructure. But to be able to pay for these things, we need to get the basics right. And among the most basic of all economic fundamentals is affordable and reliable energy. This will help us power up Ontario's innovators, its job creators, its entrepreneurs.

Speaker, not that long ago, Ontario was one of lowest-cost jurisdictions for energy, not just in Canada but in North America. But today, under the current government's failed energy policies, we're among the highest, and heading to having the second-highest energy rates in all of North America. Behind that rapidly rising cost of energy is a policy that treats affordable power not as an economic fundamental but as a plaything for social engineers, and it's called the feed-in tariff program, or FIT, for short. This feed-in tariff program is nothing more than an outdated, 1990s-era, European-style industrial scheme that has been a failure everywhere it has been tried in the world, and it's failing here in the province of Ontario.

Ironically, the Premier likes to refer to Ontario as a leader when it comes to the FIT program. The reality is, he's leading from the caboose; and when it comes to the green energy train, everyone else is getting off. He was the last one in and he's the last one grabbing on to this outdated 1990s industrial policy. So if you look around the world at policy-makers in Spain, Germany, Italy, Denmark and France, all, it seems, have been a failure. Housing rates have gone through the roof. They've lost jobs; they're running up big debts. Spain, Germany, Italy, Denmark, France and others are all dramatically scaling back their wind and solar subsidies or they're exiting this business entirely. Speaker, if you ask me why are they doing that, it's because they learned the hard way the lesson that Premier McGuinty still doesn't get: that these types of expensive subsidies flunk every basic test of economics.

The feed-in tariff program pays unsustainable subsidies to energy developers for 20-year-or-more contracts, and it pays them whether we actually need the power or not. And the fact is, in Ontario in 2012, and particularly on days like today, we don't.

This program helps us understand the bizarre scenario where we actually are exporting surplus power to Quebec and New York—actually paying Quebec and New York to take the power off our hands. My colleague Mr. Yakabuski, from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, will be talking about that later on. All told, the subsidies to Quebec and New York to take the surplus power off our hands total some \$2 billion since 2006—actually paying them. While families and businesses in Ontario are paying more and more for energy, we've been paying Quebec and New York to take that power off our hands.

At the same time, another flaw in this outdated program is that ratepayers have had to pay generators up

to a quarter of a billion dollars a year not to produce electricity, because renewable energy is being added to the system much faster than the growth in demand for it—and all for an approach to energy that would try to power a 21st-century economy when the wind blows and the sun shines.

You can't build a competitive economy to take on the world in the 21st century based on Mother Nature. Not only that, Speaker, but report after report says that these subsidy programs cost between two to four jobs in the broader economy for every temporary job they create through subsidies. Why is that? Because they drive up energy costs for everybody else. And furthermore, up to 75% of the temporary jobs that are created—they'd be in construction and such—don't last; they're not permanent jobs. But the two to four jobs lost in industry and the commercial sector and the resource sector, they're gone for good.

Now, I know that members opposite will wave around the minister's announcement today that said they did a two-year feed-in tariff review and say, "No, no, no, it's not true. We're scaling those subsidies back." But the problem is that the minister is basically admitting today that they've wasted billions of dollars, so they're going to waste just a couple billion more instead. It's like somebody who is driving down the road about to go off a cliff and decides that they'd better slow down. The answer is obvious: You stop the car, you turn it around and you head in a different direction and build a stronger, more prosperous province of Ontario.

Interjection: Stop the car.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Stop it.

Mr. Tim Hudak: So we say, "Stop this car. Stop this train." We hear this everywhere we go. We simply cannot afford it, and we never could. So my bill, if passed, would end this outdated 1990s industrial policy with European-style subsidies that even the Europeans are leaving behind.

Number 1: We'd end the program. Point number 2: While we're at it, my bill would actually restore the local decision-making for future projects back to municipalities, back to communities, back to the neighbours who are being impacted. It just makes common sense. After all, a local government can say where a Tim Hortons is going to go, where a Walmart is going to go, but under Dalton McGuinty's bizarre scheme, they would have no say on where 400-foot-tall industrial wind turbines on industrial wind farms that can spread 25 kilometres in length—they would have basically no say.

Further, for those thousands of approved projects that are not yet up and running, my bill would task the Minister of Energy with sorting through this mess. You ask how big this mess is. Speaker, FIT and the OPA have already been flooded with 10,000 applications and a further 50,000 applications for the microFIT program. The members opposite say that's because it's successful. It's a gold rush, it's a Ponzi scheme and it's a bubble that's going to burst, costing families billions of dollars. Let's bring this costly subsidy to an end and focus on

affordable, reliable energy to create jobs in Ontario instead.

So, 60,000 applications in the last two years. But as we all know, this is not a sign of a successful program; it's the telltale sign of a gold rush that's out of control. That's why nobody else in Canada and nobody else in North America is following this program, and those that began it in Europe are getting off the train.

This part of my legislation would empower the Minister of Energy to sort through the large wind and solar contracts not yet connected to the grid. When it comes to industrial wind farms, we're talking about 75 projects, according to the most recent OPA data, although I know this government wants to add on even more. The minister would be under an obligation to do what they refused to do: to consult with municipal leaders, neighbourhoods, communities and families who are impacted to hear what they have to say. Then, based on that local input and value for money, the minister would decide which ones proceed, which ones will be renegotiated in light of local concerns and which ones would be ended altogether to save taxpayers' money and stop the exit of jobs from our province.

We also need to reassess, in the grand scheme of things, what our real energy requirements are. But first, before adding on these unaffordable new programs, refurbish what we have. And then only build what you actually need based on a long-term plan for the economy at rates that families and businesses can actually afford. That makes sense. That has been Ontario's history: for 100 years, among the lowest industrial power rates in competing states and provinces. For 100 years, we're below the American average. Then after the Green Energy Act was passed, we moved above, and we're heading next to PEI to have the second highest costs in North America. This is bad for the Ontario economy. It's going to chill investment; it's going to chase away even more jobs. We need to stop this car, reverse course and get back to basics: reliable and affordable energy that take a strong economy through the 21st century. That's the bigger picture. That is something that this government does not seem to grasp.

1400

The fact that we always had reliable and affordable energy meant that Ontario became the industrial powerhouse not just of Canada, but of North America. It was the best place to find a good job, to start a business, to see it grow. That's been the history of the province of Ontario because we had sensible, reliable energy policy. That means this province, that we know and love, could do great things—in manufacturing, in resources, financial services, tourism, film, sports and on and on—all because we had a reliable, consistent, dependable energy supply. It's also because it was based on the laws of economics, understanding how the economy worked, because jobs and investments go where they're actually welcomed with open arms, where a sound economic climate gets the basics right, gets the fundamentals right, like affordable energy.

So, Speaker, above all else, let's pass this bill and let's get the basics right. Let's restore our focus on creating conditions for investment, for economic growth. Let's get our fiscal house back in order. Let's get taxes down; let markets work on their own with no more meddling, no more tinkering and, above all, treat energy policy as economic policy. Because, Speaker, when we get it right, when Ontario does things right, we lead Canada, we lead North America. The PC Party wants to see this great province a leader again.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member from Richmond Hill.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to contribute to the debate on Bill 42, a bill introduced by the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 and the Environmental Protection Act with respect to renewable energy.

I listened to the Leader of the Opposition's presentation, and when he talks about the reliability of the energy system, I fully agree with him. The energy system in this province has to be reliable. But I remind the honourable member, in those days when he was in government and his party was in government, our electrical production capacity was reduced dramatically. We had blackouts; our nuclear reactor power had to be shut down by the regulators, by the OPG—at that time, Ontario Hydro—because of the mismanagement of the electricity system.

In 2009, just almost two and a half years ago, we made a policy decision, in the history of the electrical energy industry of this province, to bring in renewable energy to the mix of electrical energy production in this province. We made the decision, Mr. Speaker, basically under three categories, under three bases: one was to shut down coal-fired plants; the second was to clean the air and the environment; and the third was, of course, to introduce and create a new industry in this province—the clean, green energy industry in this province.

I'll just take you through, Mr. Speaker, the impact of burning coal in power plants to produce electricity. It costs our province every year \$4.4 billion in human costs and also in costs for the environment. Every year, 700 people are dying in this province as a result of burning dirty coal to produce electricity; 1,000 people are admitted to hospital in this province because of burning coal in our power plants; and over 330,000 people develop minor illnesses such as headache, coughing and some respiratory diseases because of burning coal in our power plants.

And there you have the economy and job creation. Ontario's Green Energy Act up to this point has created 20,000 jobs, and we're on the way to create another 30,000 more jobs in the near future.

We have built four major manufacturing corporations and plants in four cities in Ontario, in the area of the Green Energy Act—which has attracted, by the way, \$27 billion in investment from domestic and foreign sources. Those cities are Tillsonburg, with 900 jobs; Windsor, 700 jobs; Don Mills, 200 jobs; and London, 200 jobs. When

you add those numbers together, it comes to 2,000 jobs already created in those four manufacturing plants.

There are another 30 companies in cities like Windsor, Tillsonburg, London, Guelph, Welland, Newmarket, Burlington, Peterborough, Hawkesbury, Cambridge and Sault Ste. Marie. They have manufacturing plants, and they have created manufacturing jobs in the area of green energy.

When I talk about the creation of jobs as a result of green energy, Mr. Speaker, I don't just mean manufacturing jobs. There are other jobs associated with this industry; for example, assembly, construction, trucking, servicing and installation, financing, engineering, electrical work, inspection, computer software and hardware etc. These are the jobs created in this industry. When it comes to employment, this is the new industry. This is the future of electrical energy production in the whole world.

Mr. Speaker, 25 years ago, when I was teaching solar energy and photovoltaics at the graduate level in a university, I could see that the day was close when we would see a new industry created in the world. Today, I am here to see that our province is the leader of this industry.

In 2010, 3.5 million people in the world were engaged as workers in the green energy industry, and the number is increasing day by day. In 2010, investment in green energy was \$200 billion. Within the next nine years the investment is going to increase to \$400 billion, and by the year 2030 the investment in this industry is going to increase to \$460 billion. This is an industry growing and increasing and progressing. So we are on the right track, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to creating this new industry and when it comes to bringing solar energy, wind energy, biomass and biofuel to our energy mix. We are making good progress.

In the area of exporting our technology and our know-how to foreign countries, the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation are in the process of creating a strategy in order to help our industry export their products, their knowledge, their know-how and their technology to other countries. The world is ready for Canadian and Ontario technology and for Ontario equipment in the area of green energy.

Mr. Speaker, when we brought the Green Energy Act into this House and the legislation—the Green Energy Act—passed about two and a half years ago, we said that in two years we were going to review the act, and we did this. In October, the minister commissioned a review of the Green Energy Act. The FIT program basically was reviewed, and the report was announced today.

I leave it for my colleague the member from Oak Ridges–Markham to continue my discussion of this bill. She will elaborate on the review of the FIT program.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Speaker, earlier today I attended a news conference that Minister Bentley held, where he revealed the results of his FIT review. Straight

out of the gate, he was saying that he has listened. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sad to say that he missed the mark. I don't know who he was listening to, because the results of the FIT review do not really touch on the issues at hand.

I am so proud of my leader, Tim Hudak, and the rest of the PC caucus, because on this side of the House we understand that residents in Ontario can no longer afford the crazy energy costs that we're currently experiencing. Furthermore, the subsidized energy cost that the Liberal government is currently encouraging through the FIT contracts is just ridiculous.

You know, the fact of the matter is, in my role as deputy critic for the green energy portfolio, I'm acknowledging that my leader's vision for a balanced supply mix, including renewable, affordable energy, would be the best competition and provide the best price for using efficient technologies. The fact of the matter is—moreover, I referenced the fact, during my debate for a moratorium, that Tom Adams said that the policy-created power crisis is going to be of a profound significance to the future of our provincial economy. We need to listen to folks.

1410

On March 6, the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation said, "I don't think it's right nor do I think it's ethical for the province to run roughshod over the will of Toronto...." Well, why is this Liberal government running roughshod over rural Ontario and imposing windmills? It's not acceptable. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Speaker, Ontario deserves affordable energy in communities that are willing to host it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I oppose this bill, and no one in this chamber or watching will be surprised. What is surprising about this bill is that it has been introduced by a Conservative politician, one who styles himself as fiscally prudent and pro-business.

This is a bill that will open Ontario up to substantial legal liability. This is a bill that will destabilize farmers who have invested in biogas or who intend to have biogas production as part of their income stream. This is a bill that will undermine solar installations in rural—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. I would ask members of the opposition that—while I was sitting in the Chair, and your members were speaking, the entire House was quiet. I would ask you to afford the other members the same opportunity to speak as the room is quiet. Thank you.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker.

First of all, liability for breaking signed contracts: I suspect everyone in this House was around when this government broke the contract for the Oakville gas-fired peaker plant. I thought the plant was a mistake in the first place, but everyone in this House said the Liberals have incurred a huge expense for us, and they need to reveal the cost.

During the last provincial election, the Liberals cancelled the power plant in Mississauga. Actually, no, they said this plant is suspended and will land somewhere in some riding sometime. Perhaps it will be on a barge in Lake Ontario. We all asked what was the cost of breaking those contracts? Speaker, I say the same today: Leader of the Opposition, what will this bill cost? How many hundreds of millions of dollars in liability will your bill cause for the province of Ontario?

The second point, Speaker, is biogas. This bill ends the feed-in tariff. So if you are a farmer who has invested money in a biogas facility on your farm, dealing with the manure problem, trying to create green energy, in fact, trying to advance agriculture in this province, I'm telling you today that this bill tells you, "Forget it, buddy." If you are a farmer who has put in \$100,000 or \$200,000 into a biogas facility and you're hoping to connect into the system, what this bill says is the minister may, on a whim, say, "No, you can't do that. Forget it." This bill is no friend to rural Ontario. This bill is no friend to business in this province.

If we're actually going to develop a 21st-century economy, if we're going to develop the manufacturing we need, we have to support business in this province.

I have to tell you, during the last election—

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Mr. Speaker, can you hear me?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Now that you can hear me, good.

Speaker, going door to door in my riding, I came across a gentleman in a very nice house on Logan Avenue—not the biggest house, not the smallest house. A business person, very friendly to me at the door, he said, "Sorry, I can't vote for you: I'm a Conservative." And then he said, "But what's Tim Hudak doing about renewable energy? Why are the Conservatives against business development? Do you understand that?" I said, "It beats me. It beats me, Mr. Constituent. Why is it that a pro-business party is against developing new industry in Ontario? It's a mystery."

There are inconsistencies in what has been put before us. This bill is billed as providing local power over energy development. But, Speaker, does it say that local municipalities can reject gas-fired power plants? The bill is silent. Does it say that local municipalities could reject nuclear installations? The bill is silent. Does it say that local municipalities could reject high-voltage transmission lines going through their communities? The bill is silent.

No, this is not a question of power to local municipalities or local communities. This is a bill directed at making sure that every wind and solar project, every biogas project, is stalled, pushed back and killed. That's what this bill is about.

Speaker, this bill says nothing about water power—fascinating. When I talked to some of our northern members who are working through difficulties with their communities, they asked, "Okay, if you're going to give

it for wind power or solar power, what about water power?"

This bill talks about municipalities having the ability to say yea or nay to renewable power. What about unorganized communities? This bill is highly targeted, Speaker. This bill speaks to some political hot buttons. It does not consistently support business, and it certainly doesn't support the environment.

It was said earlier that the world market for renewable energy is about \$200 billion; in about a decade, it will be about \$400 billion. Are we or are we not going to be part of the 21st century? That's the question before us right now, Speaker.

I want to go on to another issue—and I know time is getting short and one of my colleagues wants to speak to this, but it's the cost of renewable energy in this province. Speaker, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, on March 22 of last year, posted this information on prices. He wrote that "there has been much effort made in the media to lead the public to believe that their electricity bills have been spiralling due to the cost of subsidies to wind and solar initiatives of our energy conservation programs.... Not mentioned" in those arguments "are the subsidies paid to our private natural gas generators, or those paid to Bruce Power, when the market price doesn't meet their guaranteed price (which is almost all the time)"—which is almost all of the time.

Where is our money going? Our money is going into nuclear and into gas—very little into wind.

The Environmental Commissioner says, "The latter subsidies"—relating to nuclear and gas—"involve 70% of the global adjustment monies paid out"—70%—"simply because they pay for the delivery of much more power. In fact, the Ontario Power Authority paid out \$1.35 billion in 2010 to meet gas and nuclear power purchase agreements.

"So how significant are the subsidies" paid for "renewable energy and the monies paid for conservation in a typical residential electricity bill anyway?"

What the Environmental Commissioner says is 0.4 cents per kilowatt hour. He notes that we pay about 13 cents per kilowatt hour—0.4 cents for conservation and renewable energy; the big chunk of the rest goes to nuclear and gas. Face that reality. That is not addressed in this bill.

The leader raised the cost of exports, and I, frankly, found it very interesting, because I looked into that question of export-import. He notes that we spent about a billion dollars subsidizing the export of power because we had surplus from 2006 to 2011. Speaker, in almost every one of those years, renewable power was less than 2% of the mix. Overwhelmingly, our surplus comes from overbuilding of gas plants and overbuilding of nuclear power. That's where our problem is.

1420

This government and this opposition are completely open to spending \$600 million to set out a plan for refurbishing the Darlington nuclear power plant, with no idea as to what the ultimate cost will be. The only

estimates I've seen in the paper are \$6 billion to \$10 billion. An estimate that's off by almost 100% is a ballpark; it is not an estimate. I'll tell you right now, Speaker, that there's a big difference in our hydro rates between \$6 billion and \$10 billion. And if we look at the history of Ontario, there's a very good chance that we will shoot up to \$20 billion on that.

Speaker, others are going to take time to speak, but I want to say that if we want an affordable energy system, we have to invest primarily in efficiency and conservation. Then we invest in renewables, and those renewables need to be publicly owned, locally owned, personally owned. That's where we have to go, Speaker. This bill won't get us there. I urge everyone to vote against it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Oak Ridges–Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm sure it will be no surprise to anyone in this House that I also will be opposing Bill 42, and I do that with full confidence that I'm representing the views of my constituents in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham.

Our approach to clean energy and our approach to environmental protection have been the subject of many, many discussions in my riding. Many of my constituents have expressed their support for our government's programs, and in particular the FIT program. They do so because they know that not only are we producing new jobs in a new and growing industry, but, of course, we are providing a way of moving away from dirty coal and moving toward an improvement in the health of Ontarians here in the province. When it's a choice between dirty coal and our children's health, I say I'm for my children's and my grandchildren's health every single time.

Some of the costs to health have been tabulated. Not only has dirty coal cost Ontarians \$4.4 billion annually—that includes health and environmental costs. There were thousands of trips to emergency rooms and hundreds of deaths due to poor air quality from dirty coal. We owe it to ourselves to clean up the air we breathe and create a sustainable system for producing electricity.

Getting out of coal has resulted in 668 fewer premature deaths per year in this province, 928 fewer hospital admissions per year, 1,100 fewer emergency room visits per year and many, many reductions in symptoms such as headaches, coughing and respiratory symptoms each year.

Now, I was really quite astonished to hear that the member for Niagara West–Glanbrook hadn't heard about what's happening in Europe. As of this week, Germany has announced, just yesterday, a record-breaking investment—some \$260 billion—in renewable energy. They wish to harness wind and solar power.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Germany?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Germany. Their goal, in fact, is to have at least 35% of their nation's power generated from renewable sources by 2020. It's clear that they recognize the great potential of this particular method of

producing power that, of course, so many businesses rely on.

Some of the opportunities, I know, my colleague from Richmond Hill has referenced. I think it's really important to understand a little bit more about the global market. According to Bloomberg New Energy Finance, the annual value of renewable energy capacity installed worldwide will double in real terms, from \$196 billion in 2010 to \$395 billion in 2020, rising to \$460 billion in 2030. And a recent study by the Brookings Institution indicated that this clean energy economy offers more opportunity and better pay than the nation's economy as a whole. So this is the time to leverage our strengths and our know-how and sell globally to create Ontario jobs.

Now, our colleagues opposite apparently have not quite understood the review of the FIT program that the Minister of Energy released this morning. There are specific references to the way of involving municipalities.

In fact, particularly pertinent to this bill, the minister and the Premier have said all along that the review would address some of the concerns that municipalities were facing with green energy projects. So we're introducing a new system that awards points to projects with municipal, community and First Nations support, ensuring that more of these projects move forward. The new program will prioritize projects that have significant community support. There will also be a specific set-aside of 10% for community and aboriginal projects.

This is demonstrative of the way that our government has listened to the concerns related to the program. We always acknowledged the need for a review, and that review has been conducted. We need to keep moving forward in terms of clean energy and creating jobs. There is no need to make Mr. Hudak's proposed amendments to the Electricity Act nor to the Environmental Protection Act, and I urge all members to vote against this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member from Prince Edward—

Mr. Todd Smith: Hastings. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me.

Again, I've spoken so many times on this issue here in the House that I'm getting hoarse from talking about coal. This is not about coal; this is about FIT subsidies that are enormous, and you've got to start to get that through your head over there. This is not about coal. We are in favour of renewable; we're not in favour of enormous FIT subsidies, and what the minister announced this morning doesn't go near far enough to eliminating the problem in the province of Ontario.

I'm going to take a different tack, though; I'm not going to talk about coal and renewable energy. But I would like to say that the only minister in this House to ever close a coal plant sits right down there: Liz Witmer from Kitchener.

I want to tell you quickly about Stan and Tim, okay? They're two business owners in my area, in Prince Edward–Hastings. Quickly, Stan owns a grocery store. He used to own two; now he only owns one, right in the

heart of Bancroft. Why? Because he couldn't afford to run his freezers anymore in his grocery store, he had to close it down. It's a sad, sad story.

I can tell you what. The Minister of Energy and Liz Witmer have an awful lot in common. They have both closed things, right? Liz Witmer closed a coal plant; the Minister of Energy closed Stan's grocery in downtown Bancroft.

I only have a few minutes left—a few seconds left, actually—but I just want to say that I strongly support our leader, Tim Hudak, for taking this action today and putting this bill forward, because the Auditor General has said prices are going to go up 46% on electricity over the next couple of years. It's time to stop this vehicle from going over that cliff. Jam on the brakes and end this FIT subsidy now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I just want to start by leading off where the previous member spoke and to say, "A pox on both your houses." We had a public utility system in Ontario that delivered electricity at cost. We were the most competitive, with the lowest rates in Ontario. Since the Conservatives started the privatization deregulations, the Liberals have accelerated it, and now we're one of the most expensive jurisdictions in North America, and that's at the hands of both of these governments. So I just say, "A pox on both your houses."

I want to speak to the local ownership part of the bill that is not contained within the bill, particularly in my part of the world—for example, Smooth Rock Falls. Smooth Rock Falls lost the only employer in town. The old Abitibi mill, owned by Tembec, was closed down. The community could have got into running water. They could have got into the business of taking over the hydro dam that Tembec had, as a way of raising revenue to offset the taxes they lose as a result of ripping down that mill. The government made no attempt in order to make that happen, and this particular act would not facilitate that process.

Why don't we allow municipalities and others to be involved in the hydro business in the sense of doing not-for-profit, so that we can use some of that money and put it back into our communities?

For Smooth Rock Falls, they lost—I think it's \$1.2 million per year in assessment in a community of about 1,500 or 1,600 people. That particular plant—if it had been allowed to be transferred into the municipality, owned by the municipality, so they could take the revenue from that dam, they could have at least offset it.

1430

The other one is what happened in Hearst. We had a biomass project. We've got what we call heritage woodpiles, all the old wood shavings that come out of the old mills. There's a private sector developer, in partnership with the municipality and one of the other mills there, that wanted to clean up those old sites—clean up essentially brownfield sites—to compost and to burn that particular material, or dry and burn that material, to

generate heat in order to make electricity and to sell the steam to the plant next door as a way of reducing their costs. It would have allowed at least something to happen in that community that would reduce their reliance on electricity from other places, and at the same time they're cleaning heritage woodpiles. Does this bill accomplish that? No. And I will vote against it for those reasons.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today to support the bill brought forward by my leader, the member from Niagara West–Glanbrook, the Affordable Energy and Restoration of Local Decision Making Act. The bill would cancel the FIT and microFIT programs, which have resulted in this skyrocketing increase in hydro bills—in everybody's hydro bill—across the province of Ontario. It was mentioned that there's a few large, non-resident companies making obscene profits while average working families in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock can hardly pay their bills. They have to choose, some of them, between paying their hydro bills and feeding their children. A day doesn't go by in my office where there's not a call about these skyrocketing hydro rates.

Instead of working to bring the rates down or stopping the car before it goes over the cliff, as was said before, the government continues with its expensive green energy experiments which punish Ontario's most vulnerable.

This bill would restore local decision-making powers to the municipalities. My municipalities of Kawartha Lakes and Cavan Monaghan, which are affected by these projects, have certainly passed resolutions saying they want the authority back. They hear every single day the impact of these wind turbines and solar farms on their people: the decrease in the property values, the potential risks to human health and to animal health. I mean, there's real people out there with real health problems. This government isn't listening.

I just want to quickly say that the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers report on wind and the electrical grid states, "Apart from the health and safety concerns of nearby residents, wind generation is intermittent, it has a low capacity factor and it delivers its energy when nature provides it rather than when consumers want it. These weaknesses make wind generation one of the most technically challenging and costly energy sources to integrate into the electrical grid."

If you won't listen to us, maybe you'll listen to the engineers. I don't know, Mr. Speaker, but I'm pleased to stand in support of this bill today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Renfrew–Nippissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to join this debate today and support our leader, Tim Hudak, in his private member's bill. When this government took over, power was 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour for the residents. It's now up to 10.8. What has happened? Well, it can be explained in a couple of different phrases.

We can start with the provincial benefit now becoming global adjustment. I was the energy critic when this bill was tabled in the Legislature. We fought this tooth and nail, and our caucus told this government and the people of Ontario what the results of their Green Energy Act and their FIT program would be. The chickens have come home to roost. The mess that they've got now—they don't call it the provincial benefit anymore, Mr. Speaker, because it used to be a negative number where people were actually getting a benefit on the other side. Now it's just costing them money every month, 4.85 cents per kilowatt hour this month—for every kilowatt hour, 4.85 cents. That is a result of their feed-in-tariff program, because it is directly measured as the difference between the market price of the power versus what we are paying to the generator. And we are paying these generators excessive amounts.

It's also resulting in us paying other jurisdictions to take our power. In the last 10 days alone, we have paid as much as—today, the price of power was at minus 12.8 cents a kilowatt hour. That's what we're paying other people to take our power. In the last 10 days, it has hit that number three times, and it has ranged in between there since then. That's the kind of mess that has been created by this FIT program.

A fellow in my riding who's got a solar installation said to me—I said, "What do you think about this, about the grandmother who can't pay her hydro bills, and you're getting 80.2 cents a kilowatt hour for your solar installation?" You know what he said to me? He said, "Yak, if that government down there in Toronto is stupid enough to pay me 80 cents, I'm smart enough to take it." That's the kind of thing that's happening out there, and it has got to stop.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to address Tim Hudak's Affordable Energy and Restoration of Local Decision Making Act.

Before I commence, I want to bring a message from local farmers from Haldimand and Norfolk. They spent the morning in the visitors' gallery. They wanted me to pass this on: They were just disgusted with the behaviour in here. They were also disgusted with the reasons for the behaviour: the compromise of responsible government in the province of Ontario.

Further to that—and this legislation will help—yesterday I filed a letter with the EBR commentary with respect to the Samsung project. Down in Haldimand, 67 towers are going up, and, in addition, something like 800 acres of solar, something the Haldimand federation has formally protested. These kinds of postings should not go out during the March break; people are on holidays.

We had to do the same thing a number of months ago with Capital Power: 58 turbines down in Haldimand county, and again, these were sent out right around July 1, just to kind of sneak it through when people are thinking of other things. Some very good reasons for a fulsome comment period: Don't rush it through. There

are so many economic, environmental and physical health impacts, the impacts on property values. There's no reason to stick your head in the sand.

Yesterday, there was a presentation in the Legislative Building here by Dr. Scott Petrie, Long Point Waterfowl, who made an indication of the problems with both onshore and offshore and the effect that this has on bird migration. I would encourage everybody here to take a look at the research from Dr. Scott Petrie.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: At precisely the time we need to make Ontario a more competitive place to invest, why are we doubling down on green energy subsidies that are heavily subsidized but don't create jobs? Ontario urgently needs to kick-start our job creation and attract new investment.

The Liberals have relied on massive spending and costly subsidies for wind and solar that drive up the hydro rates, undercutting job creation and competitiveness. With job losses continuing to mount, it's clear the current subsidy program should be abandoned, not revised, as it was this morning. I'm quite sure the 670 employees who used to work at Xstrata Copper in Timmins would have appreciated their company not leaving for Quebec for cheaper hydro rates as a cause of this FIT program.

These job-killing FIT subsidies happened with 1,700 megawatts of wind and solar put on the marketplace. Now the government wants to produce 10,700 megawatts of power by 2018. The very problem that has sent our hydro bills skyrocketing and gutted our manufacturing sector is about to get six times bigger.

Only Ontario PC leader Tim Hudak's call for the immediate cancellation of the FIT subsidies is the clear solution to kick-start job creation and attract new investment in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Niagara West—Glanbrook, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I want to thank my colleagues all, so many members of the PC caucus, for standing up in support of their constituents and thoughtful economic and energy policy. I thank my colleagues in the Liberal Party and the NDP for their comments as well.

Here's the bottom line: If we want to build a strong province of Ontario, if we want to make Ontario a leader again in Canada in job creation and investment, we need to get the economic fundamentals right. That means lower marginal taxes, labour markets that work freely, making sure government does not pick winners and losers in the marketplace but creates the environment for everyone to succeed. It also means we have reliable and affordable energy.

I'm proud to be born and raised in Niagara. Now I live along the Welland River, which feeds into the Beck energy project. For all of our history in Ontario, since the Beck project went forward, we've had reliable, affordable power. It made us the economic powerhouse of

Canada, of North America, and we've lost that because of an unaffordable industrial policy from the 1990s that was rejected by those who invented it. It's in the past. We're looking to the future: reliable and affordable energy to create jobs.

1440

The Auditor General said it himself: 60,000 applications in the queue. That shows you a program that is a gold rush, not about sensible economic policy. For every job created, the Auditor General says that two to four jobs are lost in the broader economy. The Auditor General said that we're paying billions and billions more for these projects through FIT than would have resulted if we'd had a competitive tendering process.

The bottom line as well, Speaker, is that I hope that members opposite will stand up and support their local constituents, like those in Scarborough who want to say no to that project off the Scarborough Bluffs. I hope the minister will stand up and vote for this bill and vote for the constituents of Scarborough.

I say to my colleagues in the third party: I hope the members for Essex and Algoma-Manitoulin will stand up for their constituents who support this bill, who want to see local decision-making. Let's see how they stand on Bill 42.

FAR NORTH REPEAL ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 ABROGEANT LA LOI SUR LE GRAND NORD

Mr. Norm Miller moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 44, An Act to repeal the Far North Act, 2010 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 44, Loi abrogeant la Loi de 2010 sur le Grand Nord et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to my private member's bill this afternoon.

The Far North Act eliminated 225,000 square kilometres from economic development opportunities for northern communities' and First Nations' benefit, or about 25% of Ontario's total land mass and 50% of the north.

The north is not just some empty wasteland. There are towns and villages and First Nation communities—more than 30 communities. According to census information, more than 36,000 First Nations people live in the area now defined by the Far North Act.

I've had the pleasure to visit some of those Far North communities. I once spent a day with Grand Chief Stan Beardy and went to the most northerly community in Ontario, Fort Severn. I call tell you that Fort Severn has some challenges. When I was there, the school was

closed. There's high unemployment. There are problems with drugs.

On that same day—they wanted to show a struggling community and one that was doing better. The one that was doing better was Webequie, and it happens to be right in the middle of the Ring of Fire, where this huge new chromite discovery, nickel discovery, has been found. There, it was bustling. There was all sorts of economic activity—First Nations people involved in drilling and other activities to do with the mine—and some hope, is what I would say. Quite a contrast.

It's easy for Mr. McGuinty to draw a line and say, "Forget about that place," but what about the people that live in the north? Governments should be concerned with creating an environment that offers northerners the same kinds of opportunities that we expect in southern Ontario. Imagine if you tried to do that in southern Ontario: declare half of southern Ontario off limits—no agriculture, no housing, no industry. There would be a revolt here. The Far North Act is simply bad public policy.

It is possible to responsibly harvest renewable resources, particularly trees. Engineering technology makes it possible to mine responsibly. The green economy is not possible without the use of minerals and metals. Wind turbines, solar cells and hybrid vehicles are not possible without mining. The mining industry is the largest employer of First Nations people in Ontario—safe, productive, well-paying jobs. There's a wealth of resources in the north, but with the Far North Act, we'll never know what's there.

This province was built on a legacy of mining and forestry, and it could do so again, responsibly. There are tens of thousands of jobs that could be realized in the north, but not if Mr. McGuinty continues to sever off huge tracts of Ontario and then subject them to economic ruin. What is the logic for arbitrarily deciding that 50% of the north is off limits to forestry, mining and other activities?

Patrick Moore, in the book *Confessions of a Greenpeace Dropout*, talks about protecting areas. He says, "Of course it is important to maintain large areas of land as parks and wilderness, and make them off limits to industrial development for factories, managed forests or farms. The World Wildlife Fund, one of the world's "largest nature protection groups, states that 10% of the world's forests should be protected from development. I would have no problem with 15% or even more in some cases." He is not saying 50%, as the Far North Act says.

He goes on to talk about the importance of forestry:

"There is the same area of forest in both the US and Canada today as there was 100 years ago; in fact, the area of forest has been growing in recent years. This is despite a tripling of population and an even larger increase in the consumption of food and wood products. About 85% of timber production in the US is from private lands. Those millions of ... landowners could easily remove the forest from the land and grow crops like corn or cotton or raise cows for beef. But they choose to grow trees because they know they will get a good price for them to pay their

taxes, send their children to college and live a good life. Because landowners choose to grow trees, the land remains forested, providing habitat for other plants and wildlife, pulling carbon from the air, protecting soil from erosion and making the landscape beautiful. Rather than illustrating the common belief that forestry destroys the forest, it is truly a win-win solution for the environment and the economy, maintaining the land in a forested state while providing an income for the owners.”

He goes on to say, “One of the great ironies of the ‘environmental’ movement today is that it claims to support all things renewable on the one hand while at the same time ignoring or rejecting the fact that wood is far and away the most important renewable resource. Environmental activists place huge importance on solar panels made from aluminum, silicon and gallium arsenide when in fact the most important solar collectors on earth are the leaves and needles” of our plants.

I bring that up simply because, in my opinion, the reason that half of the north is off bounds for development is because the current government is so much in bed with the environmental lobby groups based here in Toronto.

By the way, you can’t make those solar panels unless you have mines to provide the aluminum, silicon etc.

Why should half of northern Ontario be off bounds for northern communities to benefit? It’s not just Toronto and the GTA that drive the economy of Ontario. Let’s give all the regions of Ontario the same choice to make a contribution, grow opportunities and improve living conditions.

There have been many, many different people on record opposing Bill 191, and I would like to get some of them on the record, starting off with a letter I just received from Grand Chief Stan Beardy of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation. He writes:

“The Nishnawbe Aski Nation ... Chiefs-in-Assembly passed resolutions condemning Bill 191 (Far North Act, 2010). These First Nation decisions were ignored by the provincial government of the day. The fundamental problems with the Far North Act, 2010, include the following: (1) provincial control of the land use planning process; (2) the precondition of an interconnected protected area of at least 225,000 square kilometres; (3) the provincial power to override any land use plan; (4) the provincial power to establish provisional protected areas; (5) the lack of guaranteed funding for land use planning; and, (6) the immediate freeze on most forms of modern resource development. NAN First Nations do support mutually beneficial land use planning without preconditions and respectful of treaty rights.”

I’m pleased to receive that letter from Grand Chief Beardy. I agree that there should be some land use planning in the north. I’m not opposed to that.

The forestry industry—this is the Ontario Forest Industries Association—is on record as saying:

“The OFIA has never supported Bill 191. More specifically, the OFIA has never supported the govern-

ment’s societal and political objective to permanently protect over 50% of the northern boreal region.

“There is no scientific rationale to support the permanent protection of at least 50% of the northern boreal. The decision to permanently protect at least 50% of the area, or 225,000 square kilometres, was a unilateral, political decision made by the government of Ontario to satisfy southern special interests.

“In fact, the concept of permanent protection does not even line up with some of the government’s own stated objectives and is based on incomplete information, notably when it comes to forests and carbon sequestration.

“According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, sustainable forest management, including harvest and renewal activities, can contribute to mitigation of climate change to a greater extent than protecting forests.”

1450

I won’t have time in the short time for private members, but the Ontario Prospectors Association are on record as saying: “The Ontario Prospectors Association believes the Far North Act put forward by the McGuinty Liberal provincial government will cripple exploration and related economic development in Ontario’s boreal forest.”

The Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association: “NOMA has been clear in expressing our view that the uncertainty created by the Far North Act is a hindrance to business investment and economic growth in northern Ontario and we will continue to advocate against this legislation.”

Howard Wilson, president of the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, states: “It is left to us in the business community and the First Nations, together with municipal and other regional organizations, to make the cause against economically damaging policy that would devastate our future.

“We at the chamber are the voice of business and this Far North Act is a threat to business development to our city and region.”

The Prospectors and Developers Association states: “It is our recommendation ... that Bill 191, the Far North Act, be withdrawn.... The PDAC contends that Bill 191, in its present form, would deprive all the citizens of Ontario, particularly the First Nations communities that make up most of the population of the Far North, of the economic benefits that responsible mineral resource development can provide.

“Bill 191 fails to provide First Nations with an appropriate and clearly defined role in the land use planning process.

“Bill 191 seriously compromises the ability of the minerals sector to operate in the Far North by reducing the land base available for exploration by 50% or more, relegating the minerals sector to a peripheral role in land use planning, and damaging investor confidence in mineral exploration activities in the region.... We should

not start with prescribed limits that are not based on science, and are not based on the needs of the people. Indeed, land use planning in the Far North should begin with widespread geologic mapping and mineral exploration.”

The Northwestern Ontario Prospectors Association states: “I believe the Far North Act removes too much land from exploration and without the approval of the very people who live there, being the First Nations people.... It seems unwise and unfair to remove such a large piece of Ontario from the possibility of generating wealth for both the First Nations and the coffers of the Ontario government.” As prospectors, “We go out with a hammer and a packsack, and the footprint on the ground is minimal.”

The Whitewater Lake First Nation state: “We are ... in the desperate situation of being almost totally engulfed” by a provincial park. “This has completely stymied our efforts to get involved in modern terms of economic development such as mining, forestry and hydroelectric projects. We cannot even get a road into our community....”

“Ontario is prepared to put aside 50% of the far north for caribou, polar bears and wolverines; however, Indian reserves do not even amount to 1% of the area. Whitewater Lake has nothing. Why the disparity in treatment?”

Mr. Speaker, there are many more quotes from chambers of commerce etc. that are opposed. I simply say the reason I’m opposed is this taking of 50% of the land mass of northern Ontario away from the benefit of the people of the north, in particular, and all Ontario; I strongly object. It will hurt northern Ontario and hurt the entire economy of the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I’m not going to mince words. This is a very bad bill. If there was ever any doubt that the PC Party and its members do not understand or care about northern Ontario, this bill puts a firm exclamation point to that fact.

In this bill, the Conservatives are basically saying to the north, “We in southern Ontario know better than you.” Why are they saying that? Because First Nations are saying, “We don’t like the Far North Act, but we don’t want it revoked without a replacement,” and our municipalities are saying the same thing. In fact, the president of the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association went public with his concerns about this bill in the Chronicle-Journal on March 18.

Ron Nelson, president of NOMA, was quoted as saying, “NOMA does not support Bill 44, Far North Repeal Act, 2012, but neither do we support the Far North Act in its current form....”

“We remain concerned that the process for developing the Far North Act has created a divisive and uncertain environment that is contrary to the intent of the legislation.”

But despite this, the Conservatives push on because they think that they know better. If passed, this bill would be a disaster for northwestern Ontario—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And the northeast.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: And the northeast.

While the Far North Act itself is flawed and the way it was introduced is wrong, it does lay some groundwork and some processes that will lead to the eventual development of the Ring of Fire.

We in the NDP think there’s a better process than the act that’s currently in place. We believe that, through consultation with mining companies, First Nations and people living in the north, we can develop a plan that speeds up development significantly and leaves First Nations happy and mining companies happy, and equally important, it leaves people in our region employed. This is why earlier this afternoon I tabled the following motion:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should immediately move to implement a consultative process in the north to consider changes to the Far North Act. The review shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- elimination of the provision in the act that allows the government to arbitrarily overrule land use plans and allow development whenever the government determines that development is in the “social and economic interests” of Ontario;

- adequate funding of First Nations land use planning;

- implementation of provisions that allow for the creation of a joint body that would be composed of equal numbers of First Nations members and government of Ontario officials. This joint body would advise on the development, implementation and coordination of land use planning in the Far North, as well as perform any other advisory function to which the First Nations and Minister agree;

- serious consideration of the innovations similar to those included in Quebec’s Plan du Nord such as a coordinating body for public investments in the Far North and an effective resource revenue-sharing model which provides for the sharing of revenues between First Nations and the Ontario government on all resource-related projects in the Far North; and

That new legislation be introduced to replace the existing Far North Act upon completion of this consultative process.

So the point that I’m trying to make is that scrapping the Far North Act and not replacing it with something better stalls these processes and leaves a legislative void in its place.

Instead of a system that could work better, this proposal would see us have no system at all, and mining will be stalled indefinitely until a new system is developed and put in place, at which point the mining companies and First Nations will need time to meet the requirements of a new set of regulations, assuming, of

course, that there are new sets of regulations. If there aren't and if we're left with a situation that would be not unsimilar to the Wild West, I can guarantee that there will be no development at all. If the Conservatives are considering doing this and if they're considering the scrapping of this act in an appeal to the mining companies, they're way off base.

If you speak to mining companies, they essentially want three things. They want to know where they can explore and how they can go about it in terms of working with First Nations, and they want the government to assist with developing key infrastructure to make this happen. This bill addresses none of those things, and it would be a truly regressive step that would put us years behind where we currently are.

What the people in the north are saying is that we don't like the act, we don't like how it was imposed without meaningful consultation, much like this Conservative bill, but we don't want it scrapped without anything being put in place. We want something better.

Replacing the Far North Act is what my party campaigned on, and it's what we plan to do because we know a system can be found that works. A great template for that system currently exists in northern Quebec. There, the province's Plan du Nord was developed in consultation with mining companies, First Nations and other interested parties. It laid out a clear system for development, and now the region is booming.

We firmly believe that this can serve as a model for a new Far North Act, and we intend to work with northerners to develop it. This is what the north wants.

Frankly, this is even what Don Drummond wants. Even he gets it. If you've listened to the Conservatives during many of their debates in this House, you'd think that Mr. Drummond was the Leader of the Opposition. So why, when the Conservatives suggest that we should adopt everything that Mr. Drummond recommends, would they do something that would jeopardize the economic development in the Far North when Mr. Drummond clearly spells out the important role that the Ring of Fire will have in our economy and the need for First Nations to benefit? Which is it? Because the Conservatives are clearly contradicting themselves.

Every day they speak to the importance of us implementing everything that Mr. Drummond recommends, yet there seems to be a double standard when it comes to their agenda. They keep saying that they want to lead, but they're not presenting any ideas. Instead of presenting an alternate vision of their own, they're saying their plan is nothing. They have no plan, and that is evidenced most poignantly from this proposed repeal of this act.

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By contrast, New Democrats have a plan. We have a vision for the north—one that includes economic prosperity for everyone living in the north, where good-paying jobs are plentiful, where First Nations communities are respected partners in development, and where environmental interests are balanced with the need for economic prosperity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to participate in this debate and certainly to express our party's very strong feelings that the legislation being put forward by the member of Parry Sound–Muskoka is, indeed, a very bad piece of legislation, a very regressive one.

May I say, I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to hear the comments from my critic, the member from Kenora–Rainy River, related to her feelings, and presumably her caucus's feelings, on this potential legislation being put forward.

The fact is that the Far North Act, 2010, put into law for the first time in Ontario's history a requirement for First Nation approval of land use plans in the Far North of our province. Certainly that is one aspect that the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka has essentially brushed off as not being particularly significant, but he would just simply put that aside.

A key objective stated in that act is enabling sustainable economic development that benefits First Nations. When the Far North Act was first introduced in 2009, there were almost no land use plans or strategies in place to allow for sustainable development of natural resources or to ensure that any environmentally or culturally significant areas were protected. So this ultimately has become, I think, what will be described as milestone legislation, and it does represent an unprecedented opportunity to initiate progress and positive change in the far north of Ontario.

May I say, again, in further response to my colleague from Kenora–Rainy River, we want to work with the communities in the far north and with the members of the Legislature to find the kind of flexibility we need to make the act work even better, through either regulatory aspects or policy-making aspects of the legislation that's in place. There's no question that we have some great opportunities here.

This is about striking a balance, Mr. Speaker, that we do, I think, have an obligation to strive to find—something that the official opposition, the Conservatives, don't seem to be as concerned about—a balance between economic development and between conservation, and this is the opportunity that we have. We're talking about 24,000 people; I think it's 36 remote communities, many of them fly-in communities. This is a unique opportunity for us to partner with the First Nations in the far north to draw from their traditional knowledge in this planning process to ensure that we get it right.

We do know—it's certainly something we would say makes sense from the perspective of most parts of Ontario—that good planning leads to good development, which creates good jobs and a strong economy. What's unique about the land use planning process under the Far North Act is that decision-making has been consensus-based. We are working in partnership with First Nations to determine which areas will be protected and what will be developed.

The truth is, Mr. Speaker, too, that there are five land use plans that have already been put in place—we've got agreements on them—some great examples that could really, really make it very, very clear that the point of view put forward by the official opposition is just so darn wrong about opportunities for development in northern Ontario.

Pikangikum First Nation completed the first community-based land use plan in the Far North in 2006. It clearly identified opportunities for mineral sector activities, commercial forestry, while identifying areas of cultural significance for protection. It also, may I say, Mr. Speaker, was one that I think set a really good example as a model.

The most recent agreement we signed was with Cat Lake and Slate Falls First Nation. Their land use plan was approved in July 2011. In this case—I could break it down for you, but I want to use my time judiciously—the determination was made by the communities that 65% of the land in their traditional territories would be open to opportunities regarding development. So the case was made, the discussions took place, and that 65% was open for development. The 35%, they determined, were areas for cultural protection.

The fact is that that very much makes the point that this process, which is under way in almost every other far north First Nation community, is about making decisions related to what works for those communities in terms of development, which then, of course, provides the absolute clarity the industry has been calling for. Again, my colleague across the way from Kenora–Rainy River made reference to how important it is for industry to have that clarity. Well, indeed it is, and once they have that clarity as to where the development is welcome, I think it provides for some tremendous opportunities.

I must say also that I had a very good opportunity—the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka was going through a list of those that he chose to define as being opposed to the Far North Act. Some of my colleagues in this House noticed that he was reading sections of letters rather than reading the full document. I can certainly speak about a number of those.

But let me just at least begin with a conversation that I had yesterday with Grand Chief Stan Louttit of Mushkegowuk Tribal Council, First Nations. May I thank again my colleagues across the way from Kenora–Rainy River and Timmins–James Bay, for helping set that up.

Yes, there is no question: Grand Chief Stan Louttit and many other chiefs that were on that phone call that I was on certainly expressed their concerns about the process by which the Far North legislation was brought forward. There is no question about that, and it would not be helpful for me to pretend otherwise.

But what they made very, very clear was that the process under which they are now engaged in terms of the land use planning process is one they want to continue to move forward on. It was a very exciting conversation for me from the point of view of recognition that, yes, indeed, we need to have some more con-

versations. There are some aspects of the legislation they want to discuss with our ministry and with myself as minister; I'm more than happy to do that. But what was most exciting about it was the fact that they laid the cards on the table and made it clear: "We did not particularly like the process that brought this legislation forward, but we are very pleased to have an opportunity to be engaged in a partnership with the province in a land use planning process that simply wasn't in place before." Again, that's the kind of opportunity that we have to provide clarity to industry, while at the same time showing the proper respect for the First Nations. So I'm very grateful for that opportunity with Grand Chief Louttit and with the other chiefs who were on the call.

May I say, I've had many opportunities to speak with Grand Chief Stan Beardy, a good friend of mine, someone I've worked with for many years, of Nishnawbe Aski Nation. I was recently at a NAN energy conference in Thunder Bay, and I spoke about the Far North legislation. Again, I won't stand here and say that I received a rousing ovation for my remarks, but I certainly was treated respectfully, and we agreed to carry on the conversation, as we have in the past. That has been the key, quite frankly, to us moving forward with so many other measures, including, may I say, the modernization of the Mining Act—quite a remarkable process.

Mr. Speaker, I do need to wrap up. One of my colleagues, from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, very much wants to say a few words as well.

Let me speak quickly about NOMA, the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association. I met with them on March 9. I'm reaching out as best I can to all organizations. NOMA, of course, being the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association—I had a good conversation with them. I think, to some degree, the fact that we had a good hour to spend together was a factor in them making the determination that, indeed, they did not support the repeal of the Far North land use planning act, the Far North legislation. I'm grateful for that. The chambers of commerce—I wish we had more time—we're working with them as well, and we'll continue to work with them.

I look forward to working with my colleagues. But I certainly hope that everyone in this Legislature recognizes that this piece of legislation is a very bad one, I say to my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka, and it should be defeated this afternoon. Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: The Far North Act is exactly the kind of bill that irks northerners. Somebody in southern Ontario developed a solution for a problem that only exists in the minds of those in the south, and forced a bill onto the north.

We've heard some names thrown around here today; let me just remind you. The Ontario Prospectors Association, in the Kirkland Lake Northern Daily News on October 12, said the bill will cripple exploration. And, yes, the Mushkegowuk Council's grand chief, Stan

Louttit, said in the Timmins Daily Press on December 31: “We’ve made it very clear to the government that we stand united in opposition to this bill. There are issues in regard to the bill’s key jurisdictions, as well as treaty rights that are not being recognized.”

Speaker, as mayor of the city of North Bay at the time this act was passed, I can tell you there was extremely limited discussion in northern Ontario and northern Ontario consultations. And as you’ve heard me read, the First Nations have been very critical in their criticism.

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Speaker, when you look at a photo of a cathedral, 200 years from now, that photo is going to look the same, that cathedral is going to look the same, but a forest is quite different. The softwoods fall, they create fuel for the hardwoods, and the forest burns. Look at what happened in the northwest this summer, one of the most raging summers that we’ve had out there, causing destruction all through the northwest. Forests need to be properly managed. That is something that I think all of our parties would agree on.

Let me talk a little bit about the mining side now. Let me talk about the Ring of Fire. As members know, I have ventured up there in the summer and in the winter and belong to the very few members who have actually been to or actually set foot in the Ring of Fire. We look at the Far North Act and the land that it takes out of play in both the forestry and the mining sector. If this act had been passed only a few years earlier, could you imagine the fact that the Ring of Fire would not have been discovered? So we say, if this is the kind of activity that is going to happen through the Far North Act—you can’t have mining exploration—then I would ask you: What else are we not discovering today in the area that’s now a museum in northern Ontario? What else are we not discovering?

I would say, for the businesses in Nipissing riding, the 70 mining and manufacturing-related companies—we are heavily in the exploration business. This is big business to us as well; 70 companies in North Bay and Nipissing rely on the forestry and mining sector. I don’t see anybody in southern Ontario standing up for them. Of course, you’ve heard me say this in the House many times. To those here in southern Ontario, there is nothing really farther north of Steeles Avenue. This is a really great example of exactly that philosophy: that they just don’t believe that anything exists north of Steeles Avenue.

This Far North Act makes a virtual museum of such a vast piece of northern Ontario, Speaker, that it puts the businesses—the hard-working men and women in the city of North Bay and the riding of Nipissing—in jeopardy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thank you, Speaker. I think they’ve given me about three minutes and 45 seconds here—not a lot of time, but thank you. I’m happy to have a few minutes.

Number one, on the characterization of the legislation as being the south jamming the north: I would remind the member opposite who brought the legislation forward that not that many years ago we brought in a piece of legislation called the greenbelt that protected 1.8 million acres of land down here in southern Ontario, from Kingston right across the top of Toronto, ending somewhere west of Toronto. I don’t know exactly where it ends, but obviously a lot of policy of this type has been well applied in southern Ontario. I think it’s important to mention that.

In terms of the south jamming things down into the north, as the member has said, I would remind him that it was his party—and I’m not sure what his position was at the time—that brought in the spring bear hunt. Talk about jamming something down, with zero—zero—consultation, absolutely none, on the back of a napkin in an airport, as I’m told the story goes. But I don’t know that for sure.

Speaker, a long list of endorsements as well has been brought into this. What this legislation will do is leave a void. If the member would have perhaps brought something forward that he intended to replace this act with, that would have somehow been better, perhaps we would have given it some serious consideration over here, but what he’s going to do is create a vacuum. What mining companies want, what everybody who’s interested in northern development wants, is certainty. How has it been working for you so far? Not so well. People want certainty, and we know—the member from North Bay knows as well—that that’s what this act provides. That’s what the mining companies want. They need the certainty of access to land before they’re going to be able to make their investments, before the banks and their shareholders are going to finance exploration.

The implication that somehow this has put the brakes on mining exploration or mining activity in northern Ontario is hilarious. Mining activity in northern Ontario has never been higher. There is \$1 billion worth of work going on by juniors in the mining industry in Ontario right now, as was spoken very clearly and publicly about at PDAC just two weeks ago. When that member’s party finished in government in 2003, the number was about \$200 million. It’s gone from \$193 million up to \$1 billion. Speaker, they need the certainty.

I would say to members as well and to everybody who is interested in this, and hopefully people seriously are, that this bill was consulted on ad nauseam, and I hope that we are careful that we don’t turn consultation into the industry. We don’t want consultation to be the industry. We consulted extensively. I was on the plane with the member from Timmins–James Bay when we went to Sioux Lookout three years ago. At that point, there were already about five communities engaged. There are five communities finished; eight actively engaged. They want this.

The LUP process that’s in the Far North Act provides the road map and the pathway for exactly what we all want to happen: First Nation involvement in what goes

on in their territory so the people who are going to bring the economic development dollars forward know with certainty that when they go there, they're going to be able to continue their work, that their financial investment is not at risk. The worst thing we could do would be to pass this particular piece of legislation, create a void, create uncertainty in the industry, and then where are we again? Back at the starting line.

This legislation has moved it forward, Speaker. It's working, and we need to continue to allow this process to unfold. Most First Nations communities are interested in this. They want to be engaged, they want to be consulted and they want to see this work.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's my pleasure to speak in favour of Bill 44 today, a bill that will right a wrong imposed on our northern communities, a wrong that will make economic circumstances in our northern communities ever more dire under a government that blatantly disregards grassroots needs and is utterly disconnected beyond the GTA.

It's important to understand that Bill 44 represents the views of stakeholders who know their communities best. It will repeal the Far North Act, which was imposed from a top-down, Toronto-centric Liberal majority government. This act is another example of why, under the current government, Ontario has dropped to the bottom of Canada and become a have-not province.

The Far North Act cuts off half of the Far North, roughly 225,000 kilometres squared, to resource development—roughly 21% of the province's land mass—and turns it into parks. The total land area of Ontario is roughly 907,000 kilometres squared. Southern Ontario is approximately 102,000 kilometres squared. Double that and you begin to appreciate just how much parkland has been designated and off limits for low-impact mining exploration and sustainable—I stress “sustainable”—development.

The people who pay for it the most are the ones living in our northern communities in sometimes Third World conditions. These communities need to have the same opportunity to develop, albeit sustainably, as those of our privileged southern communities.

Outside of pandering to a few powerful environmental stakeholders, the Far North Act accomplishes little for the province's economy and the much-needed development of our north. For example, Polar Bear Provincial Park, established in 1970, is Ontario's largest provincial park at 23,522 kilometres squared, give or take a kilometre or two. It's located on the western shore of Hudson's Bay. The number of visitors to the park may be as high as 100 per year, although in 2010 it was only 65.

According the press, the nearby impoverished First Nation community sees very little tourism or economic benefit from those 65 to 100 people who come per year. There are no benefits to their economic well-being in having this massive park in their backyard. The remote tourism industry is very small, wage rates are not high

and its economic impact will not significantly reduce aboriginal poverty.

There's a kind of irony and arrogance when a few urban ruling elites decided it was their responsibility to block economic development in 20% of the entire province—20%—and that 20% is chronically depressed. There's a wise expression that goes something to the effect that you're only as strong as your weakest member. We must be taking strides in this province to boost the areas that need it the most. We must not sacrifice them for the vanity of impressing a handful of southern stakeholders.

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It's important to develop these resources responsibly and sustainably. No one here is advocating the destruction of the environment for economic gain for a few private companies. Rather, it is a few city politicians acquiescing to aggressive, well-funded environmental stakeholders who are not doing their job very effectively and, however, do not represent the interests of the province nor struggling communities living in harsh, sometimes Third World, conditions.

It's clear that this development has positive effects on struggling northern communities that cannot be ignored. Our communities need to be able to grow sustainably without undue harm to the environment. It is the will of the people, and government would have known that if it cared for a moment to consult in a meaningful way with the communities that this would directly affect. This is why it's important to repeal the Far North Act and support Bill 44.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 44 today. I'll start off by first commenting on the minister's comments about the need for these land use plans under the existing Far North Act, and of course, also from members of the third party who mentioned that we need this act for land use plans. But the minister himself contradicted his statement when he said the first land use plan came into effect in 2006, long before Bill 191 was introduced.

As well, Cat Lake had started their process long before Bill 191, so they're wrong on that account.

But I also want to talk about this perceived balance that the third party and the Liberals talked about, that we need to find a balance between the environment and economic development. Well, here's what their balance is, Speaker: Their balance is a quarter-million square kilometres of nothing—zero, no roads, no forestry, no mining, no tourism, no nothing. That's what they consider balanced: a quarter-million square kilometres of nothing. Now, I don't believe that that's a fair balance. I don't think anybody believes zero exploration, zero roads, zero forestry, zero mining is, indeed, a proper balance.

A quarter-million square kilometres and, as we heard through those committee hearings that we went through in the North on, there was only one person who was

consulted. Only one person was consulted by this Liberal government. The World Wildlife Federation's Monte Hummel was the only one who had been consulted.

Speaker, we know that if the north is going to be prosperous—and believe you me, for Ontario to be prosperous, we need the north to be prosperous. We cannot ever be prosperous if we lock away our resources, hide away our resources.

We heard the Premier. Originally, Ontario's problem was the global economy. Then it was the federal guys. Then it was the petro dollar and Alberta that were the problem. I'll tell you, every member in this House should be able to realize that if Alberta conducted itself the way that we do here, they'd be a have-not province as well. So would Newfoundland. So would Saskatchewan. If you're going to lock away all your resources and throw away the key, you are never going to be a prosperous economy. Alberta, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland have become robust, prosperous have provinces because they've got the balance right. We don't have the balance right here when we put a quarter-million square kilometres of economic value into the trash can and throw it away with the Far North Act.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to say to the author of the bill, I wish I would be able to vote for part of your bill. If you would have said, "I'm scrapping the bill, but before scrapping it, I'm going to replace it with something," we would have been in the ball game because, essentially, that's what we've called for right from the beginning.

Let's put the record straight for everybody to understand: Bill 191, the existing bill, which is the Far North Act, was not supported by First Nations. It was not supported by chambers of commerce. It was not supported by municipalities. It was not supported by hardly anybody in northern Ontario, but First Nations and all of northern Ontario said, "First of all, we need to have some sort of planning regime that gives First Nations the ability to develop their own land use plans and not be overridden by the minister as it is now in this particular act," and that we needed some mechanism to ensure that when First Nations are looking at development, they can automatically get some benefit from it.

Everybody in northern Ontario agrees with that point, if development is going to happen in the Far North in places like the Ring of Fire, we need to have a system that essentially says that First Nations aren't an afterthought, that the First Nations are in the beginning of the discussion and that they're not only able to participate in the project when it comes to jobs, but they're able to develop economically.

You've seen Sarah Campbell, myself, Howard Hampton and others, and the member who's the minister who represents First Nations, talk about the deplorable situation in communities across the Far North as a result of what the federal government doesn't do in those communities. Economic development, by way of mining

and forestry or hydro development, is one of the things that is going to bring those communities out of poverty and move them forward.

But what First Nations want is a land use planning process that works for them. My colleague the critic for MNR, Sarah Campbell, raises the point quite effectively. We, as New Democrats, fought the fight against Bill 191 because we thought there was a golden opportunity to develop an act under 191 that would have had the buy-in of northern Ontario. She was right again. It was southern Ontario telling the north what it is that it needed, not talking to northern Ontario about what we could build together.

So we find ourselves in this House today on Bill 44 where my colleague—and I have much respect for him; I don't want to diminish him as an individual because I think Mr. Miller is a very honourable member and works quite hard at what he does. But I cannot vote for a bill that is essentially going to say that we're going to throw out the current act and leave northern First Nations communities across the north without the legislative framework for them to do their land use planning.

They're into the process now. Let me just read one letter from Stan Louttit, who is the grand chief of Mushkegowuk Council. We heard from NOMA, the northern Ontario municipal association, who say they're opposed to Bill 44, and ask us to vote in opposition. I won't read the whole letter because it's a bit long, but it says: "During this time, we have had some significant concerns over the Far North Act and the way it has been implemented. However, we would prefer to see a process to amend the existing act and enter into a dialogue with the Minister of Natural Resources to address key concerns including: respect for the oral treaty, proper funding and resourcing for land use planning, concerns with jurisdiction, respect of approved land use plans and other concerns.

"At this time we will not support Bill 44, An Act to repeal the Far North Act," and essentially advises us to vote against the act.

So my colleague the MNR critic, Sarah Campbell, put forward a motion today that I think is quite reasoned. It says, "Let's engage in a process with First Nations, northern communities, mining associations and others to develop what should be in the Planning Act that meets the needs of First Nations so that they feel comfortable with what's there."

Number two, let's look at what they did in the plan du Nord and let's look at the other parts, which are revenue-sharing and other aspects that were put in the plan du Nord so that development goes forward in a way that benefits First Nations, benefits all northern Ontarians and benefits this province in a way that we're able to get the jobs and prosperity from those particular projects.

To do what Mr. Miller suggests, without replacing the Far North planning act, essentially throws us back to yesteryear. I can tell you—because we know my good friend Chief Elijah Moonias from Marten Falls will not

allow development to happen in his community if he doesn't feel, on behalf of his community, that they're going to get a benefit.

If we don't have some sort of a planning regime that codifies what lands they don't want development on, where development's to happen, what the rules of engagement are, what the rules are when it comes to revenue-sharing and other matters, the only mechanism that will be left to them, if we voted for Bill 44 to scrap Bill 191, would be for the community to say, "Let's do another blockade." Quite frankly, First Nations don't want to have blockades in order to advance the economic interests of their communities; they want to have something at the end of the day akin to what is put in the motion by Sarah Campbell, which essentially says, "Let's develop a process that develops the bill that First Nations need in order to do planning," that they need in order to benefit from mining and other activities on their lands so that all of us here in Ontario can move forward and build a better province.

1530

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka has two minutes for a response.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you to all the speakers who have participated this afternoon in debate on this private member's Bill 44.

As the member from Timmins–James Bay pointed out, Bill 191, the Far North Act, which Bill 44 would repeal, was not supported by many groups, particularly in the north: First Nations, chambers of commerce, prospectors, the forestry sector and the mining sector. About the only groups that did support the bill were groups like the World Wildlife Fund, environmental lobby groups that like the fact that half of the north is off limits to the benefit particularly of the people who live in the north and for the First Nation communities in the north. That is certainly the biggest problem I have with the Far North Act.

We have, at this time, the Ring of Fire, which is being developed in the north. That was just discovered in the past 10 or so years. We don't know where the next Ring of Fire will be found, but that Ring of Fire can be a huge benefit for the five or so First Nation communities in closest proximity to it and for places as far away as North Bay, where industry will be supported. It could be a 100-year mine, with thousands of jobs and billions of dollars generated—most beneficial for the people in the north. I don't want to see that economic development being off limits.

I am not opposed to land use planning. I note that the minister stated that the first land use plan was developed in 2006, when the Far North Act did not occur. I think we can learn a lot from Quebec and Plan Nord. Unfortunately, the government so far has not done much to help with the Ring of Fire development, to get the infrastructure—the roads and the power—to the site. There's so much more we would do, but we can start by repealing the Far North Act and then looking forward positively to

see real economic activity happen in northern Ontario. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll deal with the vote later.

REDUCING AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE
PREMIUMS BY ELIMINATING
FRAUD ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 VISANT À RÉDUIRE
LES PRIMES D'ASSURANCE-
AUTOMOBILE PAR L'ÉLIMINATION
DES ACTIVITÉS FRAUDULEUSES

Mrs. Mangat moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 41, An Act to encourage the disclosure of and investigate fraudulent activity in connection with automobile insurance claims and to amend the Independent Health Facilities Act with respect to licensee requirements / Projet de loi 41, Loi visant à encourager la divulgation des activités frauduleuses en ce qui a trait aux demandes d'indemnités d'assurance-automobile, visant les enquêtes en la matière et modifiant la Loi sur les établissements de santé autonomes relativement aux exigences applicables aux titulaires de permis.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standard order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand here today and to debate Bill 41, the Reducing Automobile Insurance Premiums by Eliminating Fraud Act, 2012.

Before I turn to debate this bill, I would like to acknowledge the presence of Debbie Thompson, president-elect of the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario; Ralph Palumbo, vice-president of the Insurance Bureau of Canada; and Joe Huber, a constituent from my riding who has been a very active advocate about this issue. They are all here today to support this bill.

Automobile insurance fraud is an issue that I have been aware of for some time. Since my first election, I have had countless conversations with the constituents of Mississauga–Brampton South, and the message has been very clear and consistent that automobile insurance rates are too high; something must be done. I believe that elimination of fraud is one of the most important, proactive and necessary steps for achieving lower insurance premiums.

As most of the members in this House know, in 2010 our government introduced a major auto insurance reform package. The purpose was (1) to simplify our auto insurance system; (2) to provide consumers with better choices and more price stability; and (3) to promote a financially sustainable and long-term auto insurance system.

Mr. Speaker, these reforms have produced favourable results. According to the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, there has been a reduction in fraudulent

claims resulting from accident benefits covering medical treatment, housekeeping, various examinations, and caregiver disability income. Of course, this is good news, Mr. Speaker. This is good news. But there is still much more to be done, especially with respect to fraud.

In 2010, I read an article in the *Globe and Mail*. The article was written by Grant Robertson and Tara Perkins. It was an intriguing article, and that article further intensified my interest in the impact of fraud on auto insurance rates. That was a very informative but disturbing report entitled “How Small-Time Auto Insurance Scams Have Evolved into Big Business in Canada.” The article described the machinations of sophisticated and lucrative staged-accident rings across the country, and how honest drivers were being forced to absorb the cost of this criminality by paying higher premiums.

According to that report, out of Ontario’s \$9 billion worth of auto insurance premiums each year, \$1.3 billion—that is, 14.4%—goes to payouts arising from fraud. I repeat: 14.4%. From 2004 to 2009, the number of accident claims rose by 13%. The costs for medical treatments almost more than doubled. The overall costs for examinations and assessments in Ontario increased more than 3.5 times, from nearly \$250 million in 2004 to more than \$900 million in 2009. Ontario’s average personal injury claim is \$56,000, which is five times more than any other province in Canada.

Southern Ontario, the largest insurance market in the country, has become a virtual haven for fraudsters. According to a preliminary report of the anti-fraud task force, fraudulent activity—and, in particular, premeditated and organized fraud—has been on the increase, especially in the greater Toronto area.

Mr. Speaker, all perpetrators of auto insurance fraud are working towards a common goal. What is that common goal? Profiting from a crime and stealing from the pockets of innocent and law-abiding citizens.

1540

According to the Insurance Bureau of Canada, criminal prosecutors have rarely taken on insurance fraud cases, believing there are more pressing cases to prosecute, namely violent and dangerous crimes. However, the figures have shown insurance fraud has also now become a pressing issue that needs to be addressed.

The intended impact of this bill is threefold. First, it will protect the whistle-blowers who report instances of fraud. Second, it will increase the alertness of our colleges of health professionals to issues of insurance fraud. Third, which is very important, the bill will discourage the activities of unregulated, fly-by-night health facilities.

This bill gives whistle-blowers the required protection without fearing any retaliation such as dismissal, suspension or discipline, acts of intimidation, coercion or harassment, and legal action, unless they acted maliciously or in bad faith.

Under the Regulated Health Professions Act, this bill will provide the same protection to investigators as it provides to whistle-blowers. This immunity to investiga-

tors will constitute an important and proactive step in the crackdown of fraudulent auto insurance activity.

This bill also deals with the Independent Health Facilities Act introduced in 1990 to combat the proliferation of unregulated facilities. This bill amends the Independent Health Facilities Act by requiring a licensee of a clinic to be a health practitioner or, in the case of a corporation, by requiring that only a health practitioner may own its shares. Thus, all owners of independent health facilities will now be accountable to the professional colleges that govern them. In this way, this bill aims to crack down on fly-by-night operations with little or no accountability.

Mr. Speaker, now the question is, will this bill eliminate fraud in the auto insurance industry? The answer is no. But the combined effect of the protections and measures provided in this bill will be a first step, and that is an important step forward.

We need to help those who help authorities that investigate fraud, and by protecting whistle-blowers, we will ensure that their actions will not be in vain.

Improving regulation of health clinics is also an important step by ensuring accountability, discouraging fly-by-night clinics and alerting investigators to instances of auto insurance fraud.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to hearing from other members of this House, and I hope they will support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: You know, when I first saw Bill 41 come across my desk, I was really excited to read it because of its title. I thought, “Finally, the Liberals are addressing the issue of auto insurance fraud.”

As my party’s critic for auto insurance, I’ve come to understand the scale of fraud in the system. At \$1.3 billion, auto insurance fraud costs up to 15 cents of every dollar in premiums we pay. Further, auto insurance fraud has escalated to the point of being classified as organized crime. It involves chop shop auto garages, shady tow truck drivers and networks of phony health clinics.

I have talked with my constituents and premium payers from my riding and across Ontario, and their message is clear: Auto insurance premiums are far too high. The big reason high premiums are there is because of the excessive costs of the system attributable to fraud. The member opposite rightly has acknowledged that fraud is a massive problem that needs to be addressed.

I cracked open the bill and eagerly started reading it, hoping I’d find the silver bullet to this province’s auto insurance fraud problem. I was encouraged to read the whistle-blower section of the bill because it’s vitally important to have comprehensive whistle-blower protection for those who come forward to be protected. However, as I got past that part of the bill, I became less enthused. This bill, bottom line, is ineffective; it will not reduce fraud and therefore will not reduce rates.

It is clear to me that while the member recognizes the importance of eliminating fraud, she does not have a

good idea of how to do it. I have put forward ideas since I was appointed as critic to help combat fraud, and she has not incorporated any of them.

I always encourage healthy discussion and would gladly have sat down with the member from Mississauga–Brampton South to discuss the contents of this bill. I think Bill 41 would have benefited from a healthy discussion of ideas. After all, that is what is great about this Legislature: the opportunity to exchange and debate ideas in an effort to bring forward good policy that will benefit everyone in Ontario. Sadly, this didn't happen.

There was an opportunity here to align interests and bring forth a truly bipartisan bill with some teeth to it, but unfortunately, the Liberals seem bent on rejecting any such bipartisan efforts.

So why did the member bring this ineffective bill forward? After all, Dwight Duncan told me in response to a question that I asked in December that he was not interested in moving forward with any action on auto insurance fraud until he has received the final recommendations of the anti-fraud task force.

Further, if this truly was the Liberals' silver bullet to fraud prevention, why was it introduced as a private member's bill? If the government was serious about fighting fraud, why wouldn't a cabinet minister bring this bill forward?

The fact that the Liberals have allowed this to go through the private-member route is an acknowledgment that they, like me, feel this bill is ineffective. It is also an indication that they are not really interested in fighting fraud but more interested with placating voters and scoring political points by introducing a bill with the words "fraud prevention" in it, but which lacks the meat to actually accomplish such a goal.

As an auto insurance customer, as I'm sure most of us are in this room, I am insulted by this blatant political ploy. I am interested in improving the system regardless of politics. I would be happy to work with the member. If she's really interested in addressing the underlying problems and not just scoring cheap political points with her constituents, I have some ideas that will really beef up this bill.

For instance, I am a pharmacist and a member of the pharmacy college—a regulated health profession. I know the college investigators have neither the experience nor the resources to investigate fraud. That was never their job, and requiring them to do so puts unfair pressure on them and is a sure way to allow fraud to go undetected.

The best way to investigate fraudulent activity is to have a special unit of the crown attorneys' office—similar to the fraud investigation bureaus in Britain and the United States—that would work with the IBC and be dedicated to the investigation and prosecution of fraud. As mentioned earlier, auto insurance fraud has escalated to the point of organized crime. You need people who are properly trained to investigate that. Health college investigators simply are not.

For the sake of Ontarians, let's take forward one good thing here: whistle-blower protection. Any piece of

legislation or policy going forward needs to include such protections. However, unless the rest of this bill is radically overhauled, I cannot in good conscience support it, because supporting it is just a way to score short-term political points. I owe it to the people of Ontario and my constituents to offer more than that, and that is why I will not support this bill.

1550

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: There is a number of serious issues that need to be clarified here. First and foremost, when the member from the party opposite, from the government, indicates that this government conducted a review on auto insurance reform in 2010, let's be clear on what that meant. That meant that services that the consumer received, benefits that the consumer received, went from—two categories: One was \$100,000 in terms of benefits for serious injury and \$72,000 when it was deemed to be in a secondary category. Those benefits, which were once \$100,000 and \$72,000, were slashed in half. This auto reform essentially resulted in the consumer receiving half of the benefits they usually received. Furthermore, there was a third category created, which was capped at \$3,500. From \$100,000 and \$72,000, we had a new set of criteria which resulted in benefits of \$50,000, \$36,000 and \$3,500. Essentially, we were paying the same for less than half of the service that we received.

In fact, what happened is, if you look at the overall trend in auto insurance, the auto insurance rates increased, despite the fact that auto insurance companies were paying out far less, less than half. So the attempt to reform the auto industry didn't reform the auto industry in favour of the consumer. What it did is increase the profit margin for insurance companies.

When times are difficult and families are struggling to make ends meet, that's not the correct approach to auto reform. We need to make changes to the auto insurance industry that benefit the consumer, not slash their benefits, not slash what they receive and still increase the rates. That is no auto reform, and that is no auto reform that puts the Ontario people first.

Now, the bill proposed by the member opposite hopes to address the issue of fraud. Fraud is, in fact, a relevant issue, but let's be clear on its impact on those increases that affect the consumer. In the past five years, the auto insurance rate in Ontario has increased 26%. According to the Auditor General of Ontario, the fraud cost, the fraud component of that 26% increase, is between 10% and 15%. What that means is, if we look at the overall cost that is attributed to auto insurance by addressing fraud, if there's a 26% increase in fraud over five years, that's only a 2.6% to 3.9% impact. Essentially, this bill will only affect a person's insurance rate by, at most, 3.9%.

And it can't be a direct translation. It can't be that if you cut out fraud, it will directly result in a savings for the consumer. In fact, the bill has no provision for that. If

indeed the bill is successful—and I doubt that it will be successful, given the fact that it has no real teeth—where is the guarantee that there will be a savings passed on to the consumer? Let's say that it does prevent the 10% to 15% fraud increase or the cost attributed to fraud. How do we know that that savings will be translated to the consumer? How do we know that the consumer will then receive some benefit from this, or will what happens instead be that the insurance companies would now have a 10% to 15% increase in their profit?

Again, that is not a change that benefits the consumer; that is a change that benefits the insurance company. In fact, it looks like there is a trend here. There is a trend that all the reforms on this side of the House are in favour of insurance companies and not in favour of the consumer. The consumers need a break, not the insurance companies.

If we look at the results of a profit measure which will come forward in the next month, I hope, or in the next two months, we are going to see substantial increases in profits for insurance companies, yet we're going to see further increases in rates for the consumer. That is not the direction insurance rates should be going. They need to be going down, not up.

Now, let's look at the actual nuts and bolts of this bill. Again, I actually agree very strongly with the member from from the Conservative Party and the member's remarks in respect to the fact that this bill, on the face of it, looks like it's an attempt to address auto insurance fraud.

But what does it really do? What is it really revolutionizing or what is it really increasing? What additional tools is it providing in terms of addressing fraud? To protect those who come forward to disclose fraud claims: The impact of that on reducing fraud claims is negligible. How can that assure that we can reduce fraud if we protect those who come forward?

It doesn't address the criminal element. It doesn't address the organized crime element. Those are the elements which are very clearly—in terms of those who have reported on this issue—the source of the auto insurance fraud, and that's not addressed by this. There is no attempt to address the root cause. This is simply a superficial gloss that seems to be addressing the issue but has no substance to it.

Providing a mechanism to investigate health professionals—I mean, all health professionals are governed by their regulatory bodies. Much like any other profession, there are regulating bodies. That already exists. What more is this bill providing in terms of tools—concrete tools—that will actually address the issue of auto insurance fraud?

Mr. Speaker, I think we need to re-evaluate our position with respect to auto insurance. We need to look at our goals and listen to what the people are saying. I've heard time and time again from my constituents that they are simply moving from one street to another street and seeing 50% increases in their insurance rates, just by moving from one street to another. I've heard stories

from my constituents that simply by being involved in an accident where they're not at fault, where they're the victim of an accident, they are now being told that they no longer have coverage.

We're seeing a vast amount of injustice, of unfairness going on in this industry. That's what we need to address. We need to help the people of Ontario. Again, there has to be a priority shift. Is our goal here to ensure that insurance companies increase their profit margins, or is our goal here as elected officials to represent the interests of the people and to ensure that they have the means to afford their insurance? That should be our goal. Our goal has to be the best interest of the people of Ontario.

If we look again, the trend that's going on with this government is an upward trend—like I said before, a 26% increase in auto insurance rates. There have been more than half of our benefits slashed, in terms of the consumer, and there are no steps to ensure that there will be some savings passed on to the consumer. That's where we need to shift our priorities.

I presented a bill in this House. I've asked this question a number of times and all of my focus has been on addressing the concerns of the people.

First and foremost is the geographic discrimination that occurs. This is not addressed by the member opposite's bill, and that is something that's a pressing concern: the fact that simply by living in Brampton, simply by living in Malton, simply by living in Rexdale or in York, your rates are sometimes double to 2.5 times higher than other residents who live in neighbourhoods such as Rosedale or Lawrence Park. That's simply unfair. That's what we need to address. That's a direct approach to improving the auto insurance industry, the auto insurance risk assessment to pass on some savings to consumers.

And there are those out there that need to have their rates higher. Those who are committing fraud themselves, those who are unsafe drivers, those who are dangers to the public: They deserve an increase. That makes sense. But why is it that someone who has an absolutely clean record, who is driving a reasonable car—

Interjection: A BMW.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: A person who has experience—and you know what's very interesting? The member opposite, I commend him for bringing that comment about the BMW. It's very troubling that this side of the House, their response to an issue that affects Ontario people, the fact that they're paying high insurance rates—the response from this side of the House is what type of car a member drives. That shows a complete lack of respect for this true issue, the true concern of the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Who cares what car I drive? Is that your response to the people of Ontario who say that their insurance rates are too high? Shame on all of you. Shame on all of you for saying that. I don't care—it doesn't affect me—but it affects the people of Ontario.

1600

It shows your lack of respect, it shows your lack of regard and it shows your lack of concern for their plight. It is a plight. It's a plight that people in this province are paying the highest auto insurance in the country. It's not just in Brampton. The fact that in Ontario we are paying the highest auto insurance rates in the entire country is simply wrong. Why is that the case when we have the highest population? We have the highest population in Ontario. Why are we paying the highest auto insurance rates? It's because this government has not taken the right initiative to ensure that consumers in this province are protected, and that needs to change. I, for one, am someone who will stand up for the people of Ontario and ensure that this auto insurance industry does reflect the needs of consumers and protects their interests.

I recognize the concerns that are raised by the member opposite that auto insurance fraud is a legitimate concern and must be addressed, and we will work with the industry to address that. The industry has great insight into this problem. The member opposite has some great insight into some real tools, some real substance to improving this and to rectifying this fraud issue. But in addition to that strategy, the more important strategy in this circumstance is to ensure that we have a priority shift toward the needs of the consumer and toward reducing the overall cost of auto insurance, and making the auto insurance system more transparent, more fair, more just and more affordable.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to be able to share my time with the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to support this bill. It actually speaks to three areas within the insurance industry. It doesn't claim to be a comprehensive approach to reforming auto insurance—I think that's an important issue to keep in mind.

I know and understand the issue around postal codes, but it's not a quick-fix solution. Because if you rationalize that, that means that in areas such as northern Ontario they will pay significantly higher to pick up the costs from those areas in which fraudulent claims do happen, and that too can be blatantly unfair. So you need to look at this in a far more comprehensive approach than a quick-fix solution.

I want to share with you some figures, when I asked about the issue of fraudulent claims. In 2009 alone, \$9 billion was paid out in claims and \$1.3 billion was paid to fraudulent claims, and over \$3 million alone in the GTA to fraudulent collision claims in 2010. So obviously there is a very significant concern here and something we need to be able to address.

The insurance industry has been doing that. We need to do some things, because the penalties can be, and are, loose here, but we're working together. What this bill is trying to address is how we can address at least three of the very significant issues that are going forward.

So you look at what the industry has had to deal with. In fact, they've had to deal with a change in the comprehensive benefit plan, which we spoke about. As you know, it's one of the most rich or the richest plan in Canada. It was changed from 2000; in the early to mid-1990s, it was considerably higher. It has been changed. It is making a difference. It's not alone.

Certainly, the insurance industry has had to deal with the change in the world markets as well. That's been a significant challenge for them. Automobiles themselves today, regardless of what you drive, are far more expensive to fix than they were in the past. That too leads to significantly higher costs.

What this bill is trying to do, Mr. Speaker, is just address some of those issues, not absolutely everything. It's a really good beginning. If there are amendments and opportunities to make this bill better, that's the reason you send it to committee, where we can have a really good kick at the can on how we can make things much better.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'm pleased to stand today and support the Reducing Automobile Insurance Premiums by Eliminating Fraud Act, 2012, which has been introduced by my colleague the member from Mississauga–Brampton South.

I know personally that she has been working for a long time on this issue, and I really applaud her for bringing this forward. I also thank all the other members who have contributed to this, including the members from Elgin–Middlesex–London, Bramalea–Gore–Malton and Etobicoke Centre.

The issue of affordable insurance is of paramount importance to my riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville, and I can tell you that this is a welcome bill for somebody like me and the people in my riding.

The measures in this bill are excellent measures aimed at reducing and discouraging fraud. As we all know, 14 cents on the dollar of our premium goes because of the level of fraud in Ontario, so this is a step in the right direction by providing whistle-blower protection to complainants and investigators, as well as discouraging fly-by-night health facilities.

I was a little disappointed that most of the criticism from the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London was the fact that, first, this is not a silver bullet. Well, grow up, because nothing in life really is a silver bullet; it's about incremental change.

Second, I was really disappointed that he would be so dismissive of an act that's being introduced by a private member's bill, because I really believe that that is a disservice to democracy, and I can only assume that he is also dismissive of bills being introduced as private members' bills from his side of the House. That's something to think about, because to attack a bill not on its merits but by who is introducing it is really a disservice to our democracy.

And finally, all I want to say is, this is a welcome step. It has got some of the ingredients that we need to fight fraud, and I know that constituents in my riding will be very, very pleased with this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I do want to speak for a couple minutes on Bill 41. I just have a couple of things to say. The couple of reports which I've reviewed—and our critic did a marvellous job—this interim report on fraud that has been with the government since just before Christmas—they've had time to review it—and the auto insurance regulatory oversight committee as well.

We all know that there's a lot of fraud within the system. The Insurance Bureau of Canada—I thank Ralph Palumbo for being here—has put forward some very good ideas, kind of suggesting why Ontario is lagging. They've suggested increasing the criminal and civil penalties; and a joint auto insurance industrial fund to look at investigations.

Here's the issue: Yes, we need action on fraud. Yes, we need action on whistle-blower legislation. This bill is an ineffective attempt to solve a serious problem, and they've given it to a Liberal backbencher who has really no standing whatsoever—no discredit to her.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: No discredit to her. It's not personal.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, what I mean by that—this is an important public policy, and what they've done is given it—they're using you. You belong in the front bench. You can do the health job.

My point here really is—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Member from Durham, please restrict your comments to the bill.

Mr. John O'Toole: —this is a serious matter. There are reports on it. Why isn't the Minister of Finance, who's in charge of this, standing here, protecting the people of Ontario?

Insurance, Mr. Speaker, is a tax. It's required, it's mandatory to have it and it's regulated by the province; therefore, it's a tax. We're paying more and getting less—typical Liberal policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm very happy to speak to this issue. I want to acknowledge the member from Mississauga–Brampton South for bringing it forward, because I think she understands how complex auto insurance is, how complex the issue of fraud is, and that there are no silver bullets, as the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London seemed to indicate.

We have brought in a lot of reforms, which the member for Mississauga–Brampton South spoke about, but we haven't systematically addressed the issues of fraud in the system. That's why, in July 2011, we appointed the Ontario Auto Insurance Anti-Fraud Task Force, led by

Fred Gorbet. I just want to go over the interim findings because I think it's relevant to this discussion.

The task force interim findings are these: The task force is convinced that fraud is a large and growing factor in the Ontario marketplace; secondly, that there's an unexplained and widening gap between the cost of accident benefit claims and numbers that we could normally expect to move in parallel with active benefits costs; thirdly, the cost increase appears to be concentrated in the GTA—a number of members have spoken to that anecdotally, but I think it's good to find out whether that actually is the case, and certainly, in my constituency, it's a question about why that is happening, and so the anti-fraud task force has identified that that is the case; and finally, that the fastest-growing parts of auto insurance fraud are premeditated and organized fraud rather than opportunistic fraud.

So what the report points out is that we need to have better prevention, detection, investigation and enforcement, regulatory practices, and consumer engagement and education. That's where this bill comes in, Mr. Speaker.

1610

What this bill does is it opens a dialogue. It starts a discussion about a badly understood area that I think we all need to know more about. It starts to help us have that discussion with the broader public, because we know fraud costs individuals and the public a lot of money. We've got to get at the root of it. There are initiatives that are being taken, but we know that more needs to be done. This bill would encourage individuals to come forward and is a step towards a public education process. That's why I think it's important. Auto insurance fraud is a complex problem. I think that Bill 21 is a very good first step, and I commend the member for bringing it forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: I think we all agree that we have to make insurance fraud an issue in the province of Ontario. I do agree with my colleague from Durham. I mean, this is something that should come forward as a government bill. You take a look at Bill 41, and I think our critic here on the PC side has noted quite well that it's pretty much a toothless and ineffective bill as it stands right now. There are a lot of things that could be included in this bill, and I just don't think that it does anything.

Many insurance stakeholders that I talked to in Prince Edward–Hastings described the bill as well-intentioned and toothless; that's the way they described it to me, as well. The good news, I guess, is that we do have some committees here that could possibly add some meaning and give it the tools that it needs to address insurance fraud.

I think everyone here is understanding that there is a real problem with insurance fraud, but this government hasn't seemed to realize that yet at all. It's another example of where the Premier just continues to kick this can down the road, and we've heard that several times regarding this government. They just don't want to tackle this subject seriously for some reason.

The Canadian Coalition Against Insurance Fraud stated that a third of all accident and benefit claims and a quarter of all bodily injury claims are from automobile accidents that have some element of insurance fraud. It's obviously a huge issue, and it's something that I think the House needs to take a little bit more seriously. We need a serious crackdown on these staged collisions. These fake accidents, as we've heard several times today, are a huge reason for the increased cost of insurance fraud claims here in the province of Ontario.

This is by no means a perfect bill. As many of my more experienced colleagues, like the member from Durham, have pointed out, there are rarely any perfect bills that come along. Most of them that do come along come from this side, I would tend to say.

I think that the members from the third party and definitely the members of our caucus and our critic have made some good points. There is no silver bullet, but there are many things that could be included to make this bill far more effective if it does make it to committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I don't even know where to begin. So many ridiculous things have been said.

First of all, the members opposite should actually get to know the member who brought this bill forward. You don't know her, you don't know her life story, and you don't know very much about her and why she does this. To refer to someone as a Liberal backbencher of no standing is one of the most insulting things I've heard—

Interjection: Shameful.

Hon. Glen R. Murray:—and shameful things from a party that just spent 10 minutes lecturing us on their new open, non-partisan, collaborative approach. That's unfortunate.

I would be very interested in sitting down with the member opposite to hear his ideas. There are people from the industry here whose—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. The member from Elgin–Middlesex, if you want to heckle, you'll have to go to your seat.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, thank you.

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Stop the clock. It's been really quiet all along, and everybody has been listening. I'd ask for some order.

Minister?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

People from the industry have been asking for this for quite a long time. We have a task force coming out with a comprehensive report. This does two things—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Then put a government bill out.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You know, I didn't interrupt you when any of you were speaking. I'd like the same courtesy back. Thank you.

There are folks from the industry—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Renfrew, please come to order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, there are people here from the industry who are asking for this bill. They think the whistle-blower legislation is particularly important right now. This is an industry that also thinks that the health care profession should also have a regulatory officer. These are very reasonable, practical things that are thoughtful, that represent the diverse experience—the life experience—of someone who actually understands business and hasn't spent their entire life in politics.

This is an industry that has lost about \$2 billion in the last few years, to my friends in the NDP. There's not any net profit in auto insurance right now in Ontario, and fraud is one of the problems. This is something the industry thinks—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It is.

I haven't heard one argument that either of these things are not useful at all. Everyone agrees the industry would very much like to see this. I trust the business leaders which represent the large insurance industry, as well as small entrepreneurs, think this is effective. I trust their experience.

The member has spent a lot of time talking to her constituents who are particularly concerned about this. You've got absolutely nothing to lose. If there was truly a spirit of collaboration here and non-partisanship, this should fly through quite quickly. The worst thing you have to lose: If it doesn't work, we're no further ahead.

We had this talk about the diminishment in benefits. It's the small-injury cap that is down to \$3,500, not overall. That's the challenge.

I'm going to leave a little bit of time for my friend from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Again, if there are better ideas in the party opposite, bring them forward. Hopefully your bill will get more respect than you're giving my colleague.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: I am pleased to speak to private member's bill, Bill 41, sponsored by the Liberal MPP for Mississauga–Brampton South.

Waterloo region, as you may know, has a long and proud history in the financial services and insurance industry. Today, Waterloo region is home to 12 major insurance companies like Sun Life, Manulife, Economical, Equitable, Waterloo Lutheran and Gore Mutual. Together, the major companies and the many insurance brokers employ over 7,000 people in our communities. Like the tech sector, this industry is a major contributor to our local economy.

Unfortunately, the McGuinty government sat back and watched as Ontario became home to the highest auto insurance rates in Canada and even North America. Bill 41, like most bills from the government benches, has a great name, but unfortunately the contents of this bill will do nothing to reduce auto insurance rates in Ontario. It's no secret that insurance fraud is hurting consumers, brokers and companies in Ontario. Unfortunately, this

bill falls well short of achieving its goal of reducing auto insurance rates by eliminating fraud.

I want to highlight the many problems with this bill. For example, downloading costs to health professionals and eventually taxpayers by requiring health colleges to hire investigators—this will not be effective because health colleges are non-experts in investigating fraud; forcing health practitioners to own health clinics will create a significant barrier, forcing many to leave Ontario because they just can't afford to stay; and the lack of a strong investigative unit means that whistle-blowers' complaints will not be adequately addressed. Over time, this will result in people choosing not to come forward.

I want to get auto insurance rates under control. I want to crack down on the insurance fraud that's hurting consumers and businesses. Unfortunately, this bill, as written, will not achieve these goals, which is why I cannot support it.

That said, I want to encourage the member from Mississauga–Brampton South to work with us in the opposition parties to address the weaknesses in this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: Just briefly, Mr. Speaker; it's sort of very sad to see the members opposite slugging private members' bills. I think many good bills come from private members on both sides. They say, "Well, the government should do it," but I think there's a lot to be achieved by supporting private members' bills. I know many good ones have come through this House, so it's very important to pay respect to private members' bills.

1620

With this bill here, the key component is to understand that it is an attempt to try and deal with pervasive fraud, and I'm shocked that the Conservatives are saying they're not going to support it because it's an attempt. Well, we've got to start, and this is a very good start. The key message here is that, in Ontario, the average accident benefit claim is about \$50,000. Across the rest of Canada, the average benefit claim is \$10,000. That's the crux of the issue. Why is it \$40,000 less in most other provinces than it is in Ontario?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

The member from Mississauga–Brampton South, you have two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank my colleagues for their comments on my bill: from Etobicoke Centre, Mississauga East–Cooksville, Eglinton–Lawrence, Don Valley West and Toronto Centre. I would also like to thank the members of the opposition from Elgin–Middlesex, Prince Edward–Hastings, Kitchener–Conestoga, Durham, and Bramalea–Gore–Malton. But I always wonder why the member from Durham has nothing else to do, nothing productive and positive, than to look at who's being used and who's not being used. Shame. It's a matter of shame.

The opposition's record on auto insurance is mixed at best, Mr. Speaker. It is mixed at best. When the official

opposition were in power, the inflation rate was 18% and the insurance went up by 45%. The NDP wanted to institute a system of public auto insurance and then backed down. They don't know what to do and what not to do.

The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton is talking about territorial rating. He's playing divisive politics, pitting one group of people against the other. It's dangerous, Mr. Speaker; it's dangerous. I'm proud to stand on my government's record. We are walking the walk, and we are talking the talk. This bill is an effective bill in the area of ending fraud and lowering rates and opening up the dialogue about fraudulent claims and educating the public on fraud. I hope all members support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A point of order, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted just to correct my record. In my haste to make sure that my colleagues had time to speak, I called this Bill 21, and it's actually 41. So I just wanted to correct that record.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

AFFORDABLE ENERGY AND RESTORATION OF LOCAL DECISION MAKING ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR L'ÉNERGIE ABORDABLE ET LE RÉTABLISSEMENT DE LA PRISE DE DÉCISIONS LOCALE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 19, standing in the name of Mr. Hudak.

Mr. Hudak has moved second reading of Bill 42. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a loud no.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

I think the nays have it. We will deal with the vote at the end of other business.

FAR NORTH REPEAL ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 ABROGEANT LA LOI SUR LE GRAND NORD

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka, has moved second

reading of Bill 44. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the notion, please say "nay."

I think the nays have it. We will deal with the vote at the end of regular business.

REDUCING AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE
PREMIUMS BY ELIMINATING
FRAUD ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 VISANT À RÉDUIRE
LES PRIMES D'ASSURANCE-
AUTOMOBILE PAR L'ÉLIMINATION
DES ACTIVITÉS FRAUDULEUSES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mrs. Mangat has moved second reading of Bill 41.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

I heard a nay. In my opinion, the ayes have it. Bill 41 is carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to general government.

Is that the pleasure of the House? Carried.

AFFORDABLE ENERGY
AND RESTORATION OF LOCAL
DECISION MAKING ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR L'ÉNERGIE ABORDABLE
ET LE RÉTABLISSEMENT DE LA PRISE
DE DÉCISIONS LOCALE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1626 to 1631.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All members take their seats. We'll take the vote on Bill 42.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Jackson, Rod	O'Toole, John
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Leone, Rob	Pettapiece, Randy
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	McDonnell, Jim	Smith, Todd
Elliott, Christine	McKenna, Jane	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Harris, Michael	Milligan, Rob E.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hillier, Randy	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Hudak, Tim	Nicholls, Rick	Yurek, Jeff

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please stand and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	Murray, Glen R.
Bentley, Christopher	Gravelle, Michael	Natyshak, Taras
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoskins, Eric	Oraziotti, David
Bisson, Gilles	Jaczek, Helena	Piruzza, Teresa
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Prue, Michael
Brotten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Qaadri, Shafiq
Campbell, Sarah	Leal, Jeff	Singh, Jagmeet
Cansfield, Donna H.	MacCharles, Tracy	Sorbara, Greg
Chan, Michael	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Colle, Mike	Mantha, Michael	Tabuns, Peter
Coteau, Michael	Marchese, Rosario	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crack, Grant	Mauro, Bill	Taylor, Monique
Damerla, Dipika	McMeekin, Ted	Vanthof, John
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Wong, Soo
Dhillon, Vic	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dickson, Joe	Milloy, John	
DiNovo, Cheri	Moridi, Reza	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 36; the nays are 49.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The motion is lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Please open the doors for 30 seconds.

FAR NORTH REPEAL ACT, 2012
LOI DE 2012 ABROGEANT
LA LOI SUR LE GRAND NORD

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll now take the vote on Bill 44. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Jackson, Rod	O'Toole, John
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Leone, Rob	Pettapiece, Randy
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	McDonnell, Jim	Smith, Todd
Elliott, Christine	McKenna, Jane	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Harris, Michael	Milligan, Rob E.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hillier, Randy	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Hudak, Tim	Nicholls, Rick	Yurek, Jeff

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please stand and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	DiNovo, Cheri	Moridi, Reza
Bentley, Christopher	Duguid, Brad	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gravelle, Michael	Natyshak, Taras
Bisson, Gilles	Hoskins, Eric	Oraziotti, David
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Piruzza, Teresa
Brotten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Prue, Michael
Campbell, Sarah	Kwinter, Monte	Qaadri, Shafiq
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Singh, Jagmeet
Chan, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Sorbara, Greg

Chiarelli, Bob
 Colle, Mike
 Coteau, Michael
 Crack, Grant
 Damerla, Dipika
 Delaney, Bob
 Dhillon, Vic
 Dickson, Joe

Mangat, Amrit
 Mantha, Michael
 Marchese, Rosario
 Mauro, Bill
 McMeekin, Ted
 McNeely, Phil
 Meilleur, Madeleine
 Milloy, John

Sousa, Charles
 Tabuns, Peter
 Takhar, Harinder S.
 Taylor, Monique
 Vanthof, John
 Wong, Soo
 Wynne, Kathleen O.

Ms. Witmer assumes ballot item number 23 and Mr. Yakabuski assumes ballot item number 27.

ANNUAL REPORT, PROVINCIAL
 ADVOCATE FOR
 CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 36; the nays are 50.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the 2010-11 annual report of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.

Orders of the day?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Agreed? Agreed.

This House stands adjourned until Monday the 26th at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1639.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre de Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Innovation / Ministre du Développement économique et de l'Innovation
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Milligan, Rob E. (PC) Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Reza (LIB) Munro, Julia (PC)	Richmond Hill York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Grant Crack, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Michael Harris
Rob Leone, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Bob Delaney
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Teresa Piruzza
Bob Delaney, Victor Fedeli
Cindy Forster, Monte McNaughton
Yasir Naqvi, Teresa Piruzza
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: David Oraziotti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: David Zimmer
Sarah Campbell, Michael Coteau
Joe Dickson, Rosario Marchese
David Oraziotti, Laurie Scott
Todd Smith, Jeff Yurek
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: Bill Mauro
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Donna H. Cansfield, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Jim McDonell
Phil McNeely, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Shafiq Qaadri
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Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
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Liz Sandals, Jagmeet Singh
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