



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 17 April 2012

Mardi 17 avril 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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



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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 17 April 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 17 avril 2012

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ACCEPTING SCHOOLS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 POUR
DES ÉCOLES TOLÉRANTES

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 4, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to bullying and other matters / Projet de loi 13, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui a trait à l'intimidation et à d'autres questions.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you, Speaker, and good morning. It is a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 13. I'm happy to rise today and to comment on such an important issue.

As we know, over the last number of years, the need for serious anti-bullying initiatives in Ontario has become particularly urgent, and as a parent, I've seen it first-hand. I've seen it with my peers, my friends as they talk about what they have to deal with in the school system, and so I'm pleased, actually, that we're trying to bring forward some legislation here that will try to deal with it.

Therefore, let me say that I must commend both the Minister of Education and my colleague from Kitchener for bringing forth legislation. It is clearly an attempt on both of their parts—and I know that my colleagues in the NDP caucus have also been active on it—to try to deal with an issue that is not an easy fix. I think if we've seen one thing in this debate, it's that there is no easy fix for how we're going to deal with bullying in our schools, in our society.

Much to my and I think every other parent's frustration, bullying seems to have mutated in recent years to something far more vicious than any of us would have been used to or seen when we went through the school system. It's truly saddening to consider the many new forms of torment that children are suffering and do suffer at the hands of a bully, particularly as we widen our social circles with Facebook and other electronic forms of communication, which, while they have a benefit of widening our circle of interest, also have an ability to—

how shall I say?—do the pile-on very quickly, and that's where bullying has taken on a very different form in today's society.

The very word “bully” used to be associated with lost lunch money and broken sandcastles. Of course, now we know of far too many examples where it has a much more sinister association. Cyberbullying, text threats, vicious beatings and highly hateful discrimination are now commonly associated with bullying, and rightfully so, Speaker, because these heinous things do occur and bullying does often reach these extremes. While awareness of this fact is critical, it's also equally imperative that action complements awareness. The members of this House, Speaker, must act to combat bullying in our schools and make sure that every Ontario child is happy going to school in the morning and as well when they are coming home in the afternoon.

I think it's fitting at this time to take note of one member in particular who has worked very hard to both raise awareness about and put an end to bullying in our schools. The member of which I speak, of course, is Elizabeth Witmer, the MPP for Kitchener–Waterloo. As a former teacher, board chair, critic and Minister of Education, Mrs. Witmer has brought a great deal of wisdom and expertise to this debate on bullying, and I would urge, encourage in any way possible, that we incorporate and we listen to that depth of knowledge that we have sitting on this side.

Simply because we are on this side of the House does not mean that we do not have any ideas, and if there is an example of it right now, it is the private member's bill that Mrs. Witmer took three years to debate, to discuss, to have consultation with before she was prepared to put it into the chamber and debate. I guess I am disappointed that the Minister of Education hasn't accepted that offer of assistance, accepted that offer of help from the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, because I think there's a lot to be gained there, and it is not for a partisan reason. It is not for a political gain. It is, quite frankly, because she wants to help and because she wants to make it better for all students in our school system.

Before the constituency week, we heard the member from Nepean–Carleton, our education critic, relate some terribly heart-wrenching stories of her friends, the Hubley family, who tragically lost their son Jamie to the senseless, heartless persecution that too often characterizes bullying today. Speaker, as my friend and fellow member said so graciously, we owe it to the Hubleys and every family in Ontario touched by these cruel actions to prevent these kinds of tragedies from ever occurring

again. After hearing the story of Jamie and the many other children who suffer needlessly, I'd be shocked if there was even one member left in this chamber who thought Ontario students don't need legislation preventing that kind of brutality.

This brings me to the legislation before us. About four months ago, there were two competing bills introduced in this chamber back to back. The Liberal government introduced Bill 13, and the PC opposition, through the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, introduced Bill 14. While these bills are greatly different in their approach, they were born of the same positive and noble intention, namely that never again in our province should a student feel so isolated, so alone, so depressed as a result of bullying that they should do the unthinkable and take their own life. It is unfortunate, Speaker, that, yes, there may be some extreme cases, and the fact that if even one of these tragedies occurs, that we didn't try to prevent it. If there was ever a time or a subject to unite, to unify the provinces in this chamber, this should be it.

I've studied both bills and I've listened to the competing arguments and I have great respect for the authors of both bills for their passion, their enthusiasm and their dedication. But in my mind, Bill 14 takes a more comprehensive approach to eliminating bullying once and for all across Ontario. It is for this reason that I honestly believe Bill 14 is a superior bill to the one that we are debating here this morning, and I really do hope that there will be a—how shall I say?—meeting of the minds so that we can incorporate some of the positive ideas that my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo has brought forward in her Bill 14, to be incorporated or replaced into Bill 13.

For example, in Bill 14, the definition of the actual word “bullying” is more thorough than in Bill 13, since it focuses on what constitutes bullying and how it affects the victim. I feel this is a more radical approach as opposed to focusing on the reason for bullying, which is relative.

Bill 14, by design, includes all conceivable reasons a child may be bullied. Moreover, it also takes into account the wide-ranging effects bullying has on the victim, the bully themselves, the school environment, the education process and the family.

This comprehensive nature is also reflected in Bill 14's specific focus on cyberbullying, something Bill 13 is lacking. In today's day and age, we are constantly exposed to information 24 hours a day, and no one more so than our children. While this is often touted as a benefit of modern society, the dark side of this connectivity is that it means bullying can often become a 24-hour affair that very quickly escalates and gets out of control.

Bill 13 mentions cyberbullying in passing; however, it comes to nowhere near the thoroughness of Bill 14's definition, which defines cyberbullying as creating an anonymous webpage, impersonating another person, communicating material to more than one person or posting material on an electronic medium that can be accessed by more than one person.

After reviewing Bill 13, I've noted it requires school boards to issue biannual surveys to students in order to

collect information on the success of boards' policies and plans. This information, however, is for internal board use only. I guess what frustrates me is that it seems to be another process-oriented idea where we have more paperwork and more surveys to fill out, and yet we're not actually dealing with the issue faced in front of us.

I know that my time is coming to a close, but it does remind me of another issue that we have before the chamber, and that, of course, is the frustration where we are trying to get into the process of what is happening at Ornge. For that reason, I must call for adjournment of the debate until we get the select committee on Ornge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin–Caledon has requested adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those not in favour, say “no.”

I believe the noes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 0913 to 0943.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask all members to take their seats. Order. I'd ask all members to take their seats.

Ms. Jones has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour will rise and remain standing to be counted.

All those opposed will please rise and remain standing to be counted.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 28; the nays are 36.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I declare the motion lost.

Further debate?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Oh, are you? Okay.

Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It sounds like you're suffering from the same voice issue others are.

It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this bill. I certainly would ask both my friends from the Liberal Party and my friends from the Progressive Conservatives that they work together so that we can see this bill moving forward, because that's what their children need. This is not about us. This is about our children, and this is about the safety of our children in our schools. We should be together at committee looking at both bills. There are strengths in both.

I also want to take this opportunity to give a shout out to the trans community, who had a historic victory yesterday in the Supreme Court of Ontario, who ruled that they do not have to have sex-reassignment surgery to be considered a trans person. That's good. We have more work to do on that file.

But here's the bullying bill. The bullying bill needs to move forward. Unfortunately, because of other issues pressing, it's not. I would hope that both the minister,

who brought in Bill 13, and of course the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, Liz Witmer, who brought in Bill 14, could get together and speak and make this happen. That's my ardent wish, and my ardent wish is the wish of the LGBT community, and it is the wish of our schools, including OECTA, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association. Shout outs to them, because everyone who is concerned about our children is concerned about their safety.

We need something in place by September. To get it in place by September we need to get it to committee now. That's our fervent belief in the New Democratic Party, and Andrea Horwath's fervent belief. We hope that both the members opposite and the members next to us share in that belief for the future of our students. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The Minister of Education.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Thank you very much, Speaker. I want to use my time that I have to speak today to encourage my friends on the opposite side of the House to join with us in our endeavour to see this bill passed so that we can have it in place in schools before September.

We are committed to working with our colleagues in opposition to make this legislation as strong as possible. I'm pleased to tell this House that I have been in touch with MPP Witmer. I have sent her a letter with a long list of items that we'd like to include in the Accepting Schools Act from Bill 14. But I want to be clear that it is imperative that the procedural games in the House end so that this bill can go to committee, so that we can hear from Ontarians, so that we can see this legislation in our schools in September.

Ontario students depend on us in this Legislature to be responsible, to understand that they need to be safe in our schools, to make this bill as strong as possible. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that we're absolutely committed to doing that. Both bills raise important, important issues, and we look forward to working. But I do want to say that it is absolutely critical that we acknowledge that Bill 13 speaks widely to the issues that students face in our schools.

I just want to take the last moments that I have to read a section from the preamble, just so that Ontarians watching today will know what the bill is about: "Recognize that a whole-school approach is required and that everyone—government, educators, school staff, parents, students and the wider community—has a role to play in creating a positive school climate, preventing inappropriate behaviour such as bullying, sexual assault, gender-based violence and incidents based on homophobia."

We believe that all students have the right to have a school climate that is safe and accepting for us. That's what Bill 13 speaks to. I hope that we will be able to see this debate conclude and move on and get this bill in our schools to where it needs to be so that Ontario students are protected.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the member from Dufferin–Caledon. I think she brought a very balanced commentary to Bill 13, paying respect, of course, to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo on Bill 14. It's in that spirit of co-operation that I think both sides of the House are trying to move forward to end bullying. But even the tone this morning of the Minister of Education, who's here, the ultimatum kind of minister I call her—she's given that same thing to the teacher unions, the sort of "my way or the highway"—that's sort of like a bullying culture that I'm starting to pick up. I think it's critical that she says that we do have this in place, but she's not really clearly explaining the motive for the procedural wrangling here.

0950

The government and the opposition passed a motion in this House that there would be a select committee. That select committee would be on Ornge. Now, she's leaving the impression that this is about Bill 13. It's not about that at all. It's about Ornge and the waste and scandalous spending on an issue; we insist there be a select committee.

For the clarification of the minister trying to leave the impression that procedural wrangling here was based on Bills 13 and 14, it's not at all. It's based on the inability of the Liberal government, under Premier McGuinty, to deal fairly with the people. In fact, on that bill there, they're bullying us. They really are. They won't have a select committee. They're using all sorts of procedural standing order issues, with their House leader carrying the sword.

But getting back to Bill 13, I would put on the table that we all respect the fact that there should be opposition totally to any form of bullying. That's a given. We have to find a compromise here to make this happen, and I would put on the table the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' document Respecting Difference. I think that's a very good starting point, that we could have an agreement and move forward, as the minister suggests we should.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm glad to be here this morning and I want to congratulate the member from Dufferin–Caledon on her 10-minute thoughts on the anti-bullying Bill 13.

In her speech, she recognized the efforts of the Minister of Education and also the efforts of the member for Kitchener–Waterloo. I think recognizing the fact that two members have brought the same concerns over the same issue should make us think that we need to work together on this bill, improving Bill 13. I think Bill 14, which the member from Kitchener–Waterloo brought forward, has a lot of valid points and I think they really need to be looked at when it goes to committee—Bill 13—to incorporate some of these great ideas.

We also, the NDP, the New Democrats, have a lot of feedback that we can offer into Bill 13.

Bullying, of course, has come from the time when we went to school, escalated to the time that it is here today.

One of those things is the cyberbullying, and cyberbullying needs to be addressed, which is one of the items in Bill 14 that was brought forward. I think that's something that really needs to be looked at. Bullying under cyberbullying is basically a faceless act and it can hurt. Words sometimes hurt more than actions for children.

So I encourage the government to work together. This, to me, is the purest of issues, a nonpartisan issue. We all have children, we all have family that we certainly don't want this to have a negative impact on—bullying. So to make this a better environment in our schools, let's work together in the House so that we can set the tone that we are going to work together to help eliminate bullying.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the members from High Park, Durham, London–Fanshawe and the minister.

I must focus my comments on what the minister chose to speak of. She used words like “have this bill passed,” “procedural games.” Well, quite frankly, Minister, those procedural games are us making our point. They are clearly laid out in the standing orders. We have every right to do it. It's called the will of the Legislature. We voted to ensure that Ornge go to a select committee and to start looking at what the issues are. We need to find out what is going on at Ornge. And the fact that you're using “procedural games” as your response to Bill 13 and Bill 14, I find quite offensive.

What I would like to see is for the minister to stand up and say what kind of discussions she's had with the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. You don't need to send a letter. She's right there. You could actually have a meeting and have a meeting of the minds, because there are some excellent ideas in Bill 14. If you would only open your ears and listen instead of only talking and saying, “We must do it this way because we're Liberals and we're the smart ones”—it doesn't work that way. We're legislators; we all come here with good ideas. If you would start listening instead of just talking, you might actually come forward with some positive suggestions and we could solve this issue.

You and I are both mothers, and we know what's happening in our classrooms, we know what's happening in our arenas, in our communities, and for heaven's sakes, let's try to solve it. And you need to solve it not by writing letters but by actually sitting down and talking to someone who has done the research, who has spoken to the school boards, who has spoken to the principals and the schools and the parents, and I just wish you would do that now.

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

Mr. Todd Smith: It's an honour to rise today to speak to Bill 13. I'd like to congratulate the member from Dufferin–Caledon and her passion when it comes to this issue and the fact that what the Minister of Education said was completely bogus and did not deal at all with what we've been fighting for, which is a select commit-

tee on Ornge. That's something that the government has ignored, despite the fact that the Minister of Health, on probably 12 or 15 different occasions in this House, said she would do what the will of the House was and we would move forward with a select committee on Ornge. I'll get back to Ornge in a moment.

I have listened with great interest as several of my colleagues have risen in the House to speak both to this bill and to Bill 14, which the House passed some three weeks ago, four weeks ago, something like that. There has been a lot of contentious debate in the House on this issue; there are a lot of good reasons and bad reasons for that. On an issue like bullying, that impacts our kids every day at school, this shouldn't be a contentious issue here in the Legislature, but it has become that way because of the political games that have been played by the current government.

I have no doubt that there are members of every party in the House who are genuinely interested in combating the bullying epidemic. There are a lot of parents who are here in the House and have been speaking on this. There are a lot of former teachers who are here and know the situation in our schools. Madam Speaker, I remember listening to the member for Trinity–Spadina in the House just a couple of weeks ago as he gave a rather passionate analysis of both bills alongside each other and which one had nothing in it—the government bill—and which one was comprehensive, and that would be Bill 14, put forward by my colleague here in the Progressive Conservative caucus, Elizabeth Witmer, from Kitchener.

It has been speeches like the one given by the member from Trinity–Spadina that show that there is a difference between these two bills, and there is a very serious matter at hand here that has to be dealt with. There are three-plus years', or two-plus years', anyway, worth of research and thought that went into the bill that Liz Witmer put forward, and I don't know how much went into the bill that the current government has put forward, but by the flimsy nature of it, it doesn't seem like a lot has gone into it.

When the issues are big enough and pervasive enough, we are actually capable of overcoming our differences in this House, and we have many differences, and that's obvious.

What is discouraging to me is that this bill is rather typical of the way the government has crafted policy over much of the last eight years. This government has used policy as a way of saying that some people in Ontario are just a little more important than others. Nobody on the other side seems willing to say why a kid who's bullied because of their weight or a kid who's bullied because of their race or religion or economic class is any less worthy of special protection or special designation by the government. That's because they aren't; all kids should be treated as equals.

When you're a parent, as I am of two young daughters, and your kid is being bullied, which one of my daughters was in school, you want to do everything you can to protect them. You want them to be safe at school.

You want them to be safe on the school bus when they're on their way to school. Unfortunately for my daughter, when she was in grade 1, she didn't have that safety. She was bullied. And she's a wonderful, normal young girl who did absolutely nothing to provoke any kind of bullying, but that's the nature of bullying. Sometimes it doesn't need a reason or an excuse. So it's very frustrating to me to see the way that the political games are being played with this legislation right now. Why not go with the best bill possible to give the teachers and the educators and the administrators the weapons and the information and the tools that they need to combat bullying in our schools?

1000

It's inconceivable to me and to any parent that someone wouldn't see their child the way a mom or dad sees them. Of course, as I sit here as a father of two, I can't understand why other people wouldn't see that these are children and they need to be protected.

As I said in my past speakings here in the Legislature, I'm a long-time coach of young people, young girls in particular, when it comes to hockey and, in the past, soccer and baseball. We teach them to stand up for themselves. We give them confidence, and I think the same thing should be happening in our schools right now. They need to have the tools at their disposal, the administrators and teachers and the principals, to ensure that our children are safe and that they are given the space that they need to thrive in our schools.

As I said, Madam Speaker, this is not atypical of the way, though, that this government does business by and large here in this House. The people in this House have heard me talk about Prince Edward county in the past, which is in my riding. The county is the perfect example of exactly how divisive this government's policies are. For some reason, when we're talking about power projects, the citizens in Mississauga are just a little bit more important to this government and worthy of more protection than the citizens of Prince Edward county are. We saw that illustrated perfectly in the last election. Even in the county itself, the project has proven to be an instrument of division there. There are families in the county that go back to the 18th century. In parts of the county, knowing someone's last name is often enough to know if their family is from South Marysburgh or Sophiasburgh ward. As it has with this bill, though, the government has used policy as an instrument of division, and that's what it's aimed to be: an instrument of division in this House.

It's hard, Madam Speaker, for me to stand up in the House and lend any support to legislation whose chief accomplishment is to tell one group of people that they're more important and more deserving of protection than another group of, in this case, children. All kids are worthy of protection from bullies.

In the Quinte region, we've been fortunate to have some great parents who stepped up and made this an issue for our community. What we're here to do, and I believe that every member of the House has an interest in this, is to ensure that we're not here again any time soon

to discuss a tragedy like one that my friend the member from Nepean-Carleton spoke about a few weeks ago, when she discussed what happened to the young figure skater named Jamie Hubley. I legitimately believe that there is a genuine interest on behalf of everyone in this House to prevent another kid and another family from going through that kind of ordeal.

I do know that back in the Quinte region today, administrators at the Hastings and Prince Edward school board have formed a partnership with the Hastings and Prince Edward Learning Foundation. They're actually having an anti-bullying symposium for all the secondary schools in our region. Tonight, they're having a cyber-parenting 101, which is parenting the always-on generation, which infers the fact that our kids are always on because they're always on the Internet, it seems, and there's a lot of cyberbullying going on there, of course. The special presentation is taking place tonight at Quinte Secondary School for parents from 7 until 9. Then tomorrow, there's actually a symposium that's taking place at Quinte Secondary School for students and staff in partnership with the learning foundation as well, and it's taking place all day tomorrow from 8:30 until 5. The keynote address there is "Virtual World-Real Consequences" by Bill Belsey, who's the president of the bullying.org site on the Internet and cyberbullying.org as well.

As I say, it is an important issue that is being dealt with at the local level by parents, by our Hastings and Prince Edward Learning Foundation and by our school board. But what we need to do here in the Legislature of Ontario is get this legislation passed so that we can actually get things moving in the right direction and give the administrators the tools that they need.

That's why I insist that Bill 14 is the right way to go. It's a far more comprehensive anti-bullying bill. It focuses on prevention, accountability and awareness. Bill 14, put forward by Liz Witmer, provides students, parents and educators with a strategy to raise awareness and prevent bullying, as well as the process to resolve it. It also collects data and reports to the ministry. The Liberal bill, unfortunately, does none of these things. That's why we need to see some real action by the Minister of Education and Liz Witmer in merging Bills 13 and 14 and putting them together in one large, comprehensive bill that can actually do the job that all of us I think believe is the appropriate thing to do, and that's do what we can to end bullying in our schools.

Madam Speaker, I'd also like to tell the House quickly about Mary. She's a 10-year-old at Parkdale public school who took her campaign against bullying to the local press. The Belleville Intelligencer did a story about a month ago as this whole debate was starting. Mary was picked on because some other kids thought she was a tomboy. She actually went into a washroom at the school and pulled down her pants so the other kids could see that she wasn't a boy and she was in fact a girl. These are the kinds of things that are occurring in our schools and these are the kinds of things that need to come to an end quickly.

We also need to get an end to this whole Ornge debacle. We need to form a select committee and have it formed now, and that's why I am moving adjournment of the debate.

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

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1007 to 1015.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Mr. Smith has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour will please rise and be counted by the Clerk.

Those opposed, please rise until counted.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 14; the nays are 36.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I declare this motion lost.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very pleased today to introduce a good friend of mine and a colleague from the region of Durham, Dave Ryan, the mayor of Pickering. Welcome, Dave, to Queen's Park.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm pleased to welcome to the Legislature today Mr. Robert Alexander, the father of page William Alexander from École L'Heritage in St. Catharines. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to inform the members that we have with us today in the Speaker's gallery the Honourable Carmel Tebbutt, member of Parliament from the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, Australia. Please welcome the former Deputy Premier.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now I would also ask all members to join me in welcoming this group of legislative pages serving in the first session of the 40th Parliament. Could you please assemble?

Noah Alcantara-Aquino, from Newmarket-Aurora; William Alexander, from St. Catharines; Vincent Arff, from Ajax-Pickering; Shaumik Baki, from Windsor West; Brady Doyle, from Durham; Gillian Giovannetti, from Vaughan; Katarina Jakobsh, from Trinity-Spadina; Georgia Koumantaros, from Toronto-Danforth; Carley Maitland, from Wellington-Halton Hills; Ranbir Mangat, from Bramalea-Gore-Malton; Manak Mann, from Brampton-Springdale; Sarah McPherson, from Thunder

Bay-Atikokan; Andrew Mohan, from Thornhill; Talin Mooradian, from Simcoe North; Dia Mukherjee, from Etobicoke Centre; Shanice Nazareth, from Scarborough Centre; Jenny Peng, from Scarborough-Agincourt; Sabrina Schaly, from Parry Sound-Muskoka; Constantine Ttofas, from Scarborough-Guildwood; Safa Warsi, from Markham-Unionville.

These are our new pages for this session.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finally, in the Speaker's gallery today are friends from the riding of Brant: Mr. Vince Bucci and his wife, Carol Bucci; Mr. Lance Calbeck; Mr. George Whibbs; and a great Canadian actor and my theatre arts teacher in grade 12, David Fox. We welcome you. You can all tell how well I'm acting. It's all an act.

Mr. Rob Leone: Break a leg.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Break a leg. The member from Cambridge, come to order. For those who didn't hear, he asked me to break a leg.

It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question today is to the Premier. Premier, as you know, your approach on this recent budget was a very weak response to a jobs crisis in the province of Ontario. It actually increases spending and drives the deficit up.

Yesterday, when I asked you about the debt trap that you're walking into, you said to me in Hansard that, "In fact, we cut \$17.7 billion." Can you point to me the exact page where you outline your \$17.7 billion in cuts?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: In fact, there is an entire addendum devoted to that very subject, and I'd recommend that to my honourable colleague.

I want to put something else on the table here. It occurs to me that when the good people of Ontario voted at the time of the last election, they voted in favour of a minority government. And it occurs to me that at that point in time, they also placed a heavy responsibility on all of us to work together on their behalf. I would say to my honourable colleague that he's coming very close—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It would seem to me that the responsibility that has been vested in each and every one of us is to find a way to make this government work for the people of Ontario. I can say that the NDP are making a sincere effort in that regard. I say to my honourable colleague he is not, and I leave it to him to tell the people of Ontario why it is he's not prepared to work in a sincere way with this government on this budget.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, you know this as well as I. You and I sat down across the table on November 8—it wasn't two sword lengths apart, it was two feet apart—and I laid out our positive vision for job creation in the province of Ontario, a pro-growth, pro-jobs agenda to make Ontario number one again. I laid out our plan to reduce spending in the province, to get back to balance. Premier, you didn't even think about it. You rejected every single proposal at the table that day, November 8, so I'm trying here in question period.

You just said to me, Premier, that the \$17.7 billion in cuts are in the addendum to the Ontario 2012 budget. I have this document; I've read through the document in total. I found a total of \$1 billion in savings. Can you point to me where the missing \$16 billion is, or is there a page you didn't include in the document that you yourself pointed out? Where's the \$17 billion?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Since the leader of the official opposition has withdrawn from any sincere effort to improve the budget, I would submit that he has forfeited his right to criticize the budget. Either you want to work with us to improve the budget as part of a collaborative process on behalf of the people of Ontario—either you're inside making it better or outside throwing stones. You can't have it both ways.

Interjections.

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

Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, I've now asked you two questions on what you said yesterday, which was "\$17.7 billion" in spending cuts. Premier, we need to trust your word. The problem is, what you said is not in keeping with the facts. Twice now, you have failed to indicate where these cuts are, because in reality that is not the case, Premier. You don't have these savings; you found barely \$1 billion in this book. And I'll tell you, 38 of the proposals in this addendum—38, sir—have no savings whatsoever; seven have no costing at all for the entire three-year plan.

Premier, this is a meagre, sad, weak attempt to try to balance the books of the province of Ontario, and I will make no apologies for standing up for Ontario families who sent us here to get spending under control and promote jobs in the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

1040

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

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, again I say to my honourable colleague that he is abdicating a very important responsibility that he owes Ontario families, which is to find a way to work in a collaborative spirit with our government to improve the budget insofar as the shortcomings that he perceives to be found in it.

We've received support of none other than Ernie Eves, former Premier; Janet Ecker, former finance minister; the Royal Bank of Canada, the Toronto Dominion Bank, Scotiabank, Dominion Bond Rating Service, BMO Nesbitt Burns, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. I say to my honourable colleague, provide us with his list of those reliable financial organizations, banks and economic analysts who say that our budget doesn't go far enough. We'd love to get that list from my honourable colleague.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tim Hudak: I don't know, Speaker, if the Premier has failed to read the budget in its entirety or if he was telling us things yesterday that are not, in fact, in keeping with the truth.

Premier, you've indicated \$17.7 billion in cuts. They're not—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'll withdraw, Speaker.

We think it's important for the Premier to be accurate with the facts. The Premier describes forgone spending as savings. It's like going to the store looking to go on a wild spending spree of \$1,000, buying only \$200 and claiming that you saved \$800. It's a false analogy. No wonder we're in such trouble in the province of Ontario, Speaker, if that's the kind of math that the Premier is bringing to the table.

Let me ask you something further. The Drummond report, which you commissioned and then shortly put on the shelf, said on page 139 that each ministry and agency should be given a spending limit for the period that's projected to get back into balance, basically a ministry-by-ministry spending restraint plan until 2017-18. That was page 139 of the report.

Premier, can you point to what page in your own budget this Drummond recommendation is carried out in totality?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, again I say to my honourable colleague that he has forfeited his right to criticize this budget because he refuses to be part of a positive, collaborative—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I believe we've gotten into a regular habit of simply saying, "I'll ask the question and then shout him down." I would ask the members to listen to the answer.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, again I say to my honourable colleague, if he had any sincere determination to live up to his responsibility, which I feel he owes to Ontario families and Ontario businesses, then he would engage us in a positive, collaborative process in the way that we've been engaged with the leader of the third party for some time now. We may not agree on

everything, but I am convinced that when we work together, we can, in fact, find some common ground.

I say again to my honourable colleague, in the eyes of Ontario families, he has forfeited his right to criticize the budget because he's not prepared to be involved in a collaborative, productive process.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, Speaker, a brand new defence: If the Premier can't or simply won't answer my question, suddenly he says I have no right to ask these questions. Sir, I have a right to stand here to ask these questions to hold you accountable on behalf of the people who pay these bills.

So let me try again, Premier. If you say that it's actually a strong budget when, in fact, it is a very weak approach, please show me where you actually have your plan as Mr. Drummond called for. As you know, budget 2012 only has ministry-by-ministry lines for one year. Then you go into general categories, including a vague "other programs." Then, as of 2015, you actually have no numbers whatsoever. So not only is there no path towards balancing the budget; you don't even leave any bread crumbs for us to follow.

Premier, this is a weak response. Prove me wrong. Show me exactly where these ministry-by-ministry reductions take place through the balance of 2017.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague made it clear from the get-go that he was going to stand in opposition to this budget. He made that statement before he in fact had read the budget, Speaker.

Let me tell you what he's going to be voting against. He's going to be voting against ending subsidies that we can no longer afford for horse racing and the ONTC. He's voting against closing underutilized jails. He's voting against selling off government buildings that we no longer need and reducing our office space by one million square feet. He's voting against slowing down some capital projects and cancelling others. He's voting against freezing compensation costs, which saves us \$6 billion over three years. Those are the kinds of specific measures that he decided, a long time ago, that he's going to oppose, rather than participate in a productive, collaborative process on behalf of Ontario families with our government.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Let me ask one last time, Premier—I've asked five times—for you to point out to me in your budget document exactly where your path to balance is. I'll repeat: Mr. Drummond said he wanted a line-by-line, ministry-by-ministry reduction for 2017. Now, I know that you've rejected the vast majority of the spending recommendations from Mr. Drummond, the restraint; Mr. Drummond's report went on the shelf pretty quick. I think you should do this. I think this should be in the budget. I think you should tell us exactly how you're going to get to balance.

The problem is, Premier, after 2014, you have no plan. It disappears into the fog, into the abyss. How can we

vote for a budget that has no plan to balance the books, no plan to create jobs? We stand for jobs, we stand for balancing the books, and that's where we stand on behalf of the people in the province of Ontario. Why don't you?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think it would be helpful were we to distill this to its essence. My honourable colleague is proposing we proceed with tax cuts we can't afford, tax cuts for corporations, and he would prefer to take that money out of our schools and our health care. That's not a choice that we support. That's not a choice that is supported by Ontario families. So we're going to protect full-day kindergarten, we're going to protect smaller classes, and we're going to protect our 30% off tuition grant. We're going to protect our standing as having the shortest surgical wait times in the country. We're going to protect our plan to move ahead with more home care for our seniors.

That's a fundamental choice that we are making. We stand for better schools, we stand for better health care, because that's where Ontario families stand.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The Premier has stated that our ideas for the budget will add to the deficit. I just want to know if he can provide the figures or any accounting to back up his claim.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, we can, but let's just understand. First of all, I want to once again thank my honourable colleague for engaging in a positive, collaborative process.

But my honourable colleague has proposed that we increase spending for child care, that we increase spending for home care, that we increase spending for hospitals, that we maintain our subsidy for the ONTC, that we maintain our subsidy for horse racing, and that we move ahead with an expensive tax benefit for home heating fuel, which, by the way, would benefit wealthiest Ontarians the most. When you add up all that list, we're talking about something that will, in fact, compromise our plan to balance the budget. These are new expenses. I say to my honourable colleague, we need to find a way to offset her proposals for new spending.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, we've been pretty up front about our plans and how we'd pay for them. We worked with economists and we used tools from StatsCan to ensure as accurate projections as possible. We worked very hard at that. In fact, the Minister of Finance agreed with our numbers before he started disagreeing with them.

So, can the Premier actually back up his claims?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think that there's a lot of common ground. For example, my honourable colleague recommended—and I think with good reason—that we not proceed with further corporate tax cuts at this point in time. I think that's sensible. In fact, that's something which the PCs did, I believe back in 2002, when they put

the brakes on further corporate tax reductions, given the economy of the time.

I'm sure my honourable colleague supports our determination to protect our schools and to protect our health care. I'm sure she believes that she will support our determination to move ahead with the Ontario child benefit.

But one of the concerns that I have, when I have yet to hear my colleague pronounce herself on this matter, is, does she support our public sector pay freeze? Because we can't balance our budget unless we realize the savings that come from a public sector pay freeze.

1050

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, nobody, from the Supreme Court to their own budget czar, Don Drummond, believes that those kinds of things work, so the Premier can keep climbing that tree if he wants, but we know that it doesn't work.

Nonetheless, we have heard from thousands of everyday Ontarians and they want to see balanced books in this province. There's no doubt about it. But they also want to see balanced plans to get there.

Now, around the world, governments are looking to the people who can afford to pay a little bit more so they can spare everyday families even more pain. In the US, President Obama has been very clear that addressing growing inequality and tax fairness is a key to America's recovery. I think it's the same thing here in Ontario. Does the Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would caution my honourable colleague against comparing tax systems in other parts of the world with those to be found here in Ontario. Again, I would say to my honourable colleague as well that a very, very important aspect of our budget is the pay freeze that we're going to put on our public sector compensation. We're going to negotiate. We're going to negotiate firmly and fairly with our partners—our teachers, our doctors and those broadly in the public sector. Should we fail to arrive at a collective agreement that is in keeping with our plans, then we will not hesitate to take action in this very Legislature.

But I say to my honourable colleague, it's very important that Ontarians know exactly where she stands on this score. Is she or is she not in favour of a public sector pay freeze?

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. We put forward some pretty simple proposals to make this budget better. There is a modest income tax increase of two percentage points for Ontarians making more than half a million dollars, but there's a tax cut on home heating costs for Ontarians struggling to make ends meet.

So let me ask, does the Premier stand with millionaires or with folks struggling to pay their heating bills?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I say to my honourable colleague—and I ask her to take note that there may be at least some modicum of incoherence in terms of the two proposals that she has just talked about. She says, on the one hand, we need to tax the rich. But now we need to create a tax benefit when it comes to home heating costs that will disproportionately benefit the rich.

Who's got the biggest homes? Who's got the biggest fuel bills? It happens to be the rich. So I'm trying to reconcile these proposals here. On the one hand, we're going to tax the rich. On the other hand, we're going to give a disproportionate benefit to the rich.

I think what we need to do is to look to those places where we have in fact some common ground. We need to make sure, should we introduce new spending, that we can offset that against something else.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, what this Premier doesn't get is who has got the hardest time paying their bills in this province. That's what he doesn't get.

Our proposal protects essential services that this budget would cut, like hospitals and child care services. It will create savings by capping skyrocketing CEO salaries and extending whistle-blower protection. It creates jobs by rewarding job creators with a tax credit instead of no-strings-attached giveaways. It includes strategic considerations for the north and for stabilization of hard-hit industries. If you take our modest tax increase for the super-rich and set it against these real-world priorities, there are \$30 million in fact left to spare. So will the Premier stand with the hard-hit or with the super-rich?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I ask, why does my honourable colleague want to benefit, to use her language, the super-rich with taking the HST off home-heating fuel? Again, the people with the biggest homes, the people with the biggest fuel bills, are those super-rich. So I would ask my honourable colleague to take a look at the incoherence to be found among her very own proposals. I think we've got lots of common ground and I think we've got to make sure that we offset any new spending by finding some spending reductions inside the budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's disappointing that the Premier can't seem to see beyond the biggest homes when what we care about is the smaller homes, the people in everyday homes. That's the thing that we're worried about.

Our numbers are clear: We can bring some fairness to this budget without adding a single red cent to the deficit. Our priorities are clear. For the province to be financially secure, Ontario families must be feeling financially secure.

So one more time to the Premier: Do you stand by a budget that prices parents out of work, that cuts support to our most vulnerable neighbours, cuts local health care and does nothing for the 550,000 Ontarians looking for

work, or will you stand with New Democrats to bring a little more fairness to hard-working Ontarians?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I could not possibly support a budget the likes of which my honourable colleague just described, so instead we've introduced our own budget, which is markedly different from the one that she just described.

The fact of the matter is that we're going to achieve three overriding objectives on behalf of Ontarians. People know that we need to balance the budget, and we're taking until 2017-18 to do that. I think families in particular want us to protect their schools and their health care, and our budget takes great pains to achieve that objective as well. The other thing that we need to do, Speaker, is strengthen this economy. We do that with a specific commitment to 170,000 jobs. We're talking about a multi-billion-dollar jobs and prosperity fund to be informed by our new jobs and prosperity council.

We look forward to working with our honourable colleague in terms of shaping that up, but I think we're doing exactly what needs to be done.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Peter Shurman: To the Minister of Finance: Minister, in Adam Radwanski's Globe and Mail column today, you admit that your government has a spending problem. You admit that you've allowed—in fact, you led—an uncontrollable, wasteful government spending spree. I think we should give him a round of applause. It took you 8.5 years to admit to your failures but only three years to run the province into the ground.

Will you now admit that your latest budget is just as much a failure? Come on, Minister. Let's continue this spontaneous streak of revelations and come clean. Will you address jobs and spending and fix your budget now?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, members on this side of the House are working hard to achieve a balanced budget by 2017-18. We've had some very responsible recommendations brought forward by the third party. We have been working behind the scenes to achieve, year in and year out, the targets we have set out.

My local newspaper in Windsor, which isn't necessarily known to be a Liberal newspaper, had this to say about that party: "Since the Conservatives rejected the budget before even seeing it—an outrageously irresponsible act even by leader Tim Hudak's standards...." I agree with the Windsor Star on this one. It's a shame they're not participating. It's a shame they haven't read the document. It's a shame that they're not part of building a better future for Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Minister, your government hired an economist who spent about a year reviewing government departments and how they manage taxpayer money. Now you say you'll be unleashing accountants and auditors, yet more consultants, to look at government spending, and you have the gall to then wonder how it happens that after five years as chair of the treasury

board, you just "never got the feeling" that you were "systematically looking at things."

News flash, Minister: You never got that feeling because you never actually looked at things. Regardless of your apparent epiphany in the Globe and Mail piece today, you're still not looking at things.

What is it with that Liberal Party over there? What is it about the Liberal Party and consultants? Is it that you don't have anyone competent enough working for you, or is hiring consultants your party's version of a jobs strategy?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, we've made significant gains in our schools and we have more to do. Outcomes are better in schools. There are more kids graduating, more kids going on to post-secondary. We've gone from the worst waiting lists in health care to the best. That's achievement. We are moving back to balance in the context of the worst downturn in history.

What are the Tories doing? I see again last night they nominated yet another candidate, Pam Hundal—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We're getting to that point where we're actually just—

Interjections.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Putting a paper in front of your mouth does not stop you from getting—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My disappointment is not in the fact that I have to stand from time to time; my disappointment is when people continue when I stand.

The second point that I want to make is that it's very difficult to bring any one member to order when both sides are heckling while both are giving an answer or both are giving a question.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They're out nominating candidates, and that's fine.

As to the question of consultants, in their last year in office the party opposite spent \$662 million. Even more recently, Andrew Boddington, Christine Elliott's leadership campaign manager, took health care dollars to lobby clients. Tom Long received millions—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll take care of that part. New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. Tomorrow, Alfred Apps will appear at the public accounts committee. As you know, the former president of the Liberal Party of Canada acted as Ornge's lawyer, lobbyist, spokesperson and financier. Reports indicate that he helped create the web of for-profit companies and helped get around salary disclosure rules, which ultimately earned his law firm millions of dollars.

Did Mr. Apps ever contact the Premier or anyone in the Premier's office on behalf of Ornge?

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

Hon. John Milloy: The honourable member is correct. Tomorrow, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts is going to be hearing from a number of witnesses. Actually, the first witness before it will be Peter Wallace, secretary to the cabinet, and then Alfred Apps, who is a counsel who, as the member points out, had done some work for Ornge. I think that committee, as all committees of the Legislature, is an excellent opportunity for members to ask questions about Mr. Apps's involvement with Ornge and put forward a whole list of questions as the ones that he's raised here and put the facts on the table.

All members on this side of the House are anxious to get to the bottom of this situation. That's why we supported a motion to have the public accounts committee look into Ornge. Unfortunately—

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The phones must have been off the hook that day in the Premier's office. He should check his voice mailbox for some communiqués.

In committee hearings earlier this month, at least one member of the Premier's staff conceded that Mr. Apps did reach out to them regarding Ornge. For a sceptical public, it's a bit much to believe that no one close to the Premier spoke with this well-connected Liberal, who was making a small fortune constructing this scheme.

Premier, who's been in the backrooms chatting with Alfie?

Hon. John Milloy: I find the member's questions a little strange. The simple fact of the matter is, this side of the House supported having hearings in front of public accounts. We had our health minister go forward. She was to be there an hour; she actually stayed two and a half hours.

We've put the facts on the table. As I said, tomorrow, there's a long list of witnesses, including the secretary to cabinet; Mr. Apps; Tim Shorthill, chief of staff to the Minister of Finance; Malcolm Bates, director of emergency health services in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care—and the list goes on.

But the simple fact is, we want to get to the bottom of it. We want to talk about the action that the Minister of Health and the government have taken in terms of Ornge. We're also anxious to understand about the opposition and the many, many communications they had with Ornge, a whole range of them that we've talked about here in the House, including briefings, including meetings, ones which they've neglected to raise when they've asked questions here in the Legislature.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Michael Coteau: My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, I know that you and the Premier

have been clear about your commitment to full-day kindergarten. Our youngest learners are the foundation that the future of our province will be built on.

I've heard from my constituents in Don Valley East that they're so pleased with our decision to move forward with full-day kindergarten in the face of these tough economic times. They know that full-day learning gives their children the best possible start while saving them thousands of dollars in child care costs each year.

Will the minister tell this House why the government chose to protect full-day kindergarten, especially given our deficit?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Thanks to my colleague from Don Valley East for raising this issue and for the advocacy that he has done for many years on behalf of families and education in Don Valley East.

We recently heard about a study conducted in Peel region, Speaker, and I want to share the results of that study with the House. The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, otherwise known as OISE, did a study about the effect of full-day kindergarten on students. They confirmed what our government and experts have been saying all along. Students with access to full-day kindergarten have shown a higher level of skills across the board—better performance in vocabulary, reading comprehension, mathematics, complex drawing skills—than those students enrolled in half-day. Small muscle and large muscle development has improved. They've grown a greater aptitude in regard to non-violent problem solving.

I think what we're demonstrating through this study is that all-day kindergarten is great for Ontario students, and that's what we're focused on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Coteau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the minister as well.

I know that full-day learning is popular with both parents and educators, and I'm pleased to hear about this study which confirms the real, tangible benefits that children and their families are getting from full-day kindergarten.

I constantly hear from people in my riding of Don Valley East that their local schools are some of the most important things in their communities.

There are also some folks that I've talked to in my constituency who remember what the schools were like when the PC government was in power.

Mr. Speaker, these are tough economic times. What will the minister do to make sure that our schools don't end up like they were when the Leader of the Opposition's party was in power?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Leadership is about making choices. Despite challenging economic times, we are making the choices to protect the gains that we've made in education. We will keep funding levels for grants for student needs stable, and we're making a clear choice about what our investment priorities should be, like full-day kindergarten, smaller class sizes, keeping teachers in

the classroom, and focusing our efforts, energies and dollars on the classroom experience.

It's our choice to protect teaching jobs, to protect the classroom experience, and I know, Speaker, that that is what Ontario families expect of us—those in Don Valley East, those in Etobicoke–Lakeshore in the community that I'm privileged to represent. Ontario families want us to put their children first, just like they do, Speaker, and that's exactly what our budget does with the investments in education that we're proud to be voting on in this budget.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Health: On page 38 of the Auditor General's report on the scandal at Ornge, he makes reference to the solemn consequences of the mismanagement at Ornge. He says this: "We found that Ornge internally reported 20 'significant patient adverse events' in 2009-10 to its board of directors, including some that involved patient deaths."

I ask the minister this: When did she first find out about this—because we're sure that she must have known about it before we did in the Auditor General's report—and did she call in the coroner to do a full investigation of these cases?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As the member opposite well knows, I became aware of the Auditor General's report on October 27. I immediately took the action that has had demonstrable results. In fact, the member opposite has even described this as "aggressive changes and improvements at Ornge." We took that action for many reasons, no reason more paramount than patient safety.

I'm very pleased that Dr. Barry McLellan, the CEO of Sunnybrook Hospital—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: A very fine doctor.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —and a very fine physician—in fact, an extraordinary reputation he carries with him, that he has earned—is on the board at Ornge, Speaker, and he is heading up the safety oversight at Ornge. There is no finer person in this province, in this country, who could take on that challenge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, Dr. Barry McLellan is not the coroner of this province. I find this most disturbing.

The minister boasts about calling in the OPP upon finding out about financial irregularities at Ornge. The Auditor General makes it very clear that there are serious operational issues at Ornge that affect patients' lives. Ornge failed, according to the Auditor General, to provide service for 7,500 requests during 2009 and 2010. Of those, 4,700 were emergency on-scene calls that Ornge did not meet.

1110

How many more lives have to be put at risk before this minister calls in the coroner to get to the bottom of this? Will the minister acknowledge that, one more time, she has failed to provide the proper oversight, to take the

proper actions? And, given that, will she admit that she's not capable of handling this file and will she step aside?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am very proud of the legislation that we have introduced to increase transparency and oversight at Ornge. I am hopeful that the member opposite will support this legislation enthusiastically, because it addresses issues that have been raised about the oversight at Ornge. It will give us more power, more tools. Among those tools, we'll have the power that we currently have with hospitals, and that is to send in an investigator, to send in a supervisor, in those extreme cases where public safety is at risk. I look forward to the support of this legislation as we move forward.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Rosario Marchese: To the Minister of Economic Development: Yesterday, in the committee of general government, we amended the government's bill to create a southwestern economic development fund. Our amendments, which the government members argued against, give local representatives a say over funding decisions, establish new accountability measures for public money and help take politics out of the program. Is the government still committed to moving the bill to third reading debate so we can start creating those badly needed jobs in this hard-hit region?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to begin by thanking the member for his work at committee, for working with us in terms of his support for the southwest Ontario development fund, and for some of the ideas and amendments that he brought forward and that his party brought forward. We're looking very carefully at the amendments and the impact on the southwest Ontario development fund. But as I've told the member from day one, we're open to good ideas. We're open to ideas that are going to create jobs in southwestern Ontario and eastern Ontario.

But in contrast, we're very disappointed with the official opposition. They did not offer ideas; they did not move amendments. They simply decided, just like they're doing with our budget, to vote against it. They decided just to go home, not be involved, not take a position. We'll stand with the NDP and fight for jobs any day, in contrast to the position of the official opposition, which is against jobs in southwestern Ontario and against jobs in eastern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm glad the minister is supportive of our ideas and our amendments. We are with you on saying that southwestern Ontario has been hard hit by massive job losses in the manufacturing sector, and New Democrats want to see funding flowing to worthwhile projects as soon as possible. Targeted support for job creation is a good idea and desperately needed in

communities like Windsor, London, Chatham and Sarnia. My question, which you didn't answer, is the following: When will the government bring Bill 11 up for third reading debate?

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's a question the House leaders obviously will talk about. But what I will say is that I'm very, very enthused about moving forward with this legislation—of course, it will be the will of the House that will determine the fate of the legislation ultimately—because it worked in eastern Ontario, Mr. Speaker: 11,900 jobs created in eastern Ontario as a result of the eastern Ontario development fund.

We want to see the same kind of job creation in south-western Ontario, and as I said, we welcome the ideas from the third party. We're very disappointed in the lack of ideas from the official opposition, who just decided, plain and simple, that they would not be supporting jobs in southwestern Ontario, not be supporting jobs in eastern Ontario, just like they're not supporting a budget that does the most important thing we can do to create jobs in this province, and that's to get our books in balance by 2017-18.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation. Minister, in Mississauga and across the province, jobs are being created in fields like manufacturing and life sciences. Banks, accountants and business advisers have told me that businesses are growing and they're starting to invest. Yet any scan of the news shows lingering uncertainty in the global economy. Our province has differentiated itself from other jurisdictions in the successful manner that Ontarians have enhanced our competitiveness in a fiercely competitive global economy. Would the minister describe how such measures are working for Ontario and in cities like Mississauga and Toronto?

Hon. Brad Duguid: This government's economic plan is working. The result is a more competitive Ontario, a more competitive Toronto and a more competitive greater Toronto area. Don't just take my word for it, Mr. Speaker. A report released by KPMG ranked Toronto as the second most competitive major city in North America for business investment. The same study ranked Chicago 21st and New York 29th.

On a similar note, the president of the University of Toronto, David Naylor, recently told the Toronto Board of Trade that Toronto is the lowest-risk city in the world for employers, is ranked second in cities of opportunity, and has the fourth-highest rate of entrepreneurship in the entire OECD. Furthermore, Toronto has the top financial services sector, the top ICT sector, the top life sciences cluster, the top auto sector and the top food and beverage sector. This is not happening by accident. Our measures to keep Ontario competitive and open for business are working for Toronto and working for Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, companies say that tax reforms like the HST and our government's reductions in

the corporate tax rate are improving business competitiveness. They make that statement by locating in Ontario, expanding their operations and sales, and hiring people. The 2012 budget contains a freeze on corporate tax rates as Ontario eliminates its deficit from the recession. The Leader of the Opposition has indicated that his party wants to keep cutting taxes while the budget isn't balanced, while most economists are saying that Ontario has gone far enough with corporate tax cuts and that our top priority should be eliminating the deficit. Minister, would further reductions in corporate taxes hurt Ontario's competitiveness?

Hon. Brad Duguid: This government has moved Ontario from an uncompetitive corporate tax jurisdiction to one that's now one of the most competitive in all of Canada and all of North America. Our economic plan is working. Ontario gained 46,000 net jobs in March.

What business leaders and economists have told us is that the best thing we can do to strengthen our economy and create jobs is to balance our books, which our budget does, Mr. Speaker, by 2017-18. The worst thing we could do right now for jobs and our economy is not to support the budget and to cause an unnecessary and costly election.

It's time for the Leader of the Opposition to listen to what Ontarians want. Do what's best for our economy, do what's best for creating jobs, and support this budget.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the Premier. Premier, you know that our party will be voting against this budget because there's no jobs plan and you do nothing to steer our province out of the \$30-billion deficit path that you brought us under. Surprisingly, you, along with your finance minister, are accusing our party of electioneering during question period today and yesterday. Well, that's a little rich, Mr. Speaker, considering that yesterday they spent money placing robocalls in my riding and for the member of Burlington's riding. Premier, were you made aware of these robocalls and will you take responsibility for them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I have now done a dozen telephone town halls with over 100,000 people on them, and they want this budget passed. They want the initiatives we brought forward, Mr. Speaker, because they realize it's a full response to challenging times. We are going to call in to opposition ridings because the people in those ridings don't want another election. Your nomination meeting is what—two weeks from now? Mr. Speaker, I don't know why he's being nominated at this point in time. He should be here in the Legislature, working to find a balance in the budget, to work with us, to do what the NDP have been doing to bring forward constructive ideas to build a better future for Ontario. Cancel your nomination meeting. Let's make this Legislature work. Please, we just had an election—

Interjection.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to offer the member from Thornhill a caution on the way he named the Minister of Finance.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I hope you just hear what I asked.

Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: It's a good thing the Premier has appointed the minister for robocalls, and hopefully he hasn't hired Pierre Poutine as his chief of staff.

Premier, you know we can't vote for this budget. You know it has failed to come up with a jobs plan. It has failed to bring down the government deficit. It has failed to rein in government spending. These are the reasons that this party is not going to vote for your budget.

Premier, Minister of Finance or minister of robocalls, if you're at least going to spend some money placing robocalls in my riding, at least be honest with people. Tell them the real reason why we're going into an election: because your leadership has failed this province.

Interjections.

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

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, those calls were telling the people of Cambridge that, on page 40 of the budget, we're confirming funding officially for the first time for a new Cambridge hospital—and you're voting against it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think we'll move to a new question.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Substance abuse in First Nations is no secret. Entire communities are battling addiction, and a sense of hopelessness is prevailing.

Two months ago, the government delisted OxyContin without a clear addictions and treatment strategy in place that would help communities manage the impact of this decision. First Nations have been asking for an addiction strategy for years. As recently as two months ago, when you delisted OxyContin, Minister, I asked what the plan was.

Minister, we're still waiting. What is the plan?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member opposite for this very important question. I know that all of us are firmly committed to be there for people who choose this opportunity to address their addiction.

The delisting of OxyContin and the replacement of that with OxyNEO we know is changing the landscape of addiction in many of our communities, most especially in First Nations communities. I want the member opposite and other members of this House to know that I have convened a remarkable panel of people, many of them from the First Nations communities in the north.

We are taking the steps, the recommendations that they are making to us, including, for example, sending an additional doctor to Meno Ya Win in Sioux Lookout to support the methadone treatment program. The Ontario Telemedicine Network is stepping up their ability to support people as they go through this addiction—

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

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Months ago, the community of Cat Lake declared a state of emergency, looking for help dealing with the crisis in their community and across the north. This week, children in Cat Lake wrote their family members who are in the grips of addiction, saying, "We don't know what to do to help you stop doing" drugs.

The minister and experts know which treatment and services can help, if only we had the political will to provide these programs. How much longer will these communities be forced to wait?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are taking significant action on this very important issue. It's very important that Health Canada step up and play their part as well.

One of the additional steps we have taken is to fast-track the approval for Suboxone. Suboxone is a medication for people who have tried methadone unsuccessfully. It's another tool in addiction treatment. So I am pleased to say that the exceptional access program has fast-tracked Suboxone, so now people are getting an answer within five business days as to whether or not they are eligible for this particular drug. There are many initiatives under way. I would ask the member opposite if she would be willing to have a meeting so I can review with her the initiatives happening in response.

FOREST FIREFIGHTING

Mr. David Oraziotti: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, as you're aware, last year's forest fire season was particularly challenging in Ontario. In 2011, there were significantly more fires in the province than the year before and a much greater area was affected. We are already receiving reports of small fires in Ontario's northwest and northeast, and many people are concerned that this year's warmer weather and below-normal snowfall may lead to another busy season.

While it may be still too early to predict how this year's weather will affect the 2012 fire season, Ontarians are thinking of the safety of their family, friends, and neighbouring communities. In fact, this week is Wildfire Prevention Week, and as part of this week, the ministry is reminding people of springtime fire hazards and the steps they can take to keep their homes and properties safe. Could the minister advise us on the steps his ministry is preparing to take in the upcoming wildfire season to keep Ontarians safe?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I want to thank the member from Sault Ste. Marie for raising this very important question. I think all Ontarians should know and be very proud of the fact that Ontario's expertise and success in fighting wildfires is world-renowned, and certainly I want to assure the members of this House that we are

absolutely ready for the upcoming fire season, prepared to fight forest fires as early as we need to, keeping a very close eye on the weather conditions, as they do change from week to week across the province.

Let me say, as well, that in addition to our air fleet—14 water bombers, 13 helicopters, 12 fire detection aircraft—we have approximately 750 fire rangers working for us, and we have available to us 320 more firefighters from the private sector. We have incredibly strong partnerships in place with other Canadian provinces and US states to assist Ontario as we get into a state of crisis. So we're ready, we're committed and we're going to have another season where we protect the people of the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. David Oraziotti: Minister, thank you for updating members of the House on preparations under way in your ministry.

Last year, frequent lightning storms combined with hot, dry and often windy weather conditions resulted in a large number of fires that grew quickly in size, making them particularly difficult and costly to fight. As April marks the official start of forest fire season in the province, and with the initial reports of small fires already, my constituents are raising questions about the resources that we are providing to ensure that our pilots are prepared to fight these fires.

Minister, last January our government selected Sault Ste. Marie as the location for a new \$6.2-million state-of-the-art training centre for pilots and maintenance engineers on the CL-415 heavy water bombers that are used to fight forest fires in northern Ontario. Could you please elaborate on the training and safety measures the province has in place to ensure public safety continues to be our government's priority, and specifically how our government will respond to extraordinary challenges, if necessary?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It really was a great question, Speaker. The member is right. Certainly last year's fire season was particularly difficult—I think our second worst in terms of the amount of hectares that burned. We did have very dry weather, particularly in the summertime. This year also, there have been some early starts.

Our investment, as he mentions, in a state-of-the-art flight simulator training facility in Sault Ste. Marie is helping to enhance the forest fire response system, and it does mean that our pilots will be even better prepared to protect Ontarians, our communities and natural resources from the devastation of wildfires. No longer will we have our highly skilled pilots forced to find that training in other jurisdictions. So that's really great news.

Last week, I had the pleasure of visiting the northwest region aviation and forest fire management centre in Dryden, accompanied by my colleague from Kenora—Rainy River, and I was presented with my first opportunity to meet with staff and understand the remarkable work they do.

Preparations are there, they're under way for this year's fire season, and we are prepared for whatever the fire season holds for us here in the province of Ontario.

1130

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of Education. As the province faces a \$30-billion deficit and cuts to education, do you think it's appropriate for a quarter of a million dollars to be spent on international travel by school board trustees?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to have a chance, first of all, to be clear that in the grants for student needs this year, we have put out grants that are stable, that maintain the additional investments we have made since 2003. And I think it's important for Ontario families to know that we continue to roll out investments in all-day kindergarten. As a result, the Ministry of Education budget will be going up by 1.7%.

But to speak directly to the issue that I know the member is raising, which is with respect to York Region District School Board travel expenses internationally, she would know from having read the newspapers that I have made it absolutely clear that this is not acceptable and that I have spoken to Chairperson Anna DeBartolo, to encourage her to take a very close look at how the monies are spent and that all international travel coming out of York region board is—

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Let me just read through the list and see if people think this is appropriate. On May 14, 16 staff went to Finland at the cost of \$30,000. May 2011, 20 staff and two trustees went to Finland again, for \$42,000. Then there was a July 2011 trip; 21 staff went to London, England, for \$50,000. November 2011, two trustees went to New Zealand, for \$10,000. Of course, in October, a year ago, four staff and a trustee went to Finland, for \$92,000. Let me just say this: There was another scheduled trip—

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Let me finish, because in May 2012, upcoming, is a cost for another \$35,000.

My question is this: She addressed York region, and this is where this occurred. Why is she not banning international travel, at a time of austerity, in all school boards? Why is she not making sure her ministry officials are making sure education dollars, which are scarce, are actually going into classrooms instead of people's passports?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: As I said, on March 15, I spoke to Chairperson Anna DeBartolo to encourage her to take a very close look at the budget. Following that, the York region put in a six-month moratorium on international travel. Let me also say what director Ken Thurston had to say following the very frank and direct conversations that I had with Ms. DeBartolo: "Given the fiscal realities of this province, it's important that education funding goes to protecting the gains we've made in classrooms."

I know that our school boards are partners with us in delivering strong, quality public education in Ontario.

I'm proud of the work that our school boards do. They play an important role in communities, and they've taken very seriously the conversation that I have had with them that we need to use dollars in our classrooms.

BLOOD DONATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Canadian Blood Services has just closed its last Ontario dedicated plasma donor clinic, located in Thunder Bay. They said that these Ontarians' donations are no longer needed, thanks to the availability of surplus plasma products from the States. But in 2004, Ontario signed on to a plan to increase Canadian content in plasma products, recognizing the importance of domestic collection. Can the minister explain what her office and herself have done so far to protect the capacity of our not-for-profit blood system here in Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This is an issue that has been raised by members of our caucus. I have met with Canadian Blood Services to discuss this particular issue. The reality is, the demand for plasma is decreasing. That is in part because plasma that was thrown out because it had expired can last longer now, so the demand for plasma is decreasing.

The Thunder Bay Canadian Blood Services was the only place where only plasma was collected and not whole blood. This was a difficult decision of Canadian Blood Services; they made the decision. They, like everyone, are having to go through line by line to make the decisions that get us the best value for money. I regret this decision but it is a decision of Canadian Blood Services—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: The safety and stability of Ontario plasma products are at stake and the minister has a responsibility to ensure the strength of an Ontario not-for-profit blood system.

Ontarians still remember the tragedy from the Arkansas prison tainted-blood scandal. One of the victims of that scandal attended the rally in Thunder Bay last week to add his voice and to oppose this closure.

Will the minister listen to the voices of the people of Thunder Bay and worried Ontarians throughout this province, and pressure the Canadian Blood Services to reopen the Thunder Bay site?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am very concerned that the member opposite is raising issues around the safety of the product without actually having that knowledge.

Speaker, I can assure the people of this province that they have absolutely no cause to be concerned about the safety of these blood products. In fact, you will remember, Speaker, that the Canadian Blood Services was set up specifically in response to the tainted-blood scandal. I can assure you that the patients of this province will be unaffected by this decision.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Finance on a point of order.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I rise to correct the record of my own statement in the House. In response to the member for Cambridge, I referenced a new hospital in Cambridge. In fact, it's a major new expansion that's been long awaited in that community and I hope the member and his party—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On the point of order, the minister has the right to correct his own record.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm delighted to introduce Susan Gapka. It's a day of a momentous win for the trans health lobby, and she's here to celebrate.

M^{me} France Gélinas: My guests are about to arrive: Rowena Pinto from the Canadian Cancer Society; Mark Holland from the Heart and Stroke Foundation; Phil Jansson and Kale Brown from Flavour...Gone!—this is a student group; Michael Perley, director of the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco; Joanne Di Nardo from the Canadian Cancer Society; Elizabeth Harvey from the Ontario Lung Association; and Sarah Butson and Monica Sarkar from the Youth Advocacy Training Institute of the Ontario Lung Association. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LINCOLN ALEXANDER

Mrs. Jane McKenna: In January, I had the pleasure and good fortune of being one of about 100 people at a Burlington party celebrating the 90th birthday of the Honourable Lincoln M. Alexander, lovingly known to most as Linc.

Linc was, of course, Canada's first black MP, elected in 1968 as a Progressive Conservative to represent the riding of Hamilton West; the first black federal cabinet minister, as Minister of Labour in the Clark government; and Ontario's Lieutenant Governor from 1985 to 1991.

At that party, Linc was an inspiring presence, as always. Two months later, we were all given pause by news that Linc had been recuperating at Hamilton General Hospital after undergoing an operation to repair a ruptured aneurysm in his abdomen. This weekend, we learned that Linc has now left intensive care, and his recovery is going so well that he could be released from Hamilton General next week. This is, to say the least, tremendous news.

Linc, his wife, Marni Beal-Alexander, and his family hope that he will recover completely enough to be able to greet the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall when they visit Ontario next month as part of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations. It would certainly be most fitting.

On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I would like to add to the chorus of support and extend our heartfelt wishes to Linc for a sound and speedy recovery.

GENDER IDENTITY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The Trans Lobby Group members are thrilled—and Susan Gapka's here to share that with us—that the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal has ruled that the surgical requirement for a change in the record of birth on legal documents is discriminatory towards trans people. A decision just released, XY vs. the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services, confirmed what trans people have been saying all along—and I'm going to quote Susan Gapka. She says, "Requiring sexual reassignment surgery ... is differential treatment based upon a personal characteristic; that is, that trans people are treated differently and face harassment and discrimination when their legal documents do not match how they present in their everyday lives." Gapka, chair of the Trans Lobby Group, added, "Now we can move forward with remedy which will provide social inclusion for many trans people...."

I might say that none of this would have been necessary if we had gender identity and gender expression in the Ontario Human Rights Code—Toby's Law, tabled for the fourth time, and we hope it will be discussed in second reading debate on May 10. So on that day, hopefully we will have leapt over the one remaining hurdle in the province of Ontario to true trans inclusion and the end of any discrimination against our trans brothers and sisters.

Congratulations to them all, and here's hoping we move forward.

ITALIAN CAMPAIGN

Mr. Mario Sergio: This past February marked the 67th anniversary of the end of Canada's participation in the Italian campaign, one of the longest battles of World War II. Our Canadian soldiers played a vital role in the 20-month-long campaign, which led to the liberation of Italy.

The Italian campaign began on the morning of July 10, 1943, when Canadian and British troops landed on the southern tip of Sicily. After four weeks of battling the Germans, Canadian soldiers crossed the Strait of Messina, landed in Calabria, Italy's mainland, and engaged the Germans in fierce battles.

Our Canadian soldiers fought in Italy from July 10, 1943, until February 25, 1945. More than 93,000 Canadians fought on the front lines of the Italian campaign, with nearly 6,000 Canadians ultimately sacrificing their

own lives to protect our values, our freedom and our peace. The soldiers of the Italian campaign were among the more than one million Canadians who served during World War II.

Speaker, most Canadian soldiers who died in the Italian campaign are buried in 18 Commonwealth cemeteries throughout Italy and commemorated on the Cassino memorial. We honour the selfless commitment of all Canadians who gave their lives in service to Canada. We honour every war veteran who remains with us today and honour and support those who come after them. The loyalty and sacrifice of Canadian soldiers continues to remind us of what it means to be Canadian.

KILLALOE PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr. John Yakabuski: During constituency week, I had the pleasure of visiting Killaloe Public School, which is one of 10 finalists in a contest sponsored by Majesta Paper Products called the Majesta "Trees of Knowledge" competition.

Killaloe is a lovely village in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, only 13 miles from my home, which has always exhibited tremendous community spirit. The fact that KPS, with only about 110 students, has made it this far in a national competition is a testament to that community spirit.

In making their submission, Killaloe Public School had to design an outdoor learning space that would help educate their students and the public to the importance of working in concert with nature and understanding the benefits of a healthy natural environment.

I want to thank Principal Krista Recroskie and Lyndsey Mask, a volunteer, for inviting me to their school to learn more about their project. I had the opportunity to view a very well-done video and review the application, which was meticulously prepared. Incidentally, the video was produced by the students themselves and was most enjoyable.

The contest will be determined by a cross-Canada vote between now and May 11. If successful, Killaloe will receive \$20,000 towards the building of their customized outdoor classroom. Between now and then, everyone eligible can vote once a day for the school of their choice. I'll be encouraging friends and family to vote for the Killaloe Public School's submission and would further encourage all members of this Legislature to do the same. They can do so by going to www.majesta.com and following the prompts. Let's all get together and vote for Killaloe and bring another Canadian champion to rural Ontario.

TRAFFIC ACCIDENT

Mr. Reza Moridi: I rise here today to recognize the extraordinary courage of two fellow citizens and their heroic efforts during a terrible accident in my riding of Richmond Hill.

On March 27, as flames began to engulf a vehicle that had struck a brick stanchion, two heroic residents,

Andrea Belviso and Leslie Bonyhadi, came to the rescue of a stranger without a moment of hesitation.

Ms. Belviso approached the accident with her four-year-old son in the car. Parking her vehicle at a safe distance, she rushed to the scene while dialling 911. At that point, Mr. Bonyhadi arrived on the scene, and together, the duo decided to act before it might have been too late. Mr. Bonyhadi describes how they were able to support each other, braving the flames and smoke to reach the car and rescue the unconscious driver.

Due to the astonishing courage and fortitude of two ordinary citizens, one life was saved. They were able to summon the courage to run to this horrific scene and try their best to save the victim's life.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this time to acknowledge the courageous efforts of Ms. Belviso and Mr. Bonyhadi as they willingly placed their own lives at risk in an effort to save a stranger's life.

JOHN BRADLEY

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my great pleasure to rise today to recognize one of Chatham-Kent's most accomplished families, the family of Mr. John Bradley.

1510

John Bradley came to Chatham from Toledo, Ohio, and established Bradley Farms in 1912. The ensuing decades saw the founding of the Bradley Marshes Hunting Lodge, the building of Chatham's first strip mall, residential projects, including the area's first high-rise towers, and perhaps their most lasting legacy, a commitment to drawing tourism to Chatham-Kent.

With the establishment of the world-famous Wheels Inn in 1972, the Bradleys succeeded in bringing tourism business to an undiscovered gem of a town. The Wheels featured an indoor atrium and an amusement park, to the delight of families and their children.

John Bradley was also a generous spirit who founded the Chatham Kent Community Foundation to support local priorities.

I also want to recognize his son, Dean Bradley, and his family for their hard work in keeping John's legacy alive.

Now, to honour the contributions of the Bradley family in Chatham, it's only fitting that the new Chatham convention centre be named the John D. Bradley Convention Centre. Already operational and with an expected grand opening this spring, the centre will stand at the same site where the Wheels Inn once stood.

I wish the family the greatest success in continuing to stand for the best Chatham has to offer.

ANTI-TOBACCO LEGISLATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, today I want to remind my colleagues of a bill that we—you and I—introduced in 2008. The bill banned the sale of single-sale flavoured cigarillos.

Although this bill passed, by the time it was enacted, the tobacco companies had found loopholes. They

already had so-called new products, but they were not really new, Mr. Speaker. It was the exact same products as before: same flavour, same smell, same packaging, same price, same marketing; they just made them a little bit bigger so that they would circumvent the act. The tobacco industry recognizes a money-maker when they see one and they were not about to let the Legislative Assembly stand between them and billions of dollars of profit.

So today I will be introducing a new bill. This bill will be very simple: Ban all flavoured tobacco products in Ontario. Whether you smoke it, chew it, spit it, snuff it, it doesn't matter; if it is flavoured and it has tobacco, it won't be allowed in Ontario. Plus, we will ban new tobacco products from entering Ontario. There are a number of new products being test-marketed right now in the US; some of them are already for sale. You know about those little Tic Tacs, the little mints? They're now made out of nicotine. Same thing with the melt—same thing with the lozenges.

A very simple bill: Ban flavoured tobacco and ban new products. I hope everybody will support it.

ALANNA BRAY-LOUGHEED

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Burloak Canoe Club's winning tradition has made it a world leader in developing the best athletes at the local, the national and the Olympic levels. Cain, Oldershaw and Van Koeverden are just a few of the names that members may recognize. So it's a pleasure to rise in the Legislature this afternoon to recognize a young paddler from Oakville who is beginning to amass a growing list of accomplishments at the highest level of national and international competition.

Alanna Bray-Lougheed is a Quest for Gold recipient. She trains out of the Burloak Canoe Club, she's the winner of the K-1 200-metre event at the junior world championships last year, and she'll be representing Canada this weekend in Brazil. Alanna is part of a team of 10 athletes competing at the 2012 Pan American Canoe Sprint Championships in Rio de Janeiro. She was selected for the team based on her quick trial results at a competition in Lake Pickett, Florida, just a few weeks ago. Alanna is going to be competing in the K-1 race on the same course that's going to be used for the Brazil Summer Olympics in 2016.

On behalf of the House, I want to congratulate Alanna for her efforts and wish her well and the entire team good luck and best wishes of this House as they compete in Rio this weekend, representing all proud Canadians.

GORD RENWICK

Mr. Rob Leone: I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Cambridge native Gord Renwick, who was selected as a recipient of the Order of Hockey in Canada. The Order of Hockey in Canada recognizes individuals who have played prominent roles in

developing and growing the game in Canada. Mr. Renwick is being inducted this year alongside Jean Beliveau, Cassie Campbell-Pascall, Gordie Howe and Wayne Gretzky.

Mr. Renwick not only was one of the original builders of the Galt Hornets senior hockey organization in my riding but was also president of the Hornets during which time the Hornets won two Allan Cups. Mr. Renwick was also instrumental in establishing the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association, the CAHA—now Hockey Canada—and the International Ice Hockey Federation. He also served as president of the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association and as a board member and vice-president of the IIHF.

This honour is well-deserved and further illustrates the deep roots that the game of hockey has in the communities of Cambridge and North Dumfries. I'd like to congratulate Mr. Renwick on his award.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just wanted to correct the record. Earlier I said the Ontario Supreme Court. I meant the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. That is a point of order, and all members are allowed to correct their own record.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Nepean–Carleton has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Education concerning international travel for school boards. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 20, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 to require carbon monoxide detectors in certain residential buildings / Projet de loi 20, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment pour exiger l'installation de détecteurs de monoxyde de carbone dans certains immeubles d'habitation, the title of which is amended to read An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 to require carbon monoxide detectors in certain residential buildings / Projet de loi 20, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la prévention et la

protection contre l'incendie pour exiger l'installation de détecteurs de monoxyde de carbone dans certains immeubles d'habitation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Therefore, the bill will be ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. David Oraziotti: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 11, An Act respecting the continuation and establishment of development funds in order to promote regional economic development in eastern and south-western Ontario / Projet de loi 11, Loi concernant la prorogation et la création de fonds de développement pour promouvoir le développement économique régional dans l'Est et le Sud-Ouest de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The bill therefore is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HILI ENTERPRISES LTD. ACT, 2012

Ms. Damerla moved first reading of the following bill: Bill Pr4, An Act to revive Hili Enterprises Ltd.

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

COUTU GOLD MINES LIMITED ACT, 2012

Mr. Oraziotti moved first reading of the following bill: Bill Pr1, An Act to revive Coutu Gold Mines Limited.

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

First reading agreed to.

1520

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO
AMENDMENT ACT (PROHIBITING
FLAVOURED TOBACCO,
NEW TOBACCO PRODUCTS
AND SMOKELESS TOBACCO), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI
FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO SANS FUMÉE
(INTERDICTION DU TABAC AROMATISÉ,
DES NOUVEAUX PRODUITS DU TABAC
ET DU TABAC SANS FUMÉE)

M^{me} Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 66, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to prohibit certain tobacco products / Projet de loi 66, Loi modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée pour interdire certains produits du tabac.

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.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, this bill is quite simple. In 2008, we had passed Bill 124. The spirit of Bill 124 was to protect our youth from the marketing done to them with flavoured tobacco products. This bill unfortunately had a few loopholes, so I am now introducing a new bill. In this new bill, we will cease to have flavoured tobacco products, whether it be smoke or smokeless tobacco products, in Ontario, as well as ban any new tobacco products from entering the province of Ontario. I think this is an important bill to protect our youth from becoming the next generation of smokers. I thank you for your support.

CHILDREN'S LAW REFORM
AMENDMENT ACT (RELATIONSHIP
WITH GRANDPARENTS), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI
PORTANT RÉFORME DU DROIT
DE L'ENFANCE (RELATION
AVEC LES GRANDS-PARENTS)

Mr. Craitor moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 67, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act with respect to the relationship between a child and the child's grandparents / Projet de loi 67, Loi modifiant la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance en ce qui concerne la relation entre un enfant et ses grands-parents.

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. Kim Craitor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure today that I'm announcing first reading of the Children's Law Reform Amendment Act (Relationship with Grandparents), affectionately known as the grandparents' rights bill.

I want to thank the MPP from the official opposition party, from Whitby–Oshawa, for acting as a co-sponsor. I also want to thank the MPP from the third party, from Parkdale–High Park, for co-sponsoring the bill. Thank you to both of them.

In summary, the bill amends the Children's Law Reform Act to prohibit a person entitled to custody of a child from creating or maintaining unreasonable barriers to the formation and continuation of personal relationships between the child and the child's grandparents. The bill sets out the needs and circumstances of a child that the court must consider in determining the best interests of a child, and the emotional ties between the child and the child's grandparents and the willingness of each person applying for custody to facilitate with the child's grandparents. Thank you.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Unanimous consent has been asked. Do we agree? Agreed.

Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 34 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some grumbling but I didn't hear a no, so I think we'll proceed.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CANADIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

Hon. John Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege for me to rise in the House today to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Thirty years ago today, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II proclaimed into force the Constitution Act, 1982. This act included the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This initiative was the result of the grand vision for Canada and Ontario from the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau and his Minister of Justice, Jean Chrétien.

A strong belief in the protection of individual rights, keeping government out of the bedrooms of the nation and respecting individual differences was their primary premise. By working together with their counterparts from different political parties and different parts of this

country—namely Bill Davis, Conservative Premier of Ontario at the time; Roy McMurtry, Ontario's Attorney General at the time; and Roy Romanow, the NDP Attorney General for Saskatchewan—they were able to overcome challenges and obstacles put before them during the negotiating process, and they are truly three great Canadians.

Culminating in the Queen's signature on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, a groundbreaking human rights initiative came to fruition. It was the product of an all-party co-operation, an excellent and tangible example of what we can accomplish by working together rather than as adversaries.

For the first time, Speaker, the fundamental freedoms and rights of everyone in Canada were guaranteed. There was great anticipation and excitement on Parliament Hill at the signing ceremony, as many of us who watched the television production that day will attest to. Thousands of people of all ages and walks of life, from coast to coast, joined together on the front lawn to celebrate this momentous occasion.

We can remember times in our past prior to the charter when fundamental legal rights were sacrificed at times without justification. As the Toronto Star editorial of last Sunday, April 15, so aptly pointed out, "Think of it as a shield against the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, adopted 30 years ago this week, protects us all. Time and again, Canadians have invoked it to challenge overbearing government power, to expand freedoms including that of free speech and of the press, to right wrongs and to remedy inequality. It is one of our great treasures."

Over the past 30 years, we have seen many examples of how the charter has led to improvements in the lives of people and how it has benefitted society at large. Let's just consider a few examples. Before the charter, aboriginal women lost their Indian status if they married non-aboriginal men. Since the charter, their descendants are reclaiming their rights. Aboriginal and treaty rights were guaranteed for the first time in the Constitution Act of 1982.

As a result of the charter, Ontario's Family Law Act was deemed discriminatory as it failed to impose spousal support obligations on same-sex couples, as it did on opposite-sex couples. As a result, legislation was amended to extend benefits to same-sex couples on the same basis as provided to opposite-sex couples.

1530

I hope that our federal government celebrates this day as we do here in Ontario. April 17, 1982, ushered in a new era of tolerance and inclusiveness that should be celebrated as it was on that day on Parliament Hill.

The charter ensures that the rule of law promotes a more just society, where all people are recognized as people and as sharing fundamental values based upon freedom, respect and tolerance. The charter is essential in our society because of the principles that it embodies, and also because it allows anyone to call on its protections through ordinary courts and tribunals.

In the 30 years since the Charter of Rights and Freedoms was adopted, our province and our country have come a long way. I'm proud that the protection of human rights is a fundamental principle in our province as well. Here in Ontario, we firmly recognize that all people have a right to live free from discrimination, inequality and intolerance. In Ontario, we have not just relied on the charter to build equality but on other ways as well.

Our government has taken the most significant steps to strengthen our Human Rights Code in over 40 years to better ensure equality for all Ontarians in both the public and private sectors. In making needed changes to the Human Rights Code, our government has provided quicker and more direct access for victims of discrimination, provided legal supports to help those who would otherwise have difficulty accessing justice, and focused resources to address systemic human rights issues. By strengthening the system to provide faster, more accessible justice for those who have faced discrimination, we have improved the protection of equality rights that Ontarians cherish.

Canada has played an important role in the advancement of human rights around the world. The charter has come to be seen as a model and Canada an international leader in that regard. Thanks to our charter, no matter who you are, no matter where you come from, no matter how long you've been here and no matter what your roots are, your rights and freedoms will be protected and respected here in ways that may not be so elsewhere in the world.

As we recognize the 30th anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, it is my privilege, Speaker, to reaffirm this government's commitment to upholding the rights and freedoms of all Canadians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Speaker, this year is a year of anniversaries. It is the bicentennial of the War of 1812. It is the Diamond Jubilee year for Her Majesty the Queen, Queen Elizabeth, the 60th anniversary of her ascension to the throne. It is the 100th anniversary of the Grey Cup. And it's the 45th anniversary of the last time the Toronto Maple Leafs won the Stanley Cup.

On behalf of the PC caucus, I am honoured to have the opportunity to say a few words in recognition of the 30th anniversary of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. On April 17, 1982—30 years ago today—at a ceremony in Ottawa on Parliament Hill, Queen Elizabeth II and Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau officially signed the Canada Act, 1982, into law. This act patriated the constitution, bringing it home to Canada, and it established the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Regardless of our political affiliation in this House, I think all members would acknowledge the importance of this moment as one of the seminal events in Canada's history. It was a symbolic moment, a moment when Canada, once a French possession dismissed by Voltaire as "quelques arpents de neige," nothing more than a few acres of snow, and then a colony of the British Empire which came of age on the battlefields of Vimy Ridge—

but with the repatriation of the Constitution, Canada took its place in the community of nations as a truly independent state.

For much of our history, the Canadian Constitution could only be amended by an act of the British Parliament in Westminster. When Sir John A. Macdonald and the Fathers of Confederation authored the British North America Act in 1867, establishing the Dominion of Canada and moulding a collection of disparate colonies into a country, the authority to amend the Canadian Constitution still resided with the British Parliament. This authority remained unchanged even after the Statute of Westminster granted Canada greater independence from Great Britain in 1931. While Canada was granted limited powers to amend its own Constitution in 1949, it was not until 1982 that Canada gained complete legislative independence from Great Britain.

Now, I don't think it will come as much of a surprise to anyone in the House here today that I say, as a Progressive Conservative, that I did not always agree with Pierre Trudeau. I was in high school when he was Prime Minister, with a growing sense of political awareness. I found him to be a remarkable Canadian but did not share many of his views.

However, looking at the Trudeau legacy, with the benefit of time that's passed, we must all acknowledge Trudeau as one of the foremost champions of Canadian federalism and a historically important Prime Minister who did much to shape Canada into the country that we know it is today. The patriation of the Constitution and the establishment of the charter are his defining accomplishments, a lasting legacy that he has left to all Canadians.

However, we must also not forget the leadership and important contributions of people such as Premier Bill Davis, Attorney General Roy McMurtry and Premier Peter Lougheed. Premier Davis was a strong supporter of the charter, and his leadership proved to be pivotal in getting other provinces on board. Without his work, it's quite possible that no agreement would have been reached.

When Canadians think of the Constitution, one of the first things that comes to their minds is the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In many ways, the charter has come to define the Constitution. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms enshrined the rights that all Canadians hold dear into the Constitution. It guarantees basic rights such as freedom of expression, freedom of association and freedom of religion. It sets into law fundamental principles like the equality of all Canadians. The charter safeguards basic legal and democratic rights, like the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty and the right to vote. It upholds language rights and minority language education rights.

These rights and freedoms are guaranteed to all Canadians and stand at the core of what it means to be a free and democratic society. These are the rights that all Canadians cherish and help define who we are today as a society.

While these principles themselves were by no means new to Canadian society—Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, for example, set out many of them in the Canadian Bill of Rights in 1960—the charter officially enshrined them in the Constitution. By enshrining these basic rights into the Constitution, Canada has become a leader around the world in our commitment to freedom and democracy. Our charter has become a model that new democracies around the world look to as they transition from authoritarian regimes to democratic governance.

However, while the charter has become an important part of what it means to be a Canadian, as Lawrence Martin notes in today's *Globe and Mail*, we must also recognize that the establishment of the charter was not without its pitfalls. The process left deep and lasting scars on the Canadian political landscape. Mr. Martin writes, "With its exclusion of Quebec, the patriation exercise set in motion a fracturing of the country's unity that endured for more than a dozen years."

The patriation of the Constitution set in motion a decade-long constitutional battle and years of acrimonious negotiations. Ultimately, it led to the 1995 Quebec referendum, which nearly tore our country apart. Even today, Quebec is not a signatory of the Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It has also been criticized by people such as former Saskatchewan Premier Roy Romanow in today's *Toronto Star* for its emphasis on individual rights, which may, at times, trump the broader public good—I'm almost finished, Mr. Speaker.

However, these pitfalls aside, the charter has left a lasting legacy upon Canadian society. It has helped to shape Canada into the free and democratic society that we all know and cherish. It upholds and safeguards some of the principles that are at the very heart of what it means to be Canadian. We have a duty as elected representatives to strive to uphold these principles and continue to build upon this legacy.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I take pleasure in rising in celebration of the 30th anniversary of the charter.

The charter establishes a number of negative rights, a number of rights which protect individuals from state interference. It's very important that we celebrate some of the achievements over these three decades. The charter instils in Canada the protection of certain fundamental freedoms that are the hallmarks of a free and democratic society. These freedoms include the freedom of expression, the freedom of religion and particular freedoms that protect the individual from state prosecution and violation of individual rights.

I take great pride in the fact that Canada is a leader in the protection of civil liberties and civil rights, and the charter is largely responsible for these protections. Some of these protections involve those who are accused of crimes. A society is often judged on the way they treat those who are most vulnerable, those who are worst off in society.

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It is again another sign of a truly free society, a truly democratic society, when we have rights which protect

those who are accused of crimes. In fact, I take great pride in the fact that we protect our citizens from unreasonable searches, from unreasonable seizures. This is a sign of a society which values freedoms, which will prevent a police state, an authoritarian state, something that we have seen happen in our society. Only two years ago we've seen what can happen in our very own country when we don't have the protection of our civil liberties, when we don't have the protection of our fundamental freedoms.

The right to dissent is a very essential component of a vigorous notion of a free society. The ability to say, "I disagree with the state's actions," is something we must uphold and protect, and it's something the charter protects. If you look at some of the violations that occurred two years ago in the G20 debacle, we see that that is the risk that we have when we don't protect our civil liberties, that those who attempted to peacefully protest, to raise their voices in dissent, were detained. Their civil rights were abrogated. They were kept in custody without any charges. That's why it's important to have a document which protects our freedoms.

And so while we celebrate some of the successes we've had—the protection of religious freedoms, from the protection of the articles of faith ranging from the Jewish community to the Sikh community to the Muslim community—and when we look at some of the protection in terms of avoiding police abuse which arises from section 7 of the charter, which protects us in terms of the security of person, the security of life, liberty, and ensures that if the police conduct activities which are excessive, which hurt or abuse their powers, that there is a sanction; there is a ramification. It's a way of telling the state that there is a limit to state authority, to state abuse of power.

But while the charter has been a very great tool in protecting our individual rights, there is one area in the charter in which it has fallen short, and it's important for us, while celebrating the achievements of the charter, to look to where we can improve. An area where the charter has fallen short is in the protection of positive rights, is in the protection of addressing the issues of inequalities in our society. Our society has seen an ever-increasing gap between those who have and those who have not. We've seen an increasing gap in the inequality between our citizens, those who reside in Canada.

It's very important to note that while the charter protects our fundamental freedoms, it does not protect our fundamental rights, rights that all citizens should have, all human beings should have: the right to housing, the right to food, the right to shelter, the right to live, the right to be able to move around in freedom. These positive rights—the right to an education, the right to health—these essential freedoms, which are positive freedoms, have not been protected by the charter, and this is an area we can move towards as our society improves.

As we move towards a more inclusive, more tolerant, greater society, we must ensure that our laws also reflect these positive rights, and that while we protect the right

to freedom of expression, the right to express ourselves in whatever religion we choose, we must also take into consideration the fundamental importance of the right to have shelter, the right to have food, the right to have an education, these positive rights which are the hallmarks of an even greater society, which we can all hope one day we will achieve.

PETITIONS

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Steve Clark: I have this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas everyone agrees that Ontarians should have access to healthy, clean drinking water from a secure source;

"Whereas, under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario regulation 319/08, public health inspectors are required to undertake risk assessments of small drinking water systems;

"Whereas many of these small drinking water systems are located in small businesses, Royal Canadian Legion halls, churches and other community facilities in rural Ontario with neither the budget to pay for the expensive testing required nor the volunteers to transport water samples to provincially accredited laboratories in urban centres hours away; and

"Whereas the history of test results at a small drinking water system location is only a small factor in the risk assessment, to the point where sites with a decade or more of clean test results may still be required to conduct monthly or weekly testing;

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

"That the Minister of Health amend Ontario regulation 319/08 to give the testing track record of a small drinking water system greater weight in the risk assessment process."

I agree with the petition, will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Jenny.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

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

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

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

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with" 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” people of the northeast.

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

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I have a petition from residents of York South–Weston, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas St. John the Evangelist Catholic elementary school in Weston is overcrowded, with 480 students in a school designed for 260; and

“Whereas the students will be relocating 40 minutes away in September 2012 during the duration of the Metrolinx Weston tunnel construction; and

“Whereas the Toronto Catholic District School Board has placed St. John the Evangelist third on the urgent capital priority list for 2012;

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

“Respectfully request full funding to replace St. John the Evangelist school during the Metrolinx Weston tunnel construction; therefore, the students are not relocated twice.”

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature and hand it over to page William.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have a petition here signed by thousands of people.

“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 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 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.”

I’m proud to affix my name to this petition.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission provides services which are vital to the north’s economy; and

“Whereas it is a lifeline for the residents of northern communities who have no other source of public transportation; and

“Whereas the ONTC could be a vital link to the Ring of Fire;

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

“That the planned cancellation of the Northlander and the sale of the rest of the assets of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission be halted immediately.”

I wholeheartedly agree, affix my signature and send it down with page Constantine.

IMMIGRATION POLICY POLITIQUES D’IMMIGRATION

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario entitled “Respect for Diverse Communities.”

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

“Whereas the settlement of new Canadians to the province of Ontario remains a joint responsibility of the federal and provincial governments;

“Whereas the settlement of new Canadians to the province of Ontario remains a function of the departments of citizenship and immigration at both the federal and provincial levels;

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“Whereas Ontario still remains the destination of choice for new Canadians in our federation;

“We, the undersigned, ask that the province contact its federal counterpart, including but not limited to the Honourable Jason Kenney and his department, and notify them:

“That the proposed reduction in the number of centres in the GTA authorized to perform immigration medical exams, the IMM 1017, is ill-advised;

“That the reduction in number of centres in the GTA where services are offered in French is ill-advised;

“Que la réduction du nombre de centres dans la région du grand Toronto où les services sont offerts en français est mal avisée;

“That the virtual elimination of centres where services are offered in the GTA in the languages of Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Farsi, Tamil and Arabic is ill-advised, and that it not only will inflict undue hardship on those cultural communities but is generally discordant with the Canadian values of openness, pluralism and diversity.”

I certainly support this petition, will affix my signature and send it to you via page Brady.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O’Toole: Madam Speaker, I apologize for missing the event last night. But anyway, I have a

petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows: Four 2.5 megawatt industrial wind turbines proposed by Leader Resources at Port Granby area.

“Whereas the residents who have signed this petition have concerns regarding the direct and indirect impact on the well-being of inhabitants and the local environment in the vicinity of industrial wind turbines; and

“Whereas there are concerns regarding setbacks, health issues, the impact on the local environment and property values; and

“Whereas the residents who have signed are certainly in favour of renewable energy but are not reassured by the current level of research on the subject;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to call for a moratorium on industrial wind turbines and for the project in” the area that is in the sensitive Port Granby crown land low-level radioactive waste site. These are two incompatible uses on the same property.

I sign this petition, support it and give it to William.

SCHOOL CLOSURE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of residents from Woodslee in my riding of Essex. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board has begun a process to consider closing St. John the Evangelist school;

“Whereas St. John the Evangelist school is vital to the future well-being of the Woodslee hamlet and its students; and

“Whereas schools are not just buildings for learning; they are the heart of the community;

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

“To take whatever steps are necessary, including boundary adjustments, to keep open and maintain the long-term viability of St. John the Evangelist school.”

I agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and present it to page Constantine.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Alzheimer's disease is a degenerative brain disease that causes thinking and memory impairment. Alzheimer's disease is progressive, worsens over time, and will eventually lead to death;

“Whereas there are an estimated 181,000 Ontarians diagnosed with Alzheimer's and related dementia today, and that number is set to increase by 40% in the next 10 years;

“Whereas Alzheimer's disease creates social, emotional and economic burdens on the family and friends of those suffering with the disease;

“Whereas the total economic burden of dementia in Ontario is expected to increase by more than \$770 million per year through to 2020;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to establish an Alzheimer's advisory council to advise the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on matters pertaining to strategy respecting research, treatment and the prevention of Alzheimer's and other related dementia.”

I sign my name and I present this to page Dia.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

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

“Whereas a report from Ontario's Auditor General on the province's air ambulance service, Ornge, found a web of questionable financial deals where tens of millions of taxpayers' dollars have been wasted and public safety compromised;

“Whereas Ornge officials created a ‘mini-conglomerate’ of private entities that enriched former senior officers and left taxpayers on the hook for \$300 million in debt;

“Whereas government funding for Ornge climbed 20% to \$700 million, while the number of patients airlifted actually declined;

“Whereas a subsidiary of Ornge bought the head office building in Mississauga for just over \$15 million and then leased it back to Ornge at”—at least—“a rate 40% higher than fair market rent;

“Whereas the Liberal Minister of Health completely failed in her duty to provide proper oversight of Ornge;

“Whereas this latest scandal follows the eHealth boondoggle where \$2 billion in health dollars have been wasted;

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

“The government of Ontario immediately appoint a special all-party select committee to investigate the scandals surrounding Ornge.”

I support this petition and am pleased to affix my signature.

TOURISM

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition which reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas tourism is a vital contributor to the economy of northwestern Ontario, bringing hundreds of millions of dollars into the province's economy from other provinces and the United States, unlike other regions in the province whose target demographic is people who already reside in Ontario;

“Whereas northwestern Ontario's tourist economy has been under attack by government policies such as the cancellation of the spring bear hunt, the harmonized sales

tax...the strong Canadian dollar and difficulties passing through the Canada/United States border; and

“Whereas studies have shown that tourism in the northwest nets significantly more money per stay than other regions of the province, in part due to visitors frequenting historical sites, parks and roadside attractions that they learn about through travel information centres;

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

“To keep the travel information centres in Fort Frances, Kenora and Rainy River open permanently to ensure that northwestern Ontario maximizes the benefit of our tourist economy.”

I fully support this petition and I will give it to Manak.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Kim Craitor: I’m pleased to introduce this petition, and I want to thank the mayor of Fort Erie, Doug Martin, for presenting this petition to me the day of the rally in front of Queen’s Park. The petition reads as follows:

“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.”

I’m pleased to sign my name to this petition.

USE OF CONSERVATION RESERVES

Ms. Laurie Scott: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the proposed preliminary management statement and proposed additions for Clear Lake Conservation Reserve and Dawson Ponds and Plastic Lake Conservation Reserve, dated 9 February 2012, has been issued without consultation, is based on factual inaccur-

acies and would ban the existing use of this area by cross-country skiers, snowshoers, anglers and residents;

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

“(1) Recall the proposed management statement to correct the factual inaccuracies;

“(2) Eliminate the 45-day consultation period to allow full and fair discussion with community groups; and

“(3) Require ministry staff to engage in an open discussion with local groups to negotiate fair terms of responsible community use, including the use of groomers to allow the historical trails to continue to be accessible to community users.”

Signed by many, many people from Haliburton county, and I affix my signature.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT ACT (RENT INCREASE GUIDELINE), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA LOCATION À USAGE D’HABITATION (TAUX LÉGAL D’AUGMENTATION DES LOYERS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 16, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 19, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of the rent increase guideline / *Projet de loi 19, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d’habitation en ce qui concerne le taux légal d’augmentation des loyers.*

1600

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

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, we’re here to provide some comments on Bill 19. I want to thank the member for his previous comments.

I think it’s important for us to look at some comments that were made at the time that the original act that Bill 19 hopes to amend was put forward. I want to quote, just because he’s opposite me, the member for Scarborough Centre, who was then the parliamentary assistant to the minister. Here’s what he said of the process that took place at that time:

“It took some time and it took an engagement of unprecedented proportions with stakeholders. In fact, I don’t think this province has ever gone through such a substantial consultation process. We’ve travelled the province. We’ve been in 10 different communities, 10 different cities, hearing from landlords and tenants in Toronto, Kitchener, London, Ottawa, Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Kingston and Hamilton.

“We’ve had over 5,000 completed questionnaires sent in to us, over 1,200 telephone inquiries, 250 written sub-

missions and 30 different meetings with various other regional stakeholder groups. Over 1,500 people participated in those meetings.”

Had I been in this place, I probably would have congratulated the government on doing such a wide consultation, but certainly, I think, when you look at this piece of legislation, the government could be a bit embarrassed, because there was no consultation with this. In fact, if you look at some of the more substantive issues that we have on the housing front today—if we did have those consultations, if we did just take a snapshot of the numbers that the parliamentary assistant then, now the minister, who sits across—if we had done that type of consultation, we wouldn't be here debating Bill 19. We would have a far more substantive bill that deals with the real housing issues that are in this province—the fact that we have such a shortage of rental housing accommodation.

Those are the issues that I think we should be talking about rather than this small, narrow-minded, unnecessary bill before us, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Mario Sergio: Just to make some comments on the presentation by the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry—it's a wonderful region of our province. Madam Speaker, just to make some comments on this particular bill: Number one, I think we have to compliment the minister for bringing forth this bill at this very particular time. There is no better time to look after our needy people, especially the tenants: at a time when our economy is so much in doubt. What better thing can we do for our tenants to give them peace of mind instead of worrying about what their rent is going to be next month or next year?

Given the economic situation, I think it's the most propitious time to let our tenants know that for the next four years they can have peace of mind and concentrate more on working, growing their family, planning a holiday, planning recreation events with their families, instead of worrying about the next bill.

I have to say, Madam Speaker, that this has received already quite a bit of consultation, but I would like to see this bill move ahead and see what else can be done, can be said, can be brought forth to improve it.

I have to say, when we deal with housing in general, that when that particular government came into power, I was on that side and Minister Al Leach was sitting on this side here. The day after they took power, they cancelled every housing project, period—completely. They did not build one rental unit, one affordable unit.

I think we are very proud of the record of this government with respect to housing and affordable housing.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Durham?

Mr. John O'Toole: I just have to respond to the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry on Bill 19, but I can't for a moment sit and ignore what the

member from York West said, because I was here as well.

What we didn't do, we didn't subsidize the physical property. What we did is, we gave a housing allowance, which was more flexible and available much more broadly than waiting for projects—capital—to be built. We got on with the job immediately and gave a shelter allowance, we called it.

In fairness, I think the point must be made that our members have been standing somewhat in protest. This Bill 19 substantially does nothing except set a minimum and a maximum for rent guidelines.

Our protestations have all been about the failure of this government to listen to the opposition and to have a select committee on Ornge—the wasteful, scandalous spending of almost \$1 billion on Ornge medical evacuation helicopters. Let's be very clear: That's what we're debating here. This bill has nothing in it. Bill 19 could basically be passed in a moment's notice. But what is important is, we support the idea of having a democratic process in here where the government actually listens and they stand up and explain to the people of Ontario the wasteful spending not just in eHealth but the Ornge helicopter fiasco.

Frank Klees has been asking questions on that every day of the Minister of Health. In my view, she should resign today out of respect for this process. That's what this discussion is about, in my opinion.

Bill 19: There's really nothing in it. Let's be honest here. There's the bill. For the people watching, there's the bill. It's about four lines. That's the bill that we're spending all this time on. Why are they wasting time on this bill when there was a bill on resolving co-op housing disputes yesterday, which is Bill 65—

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

The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I thank the members who stood to comment on my discussion on Bill 19. There were some good points raised. I think it comes back to a bill that really doesn't do anything. It's trying to make—I guess it's a good-looking bill for show, a “feather bill,” as colleagues to my left called it.

Really, we're looking at trying to get at costs. We see now that the rent increases have well been within what this bill is looking at for the last 10 years, so I'm not sure why it's put out there, especially when we have some major increases going on. We've heard people talking about the increases to hydro: 85% for people with a normal meter. Anybody who's lucky enough to get a new smart meter—150% increases. This government would never run on a platform if they were to do that. As the Auditor General was so clear to say, it's up to this government to let people know what this Green Energy Act is costing this province. Unfortunately, I guess, it will likely end up bankrupting this province.

We're looking at a budget here that spends an extra \$2 billion over last year. We have the gall not only to ask

our children and our grandchildren to pay for this debt in the future, but then we're going to turn around and ask them to pay our pensions because the pension plans aren't funded either. There has got to be a plan with this government, and we just don't see it.

I think the people are starting to come around. I think the next time there's an election, they'll put somebody in who will address some of the issues, because down the road, when we've lost our pensions and we can't afford to live in places because of the cost, we have to take action. Being prudent today and the savings we put in today will be there for us tomorrow. I think we need a responsible government to look at that, that will stand up and, really, that's standing up for the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak to Bill 19, the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act.

We have heard from many of our colleagues over and over the past few days, months, about the issue with this bill; namely, that it does little, if anything, to actually make rent more affordable for everyday Ontarians. We have heard the disturbing statistics about the massive number of people in many cities across this province who are on wait-lists for affordable housing, who live in shelters and who are experiencing extreme poverty as a result of high rent costs. Capping the allowable annual rent increase which is charged by landlords to 2.5% doesn't address the reality that rent is just too darned high these days.

I was speaking with a young woman yesterday. She's in her 30s, and let's call her Claire. She's very well educated and has a really good job. She is also a single mother of a young son who is in daycare. But when I asked her about her housing situation and the cost of rent, it was evident that sky-high rent costs are not just a serious everyday problem and concern for low-income people and those around and below the poverty line; even those with full-time jobs are having great difficulties paying their rent and keeping afloat.

1610

Previously, this woman lived in shared housing, which gave her cheap rent. However, once her child was born, she needed to find a different place. She has a two-bedroom home, modest. It's an apartment, which she paid \$1,300 a month for, four years—or actually, this was four years ago. However, this rent has been subject to rent increases annually, making it much higher now. But this is cheap in the city, so she tells me.

With no job security, she was unemployed after her maternity leave, leaving her in a desperate situation, facing homelessness with a small baby. Thankfully, after months and months of looking for work and using cash advances on her Visa to pay for rent, to pay for food, she was lucky enough that she found a job—just in time to have her landlord tell her that his daughter was going to move into the apartment that she held, and she now had to move out. She looked at dozens of apartments.

However, rent had risen hundreds of dollars over the past few years. Everything was so much more expensive for her, and a challenge to find something, just a little something, for her to call her home.

Her landlord told her she could stay if she agreed to pay the hydro bills, which had been previously included in her rent. She agreed, knowing full well that what she was agreeing to and what he was proposing was technically not allowed under the landlord and tenant act. But she knew full well that even with paying the extra for the hydro bill, the rent would still be cheaper than many of the other options that she looked at. She was not in a position to challenge him, even though what was going on, she knew full well, was illegal.

Even though this young woman makes over \$50,000 a year after taxes, she pays over 50% of her income on rent, she pays another 25% on daycare costs—she is one of the few fortunate ones to have subsidized daycare in this city—leaving 25% of her income for massive student loan repayments, bills, food and other household essentials. Often, she must rent her other bedroom and sleep with her son just because she can't afford to live on her single salary.

This is an endless stress which plagues so many people in this province of ours: the length people must go to to keep up and to keep a roof over their heads; the money borrowed from credit cards just to be paid back with tons of interest. Every day, thousands of Ontarians are facing the reality that they are just a small step away from homelessness, from despair. So when reading this bill, it is not hard to see that a savings of a few dollars a month does nothing to help this working mother or others like her pay their rent and stay afloat each month. We know that she is one in five Ontarians who pay more than half her income on rent.

The NDP would work to phase in a new housing benefit of \$100 a month for individuals and \$125 a month for families who pay more than 30% of their income on rent. Now that is something that would help.

We're here in this Legislature because we're elected by our constituents to listen to their concerns and commit to working on their behalf to making their life a little bit better and affordable for them. It really just takes a few moments to ask people about their housing situation, and you will hear the same story over and over again, time and time again.

It doesn't matter where you live in this province. The need for affordable housing is an alarming, widespread crisis. I think that we can do better and we must. When I hear the staggering numbers of people in urban areas who are desperately in need of more affordable housing, I too remember the many First Nations communities I visited just a short time ago.

This country was made aware of dire housing conditions facing the community of Attawapiskat last fall. I was in that community. I looked in the faces. I saw the eyes. I noticed the despair. I saw the frustration. I felt it. But on my tour through many other First Nations communities, it was evident that this was not just a crisis

unique to Attawapiskat. There are countless other First Nations communities living in similar troubling conditions.

In my riding of Algoma–Manitoulin, there are hundreds of families on the wait-lists for affordable housing and there is not even an estimated time for when housing will be made available. An organization in my riding has submitted an application to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for capital funding over their national allocation for a much-needed project. They, along with many other organizations, realize the urgent need for housing in many of these rural communities.

Seniors on fixed incomes and persons with disabilities are often on the losing end of this housing crisis. This organization is looking to get funding to transform a recently closed long-term-care facility into a supportive rental housing project. This would create 30 apartments for seniors, singles and persons with disabilities. This seemed like a logical thing to do: The space is there; the need is there. These are the sorts of projects we need to support and move forward in order to create housing spaces that are so greatly needed in our province. We need this government to commit to building housing that meets the needs of the people of this province.

In September 2010, my colleague Cheri DiNovo introduced a private member's bill to strengthen tenant protections. Its provisions included strengthening rent control, implementing landlord licensing, protecting tenants from excessive utility charge increases, extending protections to more tenants, implementing a standard lease agreement and improving access to justice for tenants.

These are small measures that we must make in order to crack down on slum landlords who are seriously taking advantage of often the most marginalized people in our province. We need to address the gap between low-income households and market rent so that people, like the single mother I mentioned earlier, people like the seniors and persons with disabilities and other low-income folks are not burdened each and every day with whether on the first of the month they will have a roof over their heads or not.

Speaker, I believe this bill fails to address the real concerns of this province: the need to make life more affordable for all Ontarians. Again, Speaker, I will say we can do better and we must.

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to comment on Bill 19 and the comments from the member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

I did just want to comment on some comments that one of my colleagues made earlier, because he was talking about what happened when the Harris government cancelled all the affordable housing projects that were being developed. It's interesting that the very last affordable housing units that came out of the NDP government were built in Guelph; that in fact the Conservatives attempted to cancel—actually went to court to try

and cancel—affordable housing units, and lost that battle because the contract had already been signed. Guelph got the last of the NDP's affordable housing units, so that little bit of history.

1620

But if we look at what's happened more recently, or even going back, because in the 1980s and in the 1990s you would often see increases of 6%, 8% a year in rent, and hence we ended up with the rent control legislation that we have—

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The highest average rate was under the NDP.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My colleague here helpfully says that the highest average increases in rent were actually under the NDP. Then, when you look more recently at what we have done with the legislation, what we see is that, on average, over the term of our government, the increase has been 1.9%. But this year under the guideline, it's actually been 0.7%. So you actually see it falling dangerously low for landlords.

To put it simply, what Bill 19 does is it establishes a corridor. Rent increases will not be less than 1% and will not be more than 2.5%.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to congratulate the member for Algoma–Manitoulin for his very kind words in terms of his constituents. I appreciate the fact that you consistently in this place stand up for your constituents.

You also made some very good points about the failure of this government's affordable housing strategy. Last September, two groups in this province, the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association and the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, Ontario region, produced a report in their edition called *Where's Home*. It found, basically, that this government's affordable housing and poverty reduction strategy just isn't working. It showed clearly that the gap between homeowners' and tenants' incomes is growing wider, that waiting lists for assisted housing are getting longer and have swelled to over 152,000 since 2010, and that vacancy rates, particularly in urban areas, are getting even more tightened.

The fact that he brought up Bill 4, which would have taken the HST off home heating, which obviously the Progressive Conservatives supported with the New Democrats, I think would have gone a long way to help the burden of tenants. In fact, the study that I quoted earlier showed that energy costs have gone up 45% since 2002, and between February 2010 and February 2011 alone, the increase was a staggering 12.2%. Not surprisingly, our food bank usage from tenants has been increased. If you look at some of the studies, they show that at food banks, 64% are tenants in market housing and 27% in social housing. It's not surprising, when you look at studies from the Ontario Association of Food Banks, that people who use their services consume about 65% of their income just on rent.

So I applaud him for his comments. This government has not gone to the root cause of the problem with Bill 19, and I thank him for his comments today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm also happy to lend my voice to this debate today in regards to Bill 19. I also think that it unfortunately doesn't go far enough.

We have, as you've heard, single moms who are making \$50,000-plus a year who still can't make ends meet. When we continue to put increases on top of increases, yet we want to put freezes on people's wages and freezes on social assistance, we can't speak out of both sides of our mouths and expect people in this province to make it work.

In Hamilton, just the average bachelor—which isn't much to look at, you know, without the licensed landlords on the side of that, but I'll get to that—\$510 a month. They're making \$599 a month, and our food banks are actually starving out now also.

So we really have to look at the root of this issue. We have to make sure that we're getting to the heart of the core, to make sure that we do have single moms who are making a decent wage of \$50,000-plus a year—think about a person on social assistance who's barely making \$15,000 a month, and we're expecting them to make it work. In the city of Toronto, I couldn't imagine having to pay the rent here. In Hamilton, it's high, so paying it in Toronto—and I'm not sure of the rest of the province; I know it varies from place to place. It's just simply unaffordable. Making sure that maybe putting a cap on it for some time until we get our incomes up to the level might be something else to look at.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for York West.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'd just like to compliment the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. I have to tell the member that the tenants in my area are no different than any other tenants, and I can sympathize with him. I know he speaks very convincingly about the needs not only of his people but the need for more affordable housing.

On top of what we are debating today with respect to Bill 19, I have to remind the House that we have tried to strike a deal with the federal government for funding because we recognize the need for more affordable housing. As of late, we only get something like \$480 million, which is certainly not enough. Out of those funds, we also created, if my memory serves me well, some 300 homes for the native people up north as well. That created some 5,000 jobs, but that is not enough to face the shortage that we have in affordable housing.

In the last few years we have built considerable housing, but compared to the needs, we need a lot more. We managed to sign the largest housing contract or program with the federal government. We have initiated, for the first time, the long-term affordable housing strategy. This bill is part of that particular strategy.

Quite a bit has been done, but I think this bill goes a long way. I hope that it will travel. The opposition and the public out there are welcome: Make some submissions and bring some much better ideas to improve the bill. I'll look at the opposition for doing that.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'd like to thank the member from Guelph, the member from Leeds-Grenville, the member from Hamilton Mountain and the member from York West.

I just want to share a couple of words with the members that are in here. I will always speak on behalf of the people of Algoma-Manitoulin. That will always be the first words that are going to be coming out of my mouth from this seat that I hold here. Every single day that I will come here will be the words from them first. Then I will listen to what we have as a team here within our caucus to bringing that message forward on behalf of the rest of the Ontarians that are being affected by this.

I am not sure what doors everybody seems to be knocking on, but the message that I keep receiving, day in and day out, is a consistent one: "We need help. We need you to work as a Parliament. We need you to work here as members and listen to the needs that we have. We can't make ends meet at the end of the month. We can't. We're making decisions based on, 'Am I paying rent or am I paying my hydro bill? Do I have enough at the end of this month in order to buy my full prescription or will I be splitting it in half and trying to make ends meet with the sale that I can get on the corner?'" That is an embarrassment for this province, if our seniors and our people that are on our street are making these types of decisions.

I hear words in regard to "feather bills," and I really don't care for those words. We need to help Ontarians today. We need to do it now. We need to take that action. We have that opportunity. Let's make it right. Let's do the right decisions. It's frustrating to hear, when we're talking about our food banks—and by all means, I hope every one of you participates at your local food bank once in a while, not as a photo opportunity but to really go out there and help them, because they need the help. They've been the backbone carrying the burden that is going on on the everyday streets in our communities.

1630

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

Mrs. Jane McKenna: The member from Algoma-Manitoulin, your passion was phenomenal. Thank you so very much for what you said. It was nice to sit here and listen to the passion that comes out.

I rise today to speak on Bill 19, which seeks to amend the Residential Tenancies Act with regard to the rent increase guidelines. I'll start by saying that the debate on Bill 19 has been interesting because it has asked us to think about a very fundamental issue. It has asked us to consider what it means to have a home and the importance of that.

Housing is obviously a very basic human need, and "home" is a powerful word, a powerful idea. It's the foundation on which we build our lives, where we raise and nurture our families, cultivate loving relationships, host our friends and neighbours. It is a building block of community. It is also where we go through all of the rich

and wonderful and sometimes heartbreaking drama that of course comes along with relationships and family. It's where we experience the fleeting and fragile nature of the world as we watch our families age, and ourselves as well.

A lot of change goes on in any life and in any home at the best of times, and it's not always the best of times. Certainly, for 600,000 households living in overcrowded, substandard, unaffordable housing or the 600,000 Ontarians looking for work right now, it's nowhere near the best of times.

In introducing Bill 19, the minister mentioned National Housing Day, which she said was an important reminder of the importance of affordable housing. She said, "We know that access to affordable housing is crucial to breaking the cycle of poverty, that access to affordable housing means that students will do better at school and that people will be healthier."

So, yes, it is important that we acknowledge the need for a range and mix of housing with varying affordable levels so that Ontarians can weather the turbulence of this life with grace, dignity and a bit of comfort. That mix also allows our towns and cities to accommodate a variety of households we want in the fabric of our neighbourhoods. We know that such a mix makes for a healthy, diverse community. But a recent report by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities found that over the last decade we have fallen short of the ideal. More and more Ontario tenants are spending more than 30% of their income on rent; one in five pays more than half their income on rent. That makes it very hard for them to budget money for food, clothing, medicine and other basic necessities. It causes unnecessary stress.

In my home riding of Burlington, food bank use has gone up by 25% since 2006. The lack of affordable housing and low-rent units makes it too expensive for many low-income individuals to even live in Burlington, and it raises the risk of homelessness for those who do. Officials tell us that roughly 1,200 individuals in Halton become homeless every year, but the region has a relative lack of emergency and transitional housing options to serve the community in times of crisis such as these. The options we have are usually at capacity.

There's an extensive waiting list for assisted housing in Halton. Households usually wait for three years for housing, but the wait can be up to 10 years. To most of us, that's completely unimaginable. Province-wide, that waiting list has grown up to 152,000 and counting—that's about the size of the city of Burlington—when the Liberals took office in 2003.

In saying that, Speaker, since the McGuinty government has blocked all of our efforts to have a select committee for Ornge, I move adjournment of debate.

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

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1635 to 1705.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): All those in favour, please stand and be counted by the Clerk.

All those opposed, please stand and be counted.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 22; the nays are 38.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I declare the motion lost.

The member for Burlington.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Speaker, the reason that I moved adjournment of the debate just now is because the people of Ontario have asked us to get to the bottom of what is going on in Ornge through the work of a select committee. Ornge is an organization that has tied itself up in knots in order to evade official scrutiny and has cost Ontario taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars that we know of.

The Minister of Health has gone on record in this House on numerous occasions voicing her support for a select committee on Ornge if it was the will of the House—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask the member to maintain her—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. I'd ask the member to keep her comments related to Bill 19.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I call for adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Ms. McKenna has called for adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1707 to 1737.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Ms. McKenna has moved adjournment of the House. All those in support, please rise and be counted.

All those opposed, please stand.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 57; the nays are 0.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): This House stands adjourned until 9 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1739.

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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
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Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
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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	
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Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
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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	
McDonell, 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 civiles 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	

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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

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: David Zimmer
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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
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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

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Shafiq Qaadri
Laura Albanese, Teresa J. Armstrong
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Mike Colle
Frank Klees, Jack MacLaren
Paul Miller, Rob E. Milligan
Shafiq Qaadri
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
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Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Gilles Bisson, Donna H. Cansfield
Steve Clark, Garfield Dunlop
Jeff Leal, Lisa MacLeod
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, France Gélinas
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Reza Moridi, Jerry J. Ouellette
Liz Sandals, Jagmeet Singh
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Michael Coteau, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Ted Chudleigh, Dipika Damerla
Cheri DiNovo, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Ernie Hardeman, Tracy MacCharles
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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