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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 19 April 2012

Jeudi 19 avril 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 19 avril 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Let us pray.

Prayers.

WEARING OF BADGES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I seek unanimous consent to wear the “I Love Dance” logo today. It is a celebration of the Canadian Dance Assembly, as they kick off their year-long fundraising.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested unanimous consent to wear the badge. Agreed? Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ACCEPTING SCHOOLS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 POUR DES ÉCOLES TOLÉRANTES

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 18, 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 Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): At the adjournment of the debate, Mr. O'Toole had just finished his comments, so we'll go to questions and comments. The member for Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to commend the member for Durham for his remarks and indicate that, really, we should be making a little more progress with respect to anti-bullying in this House, and it's unfortunate that things are a bit bogged down. We are moving forward with the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, Mrs. Witmer's bill, Bill 14, hopefully in committee soon. We should have been at the stage where Bill 13 and Bill 14, the government bill and the PC bill—a bill that Mrs. Witmer worked on for some three years now—were both at committee, and not have Bill 13 stuck at second reading because we want a select committee to delve into the Ornge matter.

We offered the government the opportunity to have both bills put into committee after first reading, Mr. Speaker, which is rarely done but can be done with consent of the House, and there would be a meshing or a

melding of the two bills and we would bring forward the best, most comprehensive anti-bullying legislation that I think this country has ever seen. There still is that opportunity. We believe that we can move forward, and we will eventually move forward, but the fact of the matter is, it's unfortunate that that wasn't done at this time.

Mrs. Witmer's bill has a clear definition of bullying, which we don't see in the government bill, Bill 13; early intervention—incorporation into the curriculum beginning in kindergarten so that students at all ages will learn that bullying is bad; a province-wide ministry model for prevention and intervention plans; the development of detailed school board prevention plans; and the reporting of incidents of bullying in schools, which is not in the government bill. So we should work together to try to merge the two bills and come up with one that's going to deal with this issue once and for all, hopefully.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to just rise to make comment on how important I think this bill is. I'm happy to hear the member opposite talk about working together, because I think what is really important is that we get this legislation passed so that we can have a framework, a legislative framework within which our schools can function.

Some years ago, we put in place an equity and inclusive education policy. What that did was reintroduce into our school system the notion that equity and the seeking of equity in an inclusive education environment in our schools was important because, in fact, for some years, previous to our coming to office, the word “equity” had been expunged from the education ministry. There was no policy or legislation that actually included the notion that equity was important. I think an inclusive classroom and an inclusive school system is what this Bill 13 is about.

On the issue of Bill 13 and Bill 14, Bill 14 having been brought forward by the member for—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Kitchener–Waterloo.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —Kitchener–Waterloo, and our Bill 13, which was brought forward by our Minister of Education, my understanding is that there is a lot of goodwill on this side of the House to merge these two bills, to take pieces of the opposition bill and put it into Bill 13 and to get the legislation passed. I think there's a bit of a disconnect between some of the language and rhetoric that's being used and what's actually happening on the ground. My hope is that the language and the rhetoric could come closer to the reality and we

could actually work together, get this legislation passed, because it is in the best interests of all our children in our schools that this legislation be in place and that anti-bullying for all be the norm.

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

Hon. John Milloy: I'm happy to join in the debate on this important bill in terms of offering two minutes of comments.

Much has been made about the importance of the bill by all sides of the House. I, I think, as well as all of my colleagues, have been particularly disappointed that in terms of the level of debate on this bill that what we've heard from the official opposition has basically been the sound of bells ringing. We're now at over 11 hours that we've debated this bill, and for the most part all the opposition has done, instead of talking about it constructively, has been to ring bells.

It's not about me personally—the bells ring; we have a break here for 30 minutes as we wait for it—but it's the simple fact that what this bill is about is young people. It's about our education system. It's about educators. I've certainly been hearing from many individuals about how concerned they are that we're not making progress on this bill. I certainly acknowledge the good work that has been done by my neighbour to the north, our colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo, in terms of her bill, Bill 14. Certainly, the government has approached the opposition with the intention of seeing ways that we could reconcile both bills.

To that end, I think it's important to put on the record that the Minister of Education has written formally to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo and made sure that the opposition is aware of our openness to amending the government bill to take what is best from both of them and combine it in the type of bill that could be dealt with by this Legislature. As the government House leader, I was disappointed that we couldn't get agreement moving forward of how we could pull the two together, despite a great deal of discussion. But that being said, we've always made known—and I just referenced the letter—that if we were to move G13 to committee, finally, if the opposition were to quit with the bell-ringing, we would be very open to having the types of discussions that would strengthen the bill.

0910

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

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I'm looking forward to participating in the debate on this bill a little bit later—

Hon. John Milloy: We want to hear it, Frank.

Mr. Frank Klees: Well, the government House leader will hear.

I think members of this House know that the issue of bullying is one that I've brought forward in this House on many occasions. It's a very serious one. I have dealt with constituents on many occasions. I know the effect that bullying has, not only on the victim of bullying but the victim's family as well, and I have repeatedly called in

the past on the Minister of Education and on the government to bring forward meaningful legislation that will make it very clear what the obligations are on the part of the teaching staff and on the part of the principals in our education system. I have called repeatedly for a recognition of the victims of bullying.

In the past, most of the focus has been on the bully and how does one deal with the bully. Who we tend to forget are the victims who struggle with the effects—the psychological effects—that bullying has had on them. I'm concerned about the bill before us, the government bill, because it does not address in a comprehensive way many of those aspects; I am pleased that my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo has brought forward a bill that does in a very comprehensive way. We look forward to seeing what kind of progress we can make to ensure that those essential parts of that member's bill are incorporated.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Durham has two minutes for a response.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much. I'm very impressed this morning that the Minister of Education, Ms. Broten, is here as well as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Ms. Wynne. Both have spoken. I appreciate that, both having served as Minister of Education.

But more importantly, my remarks on Bill 13 were to stress the importance of and the balance that Mrs. Witmer, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo—in the time she spent on developing a full and comprehensive response to bullying.

In my remarks yesterday, I was just citing right from the paper that there were two incidents where cyber-bullying was cited as being provocative and current. That type of bullying has a very low profile in this overall discussion on Bills 13 and 14.

When you look at the strength of the Anti-Bullying Act—and I think the member from Simcoe–Grey paraphrased it very respectfully. It's a clear definition of bullying in Bill 14, which is lacking in Bill 13. These bills need to come together.

Now they're going to deflect all this and say that we're ringing bells procedurally. This is a democracy and the opposition are very concerned that the government's not listening, not just in the budget but they're not listening on the need for a select committee on the wasteful, scandalous spending of Ornge helicopter—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I request the member to keep the comments to the bill we're debating.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, I'm trying to explain. All due respect to you, Speaker, all deference to you, that is one of the reasons for the bells.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Don't argue with the Speaker.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: See? Now they're yelling. The Liberals are yelling at us now. I'm trying to speak in a civilized way. I feel like I'm being bullied.

So, respectfully, Mrs. Witmer has put on the table early intervention incorporated into the curriculum

beginning in kindergarten, a provincial-wide ministry model for prevention, a development of the detailed school board prevention plan, counselling services for the victims and the perpetrators, ongoing professional development, parent and community engagement and consultation, publicizing anti-bullying initiatives and policy, reporting incidents, prompt investigation. This is why we need to move forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back to our exchange off-camera there, the fact of the matter that we're here this morning again debating Bill 13 is a product of an inability of the parties to get together and merge these bills after first reading. We didn't have to have Bill 13 mired where it is in the second reading debate. If we had agreed to bring the bills together, in somewhat an unprecedented way, in the social policy committee, where Mrs. Witmer's bill is right now, the government at any time could have taken Bills 13 and 14 and put them in committee, and we would have merged the bills.

Unfortunately, if I recall back then, the government had some requests of what the framework of that discussion would be. Our belief very strongly on this side of the House in the PC caucus, and mine as House leader, is that we're not going to allow, in a minority government, ministers of the crown to dictate what the committees of this Legislature will or won't do. Therefore, we simply wanted the bills to come together, let the committee decide how they would merge those bills, and allow the committee to do its work in an independent way, without the influence of a minister of the crown sending a letter dictating how that committee would behave.

That sets a very bad precedent for other committees of this Legislature and a very bad precedent in a minority Parliament. The Liberals don't have a majority anymore and they have to stop behaving like they do. The fact of the matter is, this issue could have been resolved.

We're very, very positive about Mrs. Witmer's bill, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, Bill 14. She spent three years developing the bill, travelling across the province, speaking with virtually every group and parents that had an interest in the issue—a lot of discussion, a lot of consultation.

The government has the option right now—Bill 14, Mrs. Witmer's anti-bullying bill, is in committee; it's before the social policy committee—to bring that forward for debate in committee and for clause-by-clause consideration and just simply pass Mrs. Witmer's bill.

It is a comprehensive bill and has far more features in it than the government's bill. It actually has a definition of bullying, which is a tricky thing to do, but it managed to create a definition with great buy-in from people across the province. It is a comprehensive way to protect children of every race, colour, creed, size, shape, whatever—it's very comprehensive—those who are subject to bullying.

It deals with the bullies themselves and requires them to go into—I'll say it in layman's terms—rehab and to

understand why bullying is wrong and to correct their ways.

Bill 14 is a comprehensive anti-bullying bill that focuses on prevention, accountability and awareness. Just reading from Mrs. Witmer's notes: "Bill 14 provides students, parents, educators and the community at large with a strategy to raise awareness and prevent bullying, as well as a process to resolve it...collect data and report" that data to the ministry, which is not contained in the Liberals' anti-bullying bill, Bill 13.

In fact, the Liberal bill does none of those things that I just mentioned. The Liberal bill does not address the root causes of bullying. We believe in tackling bullying head-on. Unlike the Liberal bill, the PC bill does so with four critical areas.

One is reporting of bullying and investigating root causes of bullying; accountability of school officials and boards to the ministry—that is, providing the data to the ministry and making sure that we can see this on a school-by-school basis and get to the root cause of it—education, a very important part of the member for Kitchener–Waterloo's bill, public awareness, a very important part of Bill 14—public awareness to prevent bullying—and the fourth area, which is not dealt with in the government's bill, is remedial education for bullies to teach them that bullying is unacceptable.

Mrs. Witmer's bill, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, requires anti-bullying lessons to be incorporated in the provincial curriculum from junior kindergarten to grade 12, something that the Liberal bill does not do.

Mr. Speaker, again I say—it is unfortunate, but I want to explain to the public the reason that this bill is being brought forward again this morning. It's perhaps that it is stuck in second reading because we wanted a committee to deal with the issue of the Ornge ambulance scandal, which is by far the largest scandal in my 21 years here in the Legislature. And yet the government wants to hide that. Some unparliamentary terms I wouldn't be allowed to use, but they don't want to get to the bottom of it. They don't want to have an inquiry.

We're stuck in a committee that has procedural rules that are archaic and are not attuned to getting to the bottom of these issues. It will take years, at the rate we're going. I think my colleague Mr. Klees, the member for Newmarket–Aurora, has done an exemplary job on this issue in uncovering tens of millions of dollars—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We're talking about Bill 13, and the member opposite is not talking about Bill 13. He's not even approaching the substance of the issue. I'd ask that he stick to the subject.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. I would ask the member to restrict his comments to Bill 13.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Fine. If the government doesn't want to hear the full story, then I move adjournment of

the debate, Mr. Speaker, because we need a select committee on Ornge.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has moved adjournment of the debate.

All in favour of adjournment, please say “aye.”

Those against adjournment, please say “nay.”

I believe the nays have it.

Call in the members; a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 0921 to 0951.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Could all members take their seats, please?

Mr. Wilson has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour of the motion, please stand.

All those against, please stand.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 28; the nays are 33.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. The motion is lost.

Mr. Wilson?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah, it shows that one of these days, we’re going to win one of these votes. Persistence will pay off. But again, we wouldn’t have to be ringing the bells if the government would agree to abide by the will of this House, which on a couple of occasions has actually voted and passed that a select committee be struck or an inquiry be held into the multi-million dollar scandal—as I said, the largest scandal I’ve ever seen in my 21 years here. Yet the government doesn’t want to get to the bottom of it and doesn’t want to uncover the whole truth. We have to do that in a committee room under archaic rules where witnesses can only appear for a half-hour. Therefore, Bill 13 is caught up in some procedural wrangling, but the government knows where the escape route is and refuses to take it.

The fact of the matter is that Bill 13 shouldn’t even be in second reading debate right now. It should be in committee, along with Bill 14, Mrs. Witmer’s bill, the honourable member from Kitchener–Waterloo, who spent three years of her life painstakingly meeting with parents, consultants, children who have been bullied and bullies themselves, to come up with a very comprehensive piece of legislation that I believe this House, if given a fair chance, could vote upon and would pass, and find it a very comprehensive piece of legislation that’s leading in this province, in this country and indeed in North America.

There are good parts of the government’s Bill 13, their anti-bullying bill, that we would like to merge into Mrs. Witmer’s bill, the honourable member from Kitchener–Waterloo. The government had every opportunity to do that after first reading, when the House leaders were having discussions. And the minister; our critic Lisa MacLeod, the member for Nepean–Carleton; and Mrs. Witmer, the honourable member from Kitchener–Waterloo, were having some discussions about how to, in a somewhat unprecedented way but a way they often do in Ottawa, pull the two bills after first reading. Therefore

there wouldn’t be this debate, if they were to go into committee to be merged together—the best of both worlds. It would come out of committee on agreement, unanimous consent perhaps, and bring it back to the House and then the debate we’d be having today would be on a merged bill. We would call it a government bill. It would be on a merged bill with the best of Bill 13 and Bill 14. Unfortunately, that hasn’t happened.

I still think the government knows the way out of this, but refuses to take that route. I would encourage them to come to their senses about this. I understand they’re having a press conference this afternoon to try and embarrass us or whatever. We have done our best to work with the government. We understand it’s a minority Parliament and that working together is what we should do, and you guys across the way keep carrying on like you have a majority. Shame on you.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I can speak for people in my riding, where we have seen the tragic face of bullying. The story is about 10 years old, but it’s worth repeating.

We had five beautiful young girls in Nickel Belt who made a suicide pact because they had been bullied in school. Out of those five beautiful girls, two of them died in that suicide pact and the other three managed to hang on.

I was a health care practitioner at the time and we spent a lot of time in that school. We spent a lot of time talking to the kids and asking them what went on. All of the kids knew what was going on. All of the kids knew that those five girls were being bullied, but nobody knew what to do. Nobody knew how to address it. Nobody knew how to reach out. Nobody knew how to help them.

Is there room for us to move? Absolutely. Bullying is still there in some of the schools. Because of the tragedy that happened in my riding, I would say a lot of the schools have put in good programs that help prevent all sorts of bullying. The kids understand, and the young people understand what it means to be bullied. They understand how to prevent it. They understand how to help one another, but all this happened because time, effort and resources were put into those schools to make sure that we teach those youth what to do, how to recognize it.

The two bills that we have in front of us, Bill 13 and Bill 14, once merged together and once we pick the best ideas from each, could do the same thing. The progressive programs we now have in Nickel Belt could be available to all. Let’s move on.

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

Hon. John Milloy: It’s a pleasure to speak again to add some comments and questions after hearing from the opposition House leader. Unfortunately, his speech was interrupted by ringing of the bells for 30 minutes, yet again; I think another indication that the opposition is not that serious about moving forward with this bill.

He spoke a lot about the member from Kitchener–Waterloo and the private member’s bill that she put for-

ward. Again, I want to reiterate, to put on the record, the openness of this government from day one to work with the opposition—in particular, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo and the member from Nepean–Carleton—in order to take what was the best of the two bills and put together one that was stronger.

We had what I felt were many productive discussions amongst House leaders about how we could move forward, a number of ways that we could reach agreement on sections that would move forward. Those collapsed because, quite frankly, the opposition didn't want to cooperate on that. But at the same time, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo's bill has gone to committee. We would be very happy to vote in favour of the government bill, send it to the same committee and continue to find ways to strengthen it.

To that end, the Minister of Education has provided the opposition a very detailed list of amendments that the government is willing to entertain, is willing to agree to, which would take what was the best from Bill 14 and add it to Bill 13.

The Minister of Education just handed this to me: "Definition of bullying"—a big issue—"Expanded definition of bullying to include cyberbullying, school climate surveys, principal's duty to investigate reports of serious student incidents"—and I could go on.

I think what's important for members to understand, and for those watching on television to understand, is the government's willingness to work with the opposition, to work with the member from Kitchener–Waterloo and bring forward the best bill possible.

1000

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to have a couple of minutes to add my voice in the conversation on Bill 13, and obviously on Bill 14 as well.

I'm interested in the remarks made by the government House leader because of the fact that, at this point, there has been no formal recognition. I think that, on this side, we look at Bill 14 in terms of the way in which it expresses concerns over pieces in Bill 13 that are missing.

Particularly, I just would want to comment on the whole issue of anti-bullying awareness, and part of that anti-bullying awareness piece is also recognizing the kinds of issues that perpetrators have and the important role that any piece of legislation should deal with—the victims, obviously, very clearly, first and foremost, but also the question of the perpetrators, in dealing with prevention and treatment.

I remember having a student many years ago who had been caught intimidating other students. When I knew that she was going to be going to the detention centre if she so much as threatened another student, never mind beat them up, which was usually what she did, I said to her, "Come on. You're too old for this. You're not supposed to beat up people." Her answer to me, very simple, said it all. She said, "Well, what do you do when you're

mad?" That's the kind of intervention and opportunity that is in Bill 14, and that's what we need to have.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: This is the first time I believe I've had the opportunity to rise and discuss the efforts made on behalf of this Legislature to address the issues of bullying. Maybe a perspective from the outside of this Legislature will help aid in the discussion.

I'm a parent of two young kids. My daughter is eight, my son is five and a half, and they're looking forward to having this type of protection. They understand it. We talk about it.

Also, in my riding, the visits I make to grade schools, to the grade 5 civics classes and to the grade 10s—we talk about this piece of legislation. It's interesting that within the brief hour that I have to talk to students in their schools about bullying, we've come to the resolution, to the conclusion that it's important that we need to address the issue, that those who are being bullied need protection, that those who feel marginalized and pointed out due to their sexuality, their physical attributes, their culture, their heritage, their language, their name, their height, their weight, the colour of their hair—it doesn't matter. Kids can be picked on for any reason. What's interesting is how quickly they come to the conclusion and to the resolution that it's a type of protection that—it's been far too long since it's been addressed.

Also, this House, potentially, is suffering from never having addressed the issue in our own educational system. We seem to be a group that has never had the ability within our school system to understand the impacts of bullying. We could have certainly used a couple of lessons in terms of how to act and to behave in our schools. We'd be getting along a lot better in this House if that were the case.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments? Further debate? Sorry. Member for Simcoe–Grey, you have two minutes for a reply.

Interjection.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Yes. Let's repeat it all again.

I just want to thank the member for Nickel Belt. Obviously she's got some good programming in her riding. As she said, let's get on with this so that all of the children in our schools can benefit from that type of programming—progressive programming, as she called it—with respect to anti-bullying.

The member for York Simcoe, I thank her for her comments, and the member for Algoma–Manitoulin and the government House leader. I see the list that the minister has provided the House leader as possibly a small step forward, some progress. We hadn't seen that up until this moment. The fact that the approach that the government took up to this moment has been—at one point they did agree to have this bill along with Mrs. Witmer's bill, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, in committee after first reading, but then the minister sent along a letter to both our critic Lisa MacLeod from

Nepean–Carleton and Mrs. Witmer from Kitchener–Waterloo, dictating what clauses we could look at and what clauses we couldn't look at.

We cannot allow a minister of the crown of a minority government under any circumstances to dictate what our committees are going to do in this Legislature. Committees are to be distanced from any influence in that way. Committee members are free to do what the committee wants to do, and we need to make sure that that is absolutely respected, particularly when the opposition has a majority in this House by two votes, and we have a majority in committee.

People want to know where this bogged down. It bogged down with the government dictating what a committee is going to do on this particular subject, and that simply isn't acceptable. It shouldn't be acceptable to any party in this House, and it just shows the government continues to rule like they have a majority, like the arrogant way they did in the last eight years.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: On behalf of my constituents, I rise to participate in the debate on Bill 13. It's probably an issue that I've received as much communication on as any bill that has ever been before the House, and I can say that overwhelmingly, the tone and the message that I've been asked to bring to this House is one of great frustration with this government for having taken an issue that is of such importance and made it complex in a way that was unnecessary to do. This is an issue that we should have been able and should still be able to find common ground among all parties and make a decision to move forward in the interest of our children. And yet this important piece of legislation has been allowed to become polarizing, unnecessarily so.

I want to share and put on the record a communication I've received from Ms. Karen Sebben, who is with a very highly respected organization called Many Voices—One vision to eliminate bullying. I'd like to read it and ask members of the Legislature to consider her thoughts: "It has been brought to our attention that public comments from the Liberal Party are quite opposite from the comments made behind closed doors when it comes to anti-bullying legislation. This is very disturbing, as we were hoping all parties would work together for the common good of our students in this province. We ask why it is not the intention of the Liberal government to work collaboratively with the opposition on anti-bullying legislation? Anti-bullying legislation of any kind must be non-partisan. The issue of bullying is a social issue and should be everyone's concern. It should be tackled with the same vigour as the Ornge air ambulance fiasco. Sadly, we ask ourselves how many more losses we need to see before we agree on an anti-bullying bill that protects all students. We implore you to put aside your obstinate thought process and do what is right for the children of Ontario."

1010

Speaker, it's that obstinate thought process that concerns us. We have two bills before the House: one intro-

duced by the government, the other by my colleague the member for Kitchener–Waterloo. Both deal with the issue of bullying. The difference between the two bills is that the legislation being proposed and tabled by the member from Kitchener–Waterloo is strictly focused on the issue of bullying. The bill introduced by the government contains clauses that we fail to understand why the government felt necessary to insert into that bill.

We proposed to the government that what should happen is that both bills, having been tabled, should go to committee so that we can, in fact, work together collaboratively to ensure that we have the best possible piece of legislation that addresses the issue of bullying. The government agreed to that, and then issued conditions that essentially took off the table a number of areas that were of concern to the official opposition. That is not a way to work collaboratively on this issue. We believe very firmly that it is in the best interests of ending up with the best possible legislation that both of those bills should go to committee. They should go to committee now.

Unfortunately, we have no reason to trust that the government will do what it says it will do once there is second reading on this bill. I believe that if the government wants to indicate good will, they will agree to refer both of those bills to committee.

Interjections.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: It's unfortunate—in one sense, I suppose it's a good thing—that the people who are watching the proceedings here can't see the members of the government and can't hear them, because what's going on right now is bullying at its best. I'm making a recommendation, making a proposal; the minister, Ms. Wynne, continues to heckle me, doesn't want to hear what I'm saying. She's entitled, you see, to disagree with me, but one would expect that she would at least allow a member of the Legislature to express his or her views without being heckled and bullied by a minister of the crown. I think we need bullying legislation for this place. It may put Ms. Wynne in her place. We would support that.

There's something that has happened here. Those who have been following the proceedings have been watching the dysfunction of this place. They've been watching a government that fails, first of all, to respect the official opposition and the express will of the Legislature. They have refused our request to move both bills into the committee so that we can, in fact, work together and find a resolution to this important issue. The government has also refused to accept the will of the Legislature when we had a vote here that we should strike a select committee of the Legislature to deal with the issue at Ornge.

Interjections.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: We hear the cackles over there and we hear the bullying that's going on. They don't want to be exposed for how they're suppressing the work of the Legislature. That's why I have no choice. Because they

refuse to strike the select committee of the Legislature, I have no choice but to move adjournment of this debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We're on the clock. I was about to stand.

Interjection.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has moved adjournment, but I'd note for the member that the time on the clock was almost—I was ready to stand up. So this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, please join me in welcoming Dr. Elise Wong—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Moridi, you'd have to be in your own seat.

The member from London–Kent–Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm really honoured this morning to introduce David and Jean Bonsfield. David and Jean Bonsfield are the family I lived with when I was a page back in 1991. So it's really nice to have them here.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Please join me in welcoming Dr. Elise Wong, of the Ontario Dental Association, to the House.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Deputy Premier. As you know, Deputy Premier, the rate of growth in our economy continues to trail behind the national average. Our unemployment rates are higher than the national average and have been for some 63 straight months. Ontario has half a million unemployed people looking for work.

Deputy Premier, how can you possibly say that Ontario's economy is doing well?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We had 46,000 net new jobs last month. And what has her party's answer been? Today, we're trying to debate the healthy homes tax credit. What do they do? They stall it in committee. When we want to talk about the economy in this House, when we're debating the budget bill, what does your party do? You're concerned about unemployment? Why won't you let us debate it? Why are you shutting down debate? And, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections: Ornge. Ornge. Ornge.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order, please. Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order please. I know you're all having fun, but this is my first

day and I would just ask us to be a little bit civil to each other. Okay?

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Calling out names and calling names and shutting down the House—maybe they want to take the advice that the Kitchener-Waterloo Record gave to the member for Cambridge this morning: “If this budget dies, all bets on the Cambridge hospital expansion are off.” Mr. Leone should keep this in mind and think long and hard before he votes to defeat the Liberals in the House.

Start debating. Start putting forward ideas. Quit the games, quit the name-calling and act like a responsible opposition and act in the best interests of your—

Interjections: Ornge. Ornge. Ornge.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would say that despite the protestations of the Deputy Premier, the facts speak for themselves. Last year, Ontario's economic growth sat at 1.8%, lower than the national average. Your own budget expects growth to be, in 2012, even lower at 1.7%, still lower than the national average. Even two years down the road, your budget hopes Ontario economic growth will sit at 2.2%, still lower than the national average.

Deputy Premier, don't you think Ontarians deserve a plan that's a little bit better than “possibly average”?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker: 345,000 new jobs since the bottom of the recession, more than the rest of the country combined.

But again, I ask the official opposition—we agree, the economy is first and top priority—why won't you debate the budget motion? Why do you ring the bells? Why do you insist on calling names? Look at this behaviour, Mr. Speaker, from the party of William Davis, the party of John Robarts, the party of Leslie Frost. Look at this. They don't want to talk about the economy. They are no opposition. They aren't putting forward ideas. They're playing games. They ought to be working with us and with the third party to move Ontario forward instead of this silly name-calling, the silly games in committee and preventing legitimate debate on the budget—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Again, back to the facts, Mr. Speaker. We have put forward a number of proposals for a jobs and growth plan, which have been consistently ignored by this minister and this government.

This budget does not outline anything that resembles a long-term plan to bring Ontario back to growth and productivity. For the past six months, we've been putting forward ideas to bring back Ontario, to put us back on to a road to prosperity and growth, and you've consistently knocked each and every one down.

Why is it, Deputy Premier? Can you tell us today why you've failed to include even one of our ideas in your budget?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of ideas in the budget that are very consistent

with what that member and her party have put forward, and most people know that. In fact, we've been criticized in some circles for being too much like you. As the Premier says, they say we're spending too much, and they say we're not spending enough. We think we've got it right, Mr. Speaker.

But I don't understand a party—if you've got such great ideas, why don't you stop the yelling? Why don't you stop the name-calling? Why don't you let committees work? Why don't you let the budget debate unfold? Why don't you quit scheduling nomination meetings? Why don't you do what your own constituents are telling you? Why don't you work for a better Ontario and stand up for this province, instead of the foolish, silly—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sit down, please. Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order, please. I know, again, that you're having fun, but let's put it this way: If you ask a question and you want the answer, I have to hear both sides. If the noise continues, I'm not hearing the question, neither am I hearing the answer. So I would just ask everybody to tone it down a little.

Next question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, my question is to the Deputy Premier. Yesterday, the former president of the Liberal Party of Canada, Alfred Apps, testified in the public accounts committee that Ornge did “nothing wrong”—did nothing wrong in setting up a web of spin-off companies that were siphoning off public funds. Then Mr. Apps proceeded to attack the Auditor General, and he called his report into question, referred to it as “misleading,” “incomplete” and “riddled with error.”

I ask the Deputy Premier, does he believe his friend the former president of the Liberal Party of Canada in this matter, or does he believe the Auditor General of Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I said to the media yesterday in scum that we have great confidence in the Auditor General, support his recommendations and, indeed, have moved forward on his recommendations. The minister has now brought forward legislation that incorporates many of the Auditor General's recommendations. As I also said to the media yesterday, there are times, obviously, when the Auditor General brings forward things that none of us want to see, but we respect the work, continue to respect him and are most grateful for his work on this particular file.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: That's encouraging, Speaker. Let me quote once again from Mr. Apps, who went on to say in his testimony, “To the extent of all matters within my

knowledge, the board and management of Ornge more than did their job.” Even more revealing was his insistence that “the government was thoroughly, painstakingly and, in all cases, truthfully briefed in advance of Ornge taking any of these actions.”

1040

Speaker, we have heard in this House repeatedly, for months, from the Minister of Health, from the Minister of Finance and from the Premier that they knew nothing about what was going on at Ornge; that's why they couldn't do anything. In light of this revelation from the Minister of Finance's friend the former president of the Liberal Party of Canada, will he tell us why he stood by and allowed this scandal to take place?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Ornge paid a lobbyist named Kelly Mitchell \$400,000 to keep the Conservative Party informed about Ornge.

Let's see who Mr. Mitchell is. He's a top insider in Mr. Hudak's leadership. He sat on the board of directors for Ornge and five for-profit companies, the same companies that paid Chris Mazza \$1.4 million and obstructed the Auditor General. He also made \$17,000 in contributions to PC candidates and personally donated \$7,500. Among those who have benefited from them are the leader of the Conservative Party, the member for Simcoe North, the member for Whitby–Oshawa, the member for Leeds–Grenville, the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington and the member for Thornhill.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health has taken the appropriate—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Well, Mr. Speaker, everyone listening to the Minister of Finance can see that he has no interest in answering the question. What he does do is, he takes the same approach that Mr. Apps took when he first started in his testimony yesterday, boldly defending the indefensible. But Mr. Apps ended up running out of this place when he was found to be telling us less than the truth.

I'd like to know today: Will the minister at least admit that he and the Premier and the Minister of Health knew full well what was going on at Ornge, and would he tell us, once and for all, why they chose to turn their backs and to ignore the scandal that was brewing under their watch?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The government and the Minister of Health took the appropriate steps in a timely fashion to respond as information became available about Ornge. When we became aware of the situation, we asked the auditor to go in. The auditor went in and did a very good piece of work, Mr. Speaker. The minister has brought forward legislation that deals with many of the challenges that were raised by the auditor. We support the auditor in this. We continue to do that. The minister called in the police when it became obvious—after forensic auditors that we sent in did their job. The minister and the government have acted appropriately, in a timely fashion—as information became aware.

I am proud of the front-line workers at Ornge. I want to continue to build that service so all Ontarians can continue to have faith in that service which is so vital to all of our families and all of our communities in all parts of the province.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. We've put forward concrete ideas to make the proposed budget a little fairer for the families that make Ontario work. One of them was asking Ontario's very wealthy to pay a little bit more and help ease the burden on everyday families. Can the Acting Premier explain the government's hesitation around this very simple and fair proposal?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: First of all, I want to acknowledge the accuracy of the fact that the third party have put forward a number of helpful proposals. I want to acknowledge the fact that the leader of the third party has taken one of the items that we had a very sincere disagreement about off the table today. I recognize that that was and is an important item for your party and the people whom you represent in this Legislature.

We will respond in the fullness of time to all of the leader's ideas, all of her party's ideas. We'll continue to work in a co-operative fashion because I believe that the third party wants to make this Legislature work. We take your suggestions seriously and we will respond in due course to all of them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the government's proposed budget leaves families falling further and further behind; there's no doubt about it. It would have been easy to oppose it. For New Democrats, it would have been very easy. But I am proud to say that we New Democrats are doing our very best to make this minority government work.

People have told us that Ontario's tax system is unfair and that those who can afford to pay more seem to be getting all the breaks. Why is the government reluctant to show them that that's not the case?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I concur with the leader of the third party that they in fact have made very reasonable efforts to keep this Legislature working. They brought forward a number of ideas. For instance, the freeze on the corporate tax rate—which we built into the budget—was as a result of the strong efforts of that leader and her party.

There are a number of other items on the table that have been brought forward in good faith. We will continue to work with them, leading up to the vote next Tuesday, to try to find a way to find accommodation to keep this Legislature working in the best interests of all Ontarians. I know that that is certainly in the interests of the third party.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Final supplementary?

Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, I think that our New Democrat team has been more than reasonable, and the Conservative benches have been more than clear as well. They don't want the super rich to pay more; they want to see deeper cuts.

The ball is now in the Liberal government's court. Do they agree with them or do they agree with us?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'll remind the leader of the third party of the areas that we do agree on. I know that she and her party support full-day learning; I think that's something we agree on. I know that you continue to support smaller class sizes; I know that you support more home care; I know you support the Ontario child benefit; I know that you support doubling the contraband tobacco enforcement; and I know that you support \$35 billion in infrastructure.

We are down to some issues that I concur we do have an obligation to respond to. We will do that at the appropriate time, working with the leader and her party. I think we've acted in good faith—we've acted on a number of your suggestions to date—and we look forward to resolving any outstanding issues before next Tuesday.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Acting Premier, but I have to say that restating what's in their unfair Liberal budget simply is not good enough, and I hope they're aware of that.

In a letter to the editor yesterday, Monica from Toronto wrote this: "People who earn over \$500,000 a year should have to pay an increase in their taxes. This would help pay for more spaces in daycare, which would be better because it would allow parents to go to work."

Does the Liberal government agree with Monica that we should be choosing child care over millionaires?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We believe all Ontarians should work together. We believe that wealthy Ontarians, middle-income Ontarians and Ontarians of more modest incomes, working together, can build a better province for all of us.

We're proud of our investments in child care. We are grateful for the support you have shown on a number of initiatives that are important, I know, to the people who you represent and the people who put us in the government benches.

We want to work together with all Ontarians. We think all of us working together will build a better province. It will build a better future. Child care is an important part of a caring society, and I look forward to further discussions with the third party over the course of the next several days.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The budget also leaves hospitals scrambling to provide services for everyday Ontarians and ignores folks who are struggling to make ends meet. Dianne from Carrying Place writes: "It once again puts the burden of paying the debt on those who can least

afford it.... I do not see anywhere in this budget where those in the upper income brackets are paying their fair share.”

Why won't the McGuinty Liberals agree with the vast majority of Ontarians that health care should come before millionaires?

1050

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the member is putting forward an important point. There are a number of important initiatives in the budget. She's raised some other initiatives that are important to health care.

But here's what's at risk if the budget is defeated: the Cambridge Memorial Hospital expansion, the Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital expansion in Burlington, the Groves Memorial Community Hospital in Fergus—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —the North Wellington Health Care Mount Forest site renovation, the Renfrew Victoria Hospital dialysis program expansion, the St. Thomas Elgin general hospital renovation, the Brockville General Hospital expansion.

The leader of the third party has put forward additional ideas with respect to the provision of health care in this province. We take her party's suggestions and ideas seriously, and I look forward to hopefully resolving the issues that stand before us over the course of the next several days.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the government seems to be hemming and hawing over our very straightforward proposal to make the budget fairer. It's leaving families wondering what planet the government is actually on. Jeremiah from Toronto writes this: “If ordinary Ontarians are losing services to close the budget gap, the wealthy need to bear some of the burden as well.”

Will the McGuinty Liberals side with us or with Conservatives who think that millionaires should come before daycares?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the leader of the third party has put forward a number of ideas that are worthy of consideration, some of which we have adopted even in the budget itself—the freezing of the corporate tax rate.

We do have to make certain that we stay on track to balance the budget by 2017-18. That's important to the people of Ontario too. Interest costs are now the third-largest item on our operating expense. If we fail to get back to balance in the timelines outlined, those interest costs will rise.

The leader of the third party has put forward some constructive ideas, some of which we've acted on, some of which we will likely continue to discuss over the course of the next several days. I hope we can come to a conclusion that allows this Legislature to do what the people of Ontario want, and that is to continue to work together to build a better future for all of our children.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Deputy Premier: Yesterday in the public accounts committee, former Liberal Party president Alfred Apps confirmed what we have known for a long time: the involvement of Don Guy in the Ornge scandal. Based on sworn testimony in committee, Alfred Apps admitted, under intense questioning, that Apps had hired Don Guy, Dalton McGuinty's former chief of staff and election architect, to provide strategic advice on Ornge.

Speaker, can the Deputy Premier confirm for this House with certainty that Don Guy was abiding by all the requirements of the lobbying legislation?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I think the opposition has to come clean. Will they stop stonewalling on bringing Kelly Mitchell to the committee so that he can give testimony? Why are you blocking his testimony at that committee? The Minister of Health has been there. Everyone that we've been required has been there.

They are trying to silence Kelly Mitchell, Mr. Speaker. They don't want his testimony in front of the committee because they know what he's done. They know what his role has been.

I ask the member opposite, will you agree to have that person appear before the public accounts committee and explain the work he did for Ornge and the advice he gave to your caucus and your leader on this issue? It's time for you to come clean on these issues.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Look, Speaker, the Deputy Premier knows well that Don Guy would have been legally prohibited from lobbying or sharing government information during his mandatory cooling-off period. It seems curious that Don Guy, mere months after leaving as the Premier's most senior adviser and election guru, could be retained to advise Ornge.

Speaker, the web continues to grow. Interestingly, during this same period, Don Guy was providing advice on Ornge, was being paid to run the Liberal campaign, and was advising other companies on how to lobby the McGuinty government.

Deputy Premier, will you commit to table a list of every company Don Guy was similarly advising on how to lobby your government? Secondly, would you tell us how you think it's possible that Don Guy was in compliance with lobbying laws?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, Mr. Speaker, I ask the member opposite, will Kelly Mitchell, who was paid \$400,000 to lobby the Conservative Party on behalf of Ornge, be called before the committee? It's a simple question. You can yell and you can scream and you can call names and you can act like children all you want—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would the member from Cambridge come to order, please?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's a very simple question: Will, in fact, you call Kelly Mitchell? Kelly Mitchell,

who sat on the board of five different companies, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections: Ornge. Ornge. Ornge.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order, please. At this point, the member for Simcoe North, I'm warning you.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Speaker, they can shout me down. They can't shout down the truth. They need to call Kelly Mitchell before the committee and come clean about his involvement in this situation.

CHILD CARE

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Minister of Education. The budget put forward by this government failed to even mention child care. It can deny the existence of the current child care crisis, but experts say that without funding, thousands of spaces across the province will close.

We've put forward a reasonable plan to ask millionaires to pay a little more to support 4,000 child care spaces. Will the minister choose millionaires or child care?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to have a chance in this Legislature to speak about the strong record that our government has when it comes to child care.

When the federal government stepped away, it was our government who stepped up and provided \$63.5 million to permanently fill the gap that they had left. And we did not have one word from the opposition at that time calling their friends in Ottawa and asking them to step up for Ontario families.

Since 2003, child care funding has increased from \$532 million to \$869 million, a 63% increase. At the same time, we are rolling out right across the province all-day kindergarten, which will have a full investment of \$1.5 billion when it is fully rolled out in 2014.

Child care is an active file. We need to have a conversation with Ontario families and we look forward to doing that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to go back to the Minister of Education. The government likes to say it's increasing funding for child care, but according to the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, child care funding "has been frozen for 15 years."

The NDP has put forward a simple proposal: Invest an additional \$50 million beyond the planned spending to support 4,000 child care spaces by asking the richest Ontarians to pay a tiny bit more.

Will the minister side with working moms and dads who need better child care or millionaires?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: As I have said, our record of support for child care has been very consistent. As we roll out full-day kindergarten right across the province, we have come forward with \$51 million in funding for

child care centres. We've provided \$12 million over five years for capital funding.

Speaker, I can tell you that child care is a very active file. We're looking at what a modern, sustainable child care system looks like when all of our 4- and 5-year-olds are in school. Our record for child care has been consistent. We continue to have important conversations about the future of child care in this province, and I look very much forward to continuing the important work that we are doing right now to design a modern child care system that lives compatibly with all-day kindergarten so that all of our kids can have the best that they can and everything that every parent wants for them.

1100

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, you introduced the Accepting Schools Act in November. Shortly after you introduced that legislation, the MPP for Kitchener-Waterloo also introduced a private member's bill, Bill 14, on anti-bullying. At that time, you said and the Premier also said that you would be willing to work with the opposition and include elements of Bill 14 in the Accepting Schools Act.

When the opposition's education critic, the member for Nepean-Carleton, had the second reading leadoff to the Accepting Schools Act she said, "Let's put these two bills into committee." She said that Ontarians want to work together.

Mr. Speaker, my students in Scarborough-Agincourt support the Accepting Schools Act. Through you to the minister: Minister, can you tell this House why you haven't passed the anti-bullying legislation yet?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the member for Scarborough-Agincourt for her question because she has been an active participant in the debate on this legislation. However, it is very unfortunate that much of the debate time has been taken up with procedural games. The PC Party has disrupted the debate on this important legislation—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the minister to stick to the question asked on government policy.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: —six times, Speaker. In fact, this morning during debate on this very bill, we had the bells ringing.

What I have said on so many occasions is that this legislation must be in place—

Interjections.

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

Interjection: It's out of order, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would agree with the member who made the comment that it's out of order. But if you continue to make the noise, I cannot hear the answer. So I would ask the opposition, if you would like me to hear the answer so I can rule, then I'd ask you to keep it very low. Minister?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Speaker, we look forward to getting Bill 13 to committee. We want to hear debate on it. We want to have conversation at committee so we can make Bill 13 the best bill that it can be. That's why I'm calling on the opposition to move Bill 13 to committee so that we can get to the important work of amending the legislation and incorporating elements of Bill 14. We always said we'd be open to making sure that we had the best bill, the strongest bill to protect all of our students. Let's get that bill to committee, and let's stop ringing bells.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's response. The minister is correct, and I have listened to the debate attentively in terms of the Accepting Schools Act on seven different occasions. What I've noticed is the PC Party has repeatedly said they want to work with us. In spite of all that, the bells have kept ringing, and this legislation which would make a real difference in the lives of Ontario kids isn't moving forward.

Yesterday during the debate, the member of Dufferin-Caledon said, "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." Speaker, through you to the minister, will the minister tell the House how she has tried to work with the opposition to pass this legislation?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I really appreciate the chance to speak on the record about this. I met with the member from Nepean-Carleton and the member from Kitchener-Waterloo on February 23, Speaker. After that meeting, I thought that we had an understanding to move the legislation quickly to committee so that we could start helping kids right away. Since then, my staff have met with the member for Kitchener-Waterloo on several separate occasions, and I've had repeated correspondence with her.

Last week, on April 11, I sent the member another letter urging her to help move this legislation to committee, including a list that had more than half of her bill incorporated into the Accepting Schools Act. She asked for more specificity, Speaker, and yesterday, I sent the member a list with the entirety of the amendments in legislative language.

I will say again, Speaker, on this side of the House, we are deeply committed to making Ontario schools a more accepting space so that all of Ontario's students can be safe and protected and achieve their goals. We want to get this bill to committee. We want—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Please sit down.

The member from Newmarket-Aurora.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, my question is to the Deputy Premier. For the benefit of the Deputy Premier,

who appears not to be very well briefed on what is happening in this place, he should know that Kelly Mitchell has already been called to the committee, and he should know that we will support Kelly Mitchell coming to the committee. That will happen, and that now hopefully will stop the buffooning that's going on around this.

What I want to know from the Deputy Premier is: Will he agree and will the Premier agree to come to the committee and testify about what they knew?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sit down, please. Order. Stop the clock for a second.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order, please, on both sides. Order.

I'm going to remind the opposition party one more time: When your member is asking the question, if you make the noise, I'm not going to hear the question. So I hope you want to hear the answer. Otherwise I will continue to name members.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, in fact, they just recently put a motion on the order paper to debate it next Wednesday. So it hasn't been called.

You can play all the silly games you want. We want to talk about the economy. We want to build a better future for Ontario. Quit playing games. Start acting like the great PC Party of the past.

Oh, and by the way, we've also just determined that Kelly Mitchell has also registered to lobby the federal government on behalf of Ornge. We'll be exploring those questions at committee, too. I'm delighted you finally put a motion on the order paper. Can we agree here and now to call him immediately rather than wait till next Wednesday to debate it? I wonder if we could do that.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. The member from Peterborough, you're not helping my cause.

The member from Newmarket-Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: Mr. Speaker, clearly the Deputy Premier has no idea how committees work. The fact that we have to wait until next Wednesday simply reaffirms why we need a select committee of the Legislature to get it done. That's why we need a select committee.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That motion that I referred to to call Mr. Mitchell to committee was in fact a government motion, and the Conservative Chair of the committee deferred dealing with it until next week. I don't want to offend the sensibilities of the Chair or the House. I won't use some language, but it appears as though they won't want him at committee. Will you agree here and now to unanimous consent to call him immediately?

Mr. Frank Klees: Yes, we will. On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to make the motion. I'll call his bluff right now.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would you please sit down? Order. We're in the middle of question period. I will move to the next question.

Mr. Randy Hillier: On a point of order, Speaker—
Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would the member please sit down? Stop the clock. The member knows fully well that during question period there are no points of order. New question.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Acting Premier. Does the government think it's fair that people on social assistance, many of whom have disabilities, as he knows, many of whom have lost their jobs because of the recession, many of whom are struggling to put food on their children's plates, should have their benefits frozen and real incomes actually cut while millionaires are asked to do absolutely nothing to help with Ontario's financial problems?

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Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House have made no secret that the recent budget contained some very difficult decisions. But at the same time, I was very proud that we brought forward a budget that did not, as the Conservatives did, balance our budget on the backs of the poor. I am proud of our record in terms of combating poverty in the province of Ontario, the work we have done in terms of the Ontario child benefit, in terms of full-day kindergarten.

The member raises the issue of social assistance rates. We have raised social assistance rates some seven times. We have also changed the rules to make it easier for individuals to transition from social assistance to the working world. But at the same time, we admit—we acknowledge—that more work needs to be done, particularly in the area of social assistance, which is why we have brought forward one of the most comprehensive reviews of the system in decades.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Again to the Acting Premier: Put food in the budget, members. They're here today, and they're here with a clear message: We need to help vulnerable Ontarians. Some members on the government side actually agree with me on this. The Attorney General, for example, is quoted in his local newspaper as saying, "The people at the bottom end of the economic scale, the people that get ... ODSP ... have not had increases that keep up with what they're requiring in life."

Will the Acting Premier—and his own Attorney General—support our simple proposal to increase support for people with disabilities on ODSP, and ask millionaires just to pay a little bit more?

Hon. John Milloy: The honourable member and her party do not have a monopoly on compassion for the

most vulnerable in our society. I recall the most recent election, when I was asked to participate in an all-candidates meeting on poverty. To prepare for that, I picked up the NDP platform and tried to find the section on poverty. It took me four tries to find a couple of sentences at the bottom of a page that I believe talked about natural resources or something else, and the main thrust of it was the social assistance review.

We recognize that we need a comprehensive transformation of social assistance in this province. That is why we have asked Frances Lankin, a former distinguished member of this Legislature and of the New Democratic Party, along with Dr. Munir Sheikh, who is a former head of Statistics Canada, to take a look at the social assistance system and report back on comprehensive changes. We look forward to that report; I think all members do. It's going to provide a great pathway for how we want to move forward.

ENERGY RATES

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Energy. My constituents are pleased with the work our government has done to modernize an electricity system that needed to be fixed. While we repaired transmission lines and invested in new supply, we also phased out coal, because it was causing smog in places like Guelph and making people sick, costing taxpayers \$4 billion a year in health costs. These are accomplishments that we can all be proud of.

Families all across this province have been doing their part to achieve a clean, modern and reliable electricity system. They are investing in a system that can serve them today, but also tomorrow and 20 years from now. But my constituents are concerned about the cost.

Minister, can you please tell me what you have been doing to moderate costs in our electricity system?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member from Guelph has been a leading advocate, not only in cleaning up the air in the province of Ontario, but in advocating ways where families and businesses can help moderate costs.

Here are a few of the things. Two of our largest agencies, Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation, have launched a cost reduction exercise. They've already taken out half a billion dollars in costs, and they're continuing to do work.

When we launched the results of our feed-in tariff, our green energy review just a couple of weeks ago, we strengthened our approach to green energy. We're going to get more jobs out of it, but we also lowered the prices for the green energy we are bringing on.

Third, we launched an international comparison approach for our energy agencies to make sure that they're working as efficiently and as effectively as possible. It's all about finding ways to help families and businesses.

Fourth, we've launched a review of our local distribution companies; those are the ones that bring electricity down to families, homes and businesses. We've looked

to see whether we can find savings there, whether there's a better approach.

And fifth, we've launched a review of two of our major planning agencies, the OPA and IESO—all ways to take costs out of the system and help families and businesses.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I know that my constituents want to learn about the work that's being done to drive efficiencies and find cost savings, both big and small. I think we can all agree that every dollar counts.

I know that much of the change in the price of electricity is due to our government's commitment to replacing dirty coal-fired generation with cleaner sources of power by 2014. Coal is cheap, but it pollutes the air we breathe and it harms the health of Ontarians.

I know my constituents in Guelph were very pleased this week to learn that Canadian Solar is expanding its production and creating even more jobs in Guelph.

While it is important to moderate costs in the electricity system, it's also important to provide families and businesses with programs that help them as we make this transition to cleaner power. Minister, can you please tell this House what you are doing to help families and businesses with the cost of their electricity bills?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: It is what we're doing together. In the budget that we have proposed, we're maintaining the Ontario clean energy benefit—10% off the bottom line of the bill for families and many businesses to help them with those costs of electricity. We've got the energy and property tax credit, the energy portion of which is \$204 of assistance. We've got the northern Ontario energy credit—again, special issues in the north, another \$200.

We've got the industrial conservation initiative, which allows 150 of our largest energy consumers in the province of Ontario who employ thousands of people to save a significant amount of money by reducing the energy they use in our highest-demand times during the course of a year. It's a great initiative.

We've also got the northern industrial electricity rate program, which reduces costs for businesses in the north, again, with special issues.

These and more initiatives are helping families and helping businesses.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the Minister of Education. I've recently learned that the dignity and human rights of children with special needs are being grossly violated in Simcoe county schools. Shocking images of education assistants herding children like cattle with rugby blocker pads as big as me, and doing it in public, demonstrates something is broken in our school system. This deplorable method of restraint seems to have emerged because proper assessment and individual education plans have not been implemented.

Minister, you have an opportunity to protect the most vulnerable children in our communities by issuing a directive the moment we walk out of this chamber today. Will you please do the right thing and intervene immediately?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to say, first and foremost, that I understand that this board will be re-evaluating this decision, and that is the appropriate thing for them to have done.

I am very proud of the record of our government in ensuring that every child has a world-class education. This is an important—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Nepean–Carleton, come to order, please.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: —to ensure that all of our children have a strong-quality education.

Interjections.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: If I could be heard across the heckling, Speaker, I would love to share with this House the fact that in special education we have seen an increase, since our government took office, of 55%. We have seen an increase of over \$893 million. And that's not all. When it comes to autism support, when we got in here—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: —we removed the government's previous age six cut-off—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Speaker, if this government wants to get serious about stopping bullying in schools, let's get education assistants, the people who are employed by the schools, to stop bullying children who are the most vulnerable in our community.

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In fact, all the following organizations adamantly agree: Special Education Advisory Committee, the Geneva Centre for Autism, Community Living Ontario—the list goes on and on, Speaker. This practice not only labels these students but also promotes a culture of fear in our classrooms. You're doing that. You're allowing that to happen.

Minister, the Simcoe county school board has failed to act, deferring this till June. OPSEU actually openly condones this type of restraint. This is why you cannot slough this matter off to the local school board. You must use your authority as a minister to stand up for the rights of children with special needs in Simcoe county schools immediately. Will you issue this directive this morning, yes or no?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Sit down, please.

Minister?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Speaker, I'm not going to take lessons from the opposition on supporting students with special needs. We know the challenges faced by

families with autistic children, and while we may not meet all of the requests of parents, we have a plan to help children access more autism services. They cut off children at the age of six, no questions asked.

We are supporting families, Speaker. We have quadrupled investment when it comes to autism support. We have almost tripled the number of children receiving that support. We are conducting research, investing \$15 million in research, and we have more early years support and more EAs in our classrooms. I'm proud of our record, and I would contrast it to the opposition's record any day, any time.

As I have said, Simcoe region is reviewing their process. They should do that, Speaker. But we will stand up for children with special needs—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order, please. Stop the clock. Please sit down.

New question.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. The decision to sell off Ontario Northland puts real economic development at risk, not to mention 1,000 jobs. The cancellation of our public transportation system leaves families threatened.

We've put forward a proposal to help stop the sale of Ontario Northland. Will you please explain to the mayors and to the rest of northern Ontario why you choose to take millionaires over the seniors who need the train, the only train, to get to medical treatments in southern Ontario?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Speaker, this was a very difficult decision that this government had to make, but it's a necessary decision. If we're going to invest in health care and education, we have to make choices. Those choices are difficult. One of those choices was to divest the ONTC. We're going to move ahead with that divestment.

I should let the member know that divestment is not foreclosure. There is business as usual as we move forward with this divestment. At the end of the day, we want a much stronger transportation system in place, a more sustainable transportation system in place, and we're going to move in that direction. We're going to work with our stakeholders to achieve that direction.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: My next question is to the Minister of Agriculture. The north isn't the only region—

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: My supplementary—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): You've got to ask a supplementary to the first question.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's the same subject.

The north isn't the only region that feels let down by this budget and this government's lack of consultation. The unilateral termination of the horse racing revenue-sharing program has left families feeling burned in places like Sarnia, Windsor and Niagara Falls—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member knows the rules. You've got to ask the supplementary to the first question.

I will now move to the next questioner: the member from Peterborough.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, I understand that you'll be meeting with the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada minister, the Honourable Gerry Ritz, later this week, along with your counterparts from Canada's provinces and territories at the federal, provincial and territorial meeting. With agriculture being an area of responsibility that's shared in Canada's Constitution, Ontario farmers look to the province to work with the federal government to ensure the continuing competitiveness and long-term sustainability of agriculture and the agri-food sectors. This includes the Growing Forward program, which I know farmers in Peterborough are particularly interested in, as the current agreement expires next year.

Speaker, through you to the Minister: Please share with this House your plans for discussions with the Honourable Minister Ritz and other agriculture ministers.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to note that the member is correct. We will be meeting tomorrow with the Honourable Gerry Ritz and my provincial counterparts, trying to set the table for agricultural policy over the next several years. At our meeting, we will begin negotiations on Growing Forward 2 and we'll be calling on the federal government to renew certain parts of that agreement to enhance the vitality of Ontario agriculture.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, and as members opposite should know, virtually all agricultural programs are jointly shared between the federal government and provincial governments. We're all key strategic players in that economic development. The Constitution requires us to be collaborative. I suspect that that reality, coupled with any sense of a shared purpose, will move us forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for that very comprehensive and detailed answer.

Minister, I want to pass on to the farmers in my riding that we're working hard to ensure the continuing support for the best interests of Ontario's farmers. I know that farmers in Peterborough are also looking to our government to be firm with the federal government on several issues. Indeed, recent media coverage of trade negotia-

tions has led to speculation that the federal government might sacrifice a vital part of our country's agricultural support system—supply management—for the sake of other boards of trade.

Minister, in your discussions with Minister Ritz and other ag ministers across Confederation, can you please inform this House if you will be discussing your ongoing Ontario support for supply management?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want all members of this House to know that we will continue to press the federal government with respect to a commitment to supply management. In fact, I recently joined with the Quebec minister, the Honourable Pierre Corbeil, in writing to the federal minister on this issue. As two ministers representing 75% of Canada's dairy, poultry and egg producers, we said: "Supply-managed sectors have demonstrated stability where other sectors have sought government assistance to overcome economic hardship. This price stability at market translates into significant benefits to farmers, to processors, to consumers and to the Canadian economy at large."

I am hopeful and fully anticipate that Minister Ritz will reassure us, this government and all Ontarians that the federal government remains committed to supply management.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation.

On February 9 of this year the federal government issued a request for expressions of interest to gauge stakeholder interest in participating in the future of Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd.'s Chalk River nuclear laboratories. This is Canada's premier nuclear research facility and the economic impact of its 3,000 highly paid and skilled jobs on the local municipalities and economy is enormous.

I've written both the federal minister and your office on this issue. He has responded; you have not. Based on his reply, they would be open to a dialogue with the province, but his office has not heard from you, either.

Minister, have you contacted Minister Joe Oliver? If not, why are you sitting on the sidelines while the future of Ontario's nuclear industry hangs in the balance?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I have received the member's letter and I thank him for sending me that letter.

I'll tell you, we are really serious about ensuring that our nuclear industry in this province does well. That's why we have been working very closely with the federal government to ensure that we move forward, through the leadership of the Minister of Energy, with our refurbishment of our nuclear units. There are hundreds of thousands of jobs in this province that depend on the nuclear industry.

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I wish, though, that the PC Party would support the other jobs that we're creating. Just in the last few weeks, IBM made an important announcement here in Toronto:

145 high-end jobs. But guess what, Mr. Speaker? They wouldn't have been here if it were not for the program that we provided support for them on and that your party doesn't support.

This last month alone, 46,000 jobs were created in this province, jobs that we're very, very proud of. We're going to keep creating jobs. The best thing we—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Minister, it's time to stop with the gobbledegook and answer the question. You have not contacted the federal minister. The nuclear industry research division at Chalk River is vital to the industry across Canada: 70,000 jobs, most of them right here in the province of Ontario.

If Chalk River Laboratories is revitalized as a national research facility, it will support tens of thousands of research projects with wide-ranging applications, including health, environment, energy, natural resources, nanotechnology, aerospace, automotive and manufacturing. Why do you continue to sit on the sidelines in this process and not speak directly to your federal counterpart when the new future of this research facility hangs in the balance? Get off your hands and start talking to Minister Oliver.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Sit down, please.

Minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: This side of the House has shared this member's concern for a long time about the lack of support from the federal government for important parts of the energy system here in this province. We've stood up for the energy workers of this province, whether it's clean energy, whether it's nuclear power, time and time again.

The federal government decided, in the middle of our consideration of a new build, to completely restructure AECL. Where was your voice then, when the nuclear workers of this province needed you? Today you stand up.

I've got a number, Mr. Speaker. It's 1-613-992-4211. It's Stephen Harper's number. Give him a call. Finally, for once, stand up for the workers of this province.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre par intérim. Families across the province are concerned about what your budget is doing to their community hospitals and to their local health care services. With more than half of Ontario's hospitals facing cuts or in absolute freeze on their budgets, in northern Ontario we're already hearing about bed and program closures.

Can the Acting Premier explain why his government seems to be choosing millionaires over local health care?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'm quite proud of the fact that the largest expense growth item in our budget is home

care, more home care, and I appreciate the member opposite's support on that initiative.

I'm also proud of the investments we're making in Cambridge and in Burlington and a number of other communities—Leeds–Grenville—which the Conservatives want to vote against. Those are important initiatives for better health care in Ontario.

The Minister of Health has laid out an ambitious agenda to provide the right care in the right place at the right time, Mr. Speaker: better home care; better acute care; investing more in long-term care, which we're all committed to. We're going to continue to work on those things. We appreciate working with the third party to keep this Legislature alive so that we can continue to build on the enormous achievements this Legislature has made in health care over the last eight years.

NOTICE OF POINT OF PRIVILEGE

Mr. Norm Miller: Mr. Speaker, I want to give notice that I will be raising a point of privilege from today's proceedings with regard to statements by the Deputy Premier that I take offence to, questioning my impartiality as the Chair of the public accounts committee. I note that there have also been tweets arising from staff of the Premier's office with regard to this, so I will raise this in writing as soon as possible, likely early next week, Mr. Speaker.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Frank Klees: Mr. Speaker, I would ask for unanimous consent, as proposed by the Deputy Premier earlier, that Mr. Kelly Mitchell be called to testify at the public accounts committee, along with the Deputy Premier and the Premier.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I just want to thank the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for his comments and that he would be filing an order.

With regard to Mr. Klees, he has moved unanimous consent to order Mr. Kelly Mitchell to appear before the committee next Wednesday, along with the Deputy Premier and the Premier. Agreed? I heard a no.

Interjections.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: Mr. Speaker, I took it, when the Deputy Premier proposed that we would have unanimous consent to call Mr. Kelly Mitchell, that he was serious and that he would have the support—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would say to the member that I requested unanimous consent; I did not receive it.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Who said no?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I want to know who said no.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Newmarket–Aurora on a new point of order.

Mr. Frank Klees: I highly resent the implication that we were not serious. I will make the following motion, and I will leave out the reference to the Deputy Premier, and I will leave out the reference to the Premier, because apparently members of the government objected to that.

I will ask for unanimous consent that Kelly Mitchell be called to appear before the public accounts committee, and that the Clerk be directed to schedule him at the earliest possible time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I have a motion from Mr. Klees that Mr. Kelly Mitchell be called to the committee and that the Clerk be directed to request him to appear as soon as possible. Agreed? Okay, that has been agreed to.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would put a motion forward asking for unanimous consent that the Premier and the Deputy Premier be directed to appear before the public accounts committee by the Clerk at the earliest possible convenience.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has moved that the Premier and the Deputy Premier be called to the committee, and the Clerk—

Hon. John Milloy: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'm in the middle of a motion.

Hon. John Milloy: All right.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Do I have agreement? I heard a no.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I apologize for interrupting you before, but I think that if you review Hansard, the member did not ask for unanimous consent. He just put forward a random motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): That is not a point of order.

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

The House recessed from 1139 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: With great pleasure today, I introduce a number of members from the Sikh community here and also invite everyone to attend the reception being held from 4:30 to 6 o'clock at the dining hall.

We have representatives from the Malton gurdwara. We have Manohar Singh Bal; we have Sukhdeep Dhaliwal; we have Manjinder Singh; we have Mr. Ghuman. Who else do we have here? We have Jasbir Singh, and I believe we have—those are all the five here? Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, thank you for that introduction, and I do want to help out my colleague from across the way to introduce our friends here in the House today.

Last weekend, Sikhs across Ontario and the world celebrated Vaisakhi, and many of our legislative colleagues are also amongst those celebrating, so I'd like to welcome the Canadian Sikh Association to Queen's Park today. At 4:30, they will be hosting a reception in the legislative dining room in celebration of Vaisakhi. All MPPs are invited and requested to attend.

With us today, as my member across has explained, Manohar Singh Bal is here, Baljit Ghuman is here, Jasbir Singh is here, Sukhdeep Dhaliwal is here, and Manjinder Singh, as well as Rampal Singh.

To all of you, welcome to Queen's Park. We appreciate all that you do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Introduction of guests?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'd like to welcome guests—they are not quite here; they've been marching from my riding of Davenport. They will be arriving in the Legislature soon, doing a media conference. It's folks from the Put Food in the Budget campaign, who are working very hard to try to increase benefits for people who are struggling in this city, to increase welfare benefits. They will be in the media studio at 1:30.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd just remind the member, and I know many of us make the mistakes, but you can only be recognized if you stand in your own seat. I was having difficulty seeing the guy behind you to realize you are in the wrong place.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

I LOVE DANCE

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Today we're celebrating Canadian dance, a subject that this House is very familiar with because there is a lot of dancing going on in here.

In celebration of all forms of dance, today the Canadian Dance Assembly kicks off its six-year campaign, "I

Love Dance." I would like to support this campaign by reading its manifesto:

"We declare that dance, in all its diverse expressions, is a force for social good and human advancement.

"In support of this we uphold the following principles:

"Dance is an instinctive human birthright and a life-long contributor to health and contentment.

"Dance enlivens the body.

"Dance engages the mind.

"Dance inspires the spirit.

"Dance celebrates cultural, social and physical diversity yet soars above perceived barriers to foster cohesion and shared understanding.

"Dance as an art represents society's highest aspirations and communicates profound truths that are beyond the power of words.

"Dance expresses the essence of what it is to be fully alive.

"For these reasons we advocate:

"Expanded opportunities to experience dance, as art, health, education, recreation or sport, whether as observer or participant, among all age groups and socio-cultural sectors.

"Wider appreciation of the multi-faceted contributions of the dance profession as a source of valuable knowledge and provider of inspiring performances.

"Broader acknowledgment of dance as a major component of our identity as a compassionate, imaginative, innovative and thriving community."

WEST LINCOLN MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Paul Miller: I am proud to stand before you today in support of the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital rebuild project. After years of promises and planning, the proposed Liberal budget will pull the plug on this much-needed upgrade, blindsiding many Hamilton and Niagara communities, including my own community of Stoney Creek.

I've heard from community members, patients, physicians and health care workers, who all agree that this decision is short-sighted and that Ontarians are getting shortchanged.

We need a long-term, efficient and sustainable health care system, precisely what this hospital rebuild represents. Instead of investing in vital services to improve the Niagara health care system, the Premier has chosen to invest in excessive salaries for hospital CEOs. These priorities need to change.

The Premier promised increased access to health care for the people of Hamilton and Niagara, who have already raised nearly \$14 million for their hospital rebuild only to have the provincial support reserved at the eleventh hour.

Our communities fear that this Premier will continue to gut this province of its essential services. On their behalf, I challenge the Premier to keep his promise, to continue the partnership and to rebuild the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I rise today to share the great news that our government is increasing funding for students in Peel region for the 10th year in a row.

Ontario's publicly funded education system is now ranked the best in the English-speaking world. Grants for students' needs will rise this coming year to more than \$11,000 per student. That is approximately an increase of \$4,000 per student since 2003.

The increased funding has led to significant achievements in the education system, including smaller class sizes; higher test scores in reading, science, math; higher graduation rates and help for underperforming schools.

Since 2003, our government has increased GSN funding by 51% to the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board and an astounding 81.3% to Peel District School Board. Both of these boards are housed in my riding of Mississauga-Brampton South. That's great news, Speaker.

Our government's commitment to students in Peel region ensures that our students will continue to reach their full potential.

VAISAKHI

Mr. Bill Walker: Starting April 14, over 100,000 of Ontario's Sikhs began celebrating Vaisakhi. This joyous celebration symbolizes that most significant day in 1699 when Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa.

Through the unification of the Sikh faith, Khalsa created a code of conduct and discipline for the faith. The code is based on values such as equality, honesty, justice, peace, courage and community service—values that all Ontarians cherish.

These principles have led the Sikh people to be some of the hardest-working Ontarians in the province, excelling in a variety of fields and consistently contributing to Ontario's development.

With your dedication to volunteerism and civic activism, your organization is a strong community leader. Your efforts embolden Ontario's heritage of cultural diversity and strengthen Canada's multicultural fabric.

On behalf of the Ontario PC Party, I'd like to welcome our guests to Queen's Park and wish the Canadian Sikh Association all the best as they continue to honour this valuable tradition in our province's heritage.

VAISAKHI

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I take great pride in rising in the House today to honour the guests who have attended today and to invite everyone to the Canadian Sikh Association. We are celebrating, as members of the Sikh faith, the birth of the Khalsa. It's a concept and a philosophy which advocates an extreme level of equality and justice for all. It's a unique path which advocates a level of understanding and brotherhood and sisterhood, which requires the benefit and the amelioration of all people, of

all nations, of all genders, races, creeds, religious backgrounds.

This celebration is celebrating the notion of social justice, advocated by the 10th guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, who advocated a principle that we should rise in opposition of injustice against all people, regardless of their background, and it is imperative, as members of the human race, that we stand up for justice, we stand up for equality, and we fight for these rights in all our daily actions throughout our lives.

So I salute and I celebrate and I rise on this occasion of Vaisakhi, and I encourage everyone to participate in today's reception at 4:30 in the dining hall, where we will learn more about the Sikh heritage and about the birth of the Khalsa.

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LEONARD BRAITHWAITE

Mr. Michael Coteau: I stand here today to pay tribute to Leonard Austin Braithwaite, a true activist and champion of diversity, public service and civil rights, who died on March 28 of this year at the age of 88.

Mr. Braithwaite was born on October 23, 1923, in Toronto to West Indian parents, and he was raised in the Kensington Market neighbourhood. He joined the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1943 and proudly served his country with the VI Bomber Command in Yorkshire, England, during the final years of World War II.

After receiving his bachelor of commerce degree from the University of Toronto, Mr. Braithwaite received a master of business administration degree from Harvard Business School and later graduated as a lawyer from Osgoode Hall in 1958.

In 1963, the ambitious Braithwaite ran for the Liberal Party in the provincial election and became Ontario's first black member of provincial Parliament to win the newly created riding of Etobicoke. As an MPP, Leonard Braithwaite pushed to end racial segregation in our schools and also called for young females to serve as pages in this Legislative Assembly.

Braithwaite's honours include being appointed to the Order of Canada in 1997, being appointed to the Order of Ontario in 2004 and most recently winning the William Hubbard Award from the city of Toronto.

Leonard Braithwaite leaves behind a great legacy in our province, and on behalf of the residents of Don Valley East and all the members of Parliament in this provincial assembly, I'd like to honour him. Thank you.

PARRY SOUND AND AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AWARDS

Mr. Norm Miller: I stand here today to congratulate each of the winners and nominees at last week's Parry Sound Area Chamber of Commerce President's Gala and Business Awards. The awards were held at the beautiful Stockey Centre overlooking Georgian Bay.

I had the pleasure of presenting the Tourism Award to the Anderson family and Island Queen Cruise. Founded

in the 1970s, Island Queen Cruise has since grown rapidly, commissioning ever-larger ships to accommodate the growing number of visitors who wish to explore the 30,000 Islands region of Georgian Bay.

Business of the Year went to Distler Construction for the second year in a row.

Entrepreneur of the Year was awarded to Stephanie Norrie of Applause Party Rentals.

For the Community Leadership Award, there were two winners: Susan Tait of Georgian Bay Women's Network and Barb Kerr of Investors Group financial services. Both have worked tirelessly building and leading community initiatives in Parry Sound.

Finally, the President's Award, which is awarded at the discretion of Andrew Ryeland, the president of the chamber, went to new business owner Stephanie Delaurier of Kudos Kuisine.

Each of these fine businesses and individuals has made remarkable contributions to their community and each demonstrates that the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in Parry Sound.

CASSELMAN VIKINGS

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to take a moment to congratulate the Casselman Vikings, who are the Eastern Ontario Junior B Hockey League champions for the first time in their franchise history. The underdog Vikings recorded their second straight overtime win—4-3—over the Gatineau Mustangs on Thursday of last week to claim the best-of-seven series in five games.

The Eastern Ontario Junior B Hockey League was founded in 1966 as the Rideau-St. Lawrence Junior B Hockey League. Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of playing in that very league in the early 1980s—I know I don't look that old—for the Alexandria Glens. Although we came close to winning a championship, we never quite got there. So it's quite an accomplishment for this young team.

There are 22 member teams that play to compete for the D. Arnold Carson Memorial Trophy. To celebrate this big win, the town of Casselman will be proudly holding a parade this Sunday, April 22, at 3 p.m., at which I will be in attendance. The players and coaches will be able to display their well-earned trophy and their pride to the entire town of Casselman and surrounding areas.

So, félicitations à tous les joueurs et à l'entraîneur, Raymond Lavergne, qui a bien guidé son équipe, les Vikings, à la victoire.

Raymond Lavergne has quite a history as well as a successful coach guiding my former team, the Alexandria Glens, to a number of regional titles as well. He is well-accomplished and a great coach. I congratulate them all.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, communities in Nipissing are speaking out against the proposed fire sale by

this government of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission. I have assured all groups that I will read their motions in this Legislature.

The townships of Bonfield and Chisholm have both passed motions endorsing the city of North Bay resolution, which calls on Premier Dalton McGuinty to honour his pledge and suspend the government of Ontario's plans to divest the assets of the ONTC in order to permit affected stakeholders, in the form of a community task force, time to devise a more thoughtful business case that will keep the ONTC whole, while respecting the stated goals of the northern growth plan, and, Bonfield and Chisholm go on to say, that the province of Ontario start to immediately transition responsibility for the ONTC from the MNDM to the Ministry of Transportation.

North Bay city council passed a further resolution this week noting that the multimodal transportation study started under this government's growth plan isn't sufficiently developed to fully understand the implications of divesting the ONTC, and that the decision to divest was unilaterally made by the province with absolutely no consultation with local government, aboriginal peoples, businesses or the provincially appointed northern advisory council.

Speaker, they request a meeting with the northern stakeholders, as requested in correspondence from the northern mayors.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norm Miller: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move its adoption.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): Mr. Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka, from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the committee's report as follows and moves its adoption:

Your committee met on Wednesday, April 18, 2012, to consider the 2012 Special Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario on Ornge Air Ambulance and Related Services. During this meeting, the committee adopted a motion requesting that the House authorize the Speaker to issue his warrant for the appearance of Dr. Chris Mazza, former president and CEO of Ornge, before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts in room 151, Legislative Building, Queen's Park, Toronto, at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, May 16, 2012, and that, if necessary, the warrant can be served to Dr. Chris Mazza's attorney, Roger D. Yachetti, Q.C.

Your committee therefore requests that the House authorize the Speaker to issue his warrant, as provided in section 35 of the Legislative Assembly Act, requiring the appearance of Dr. Chris Mazza before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Miller presents the committee's report and moves its adoption. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Norm Miller: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Dr. Chris Mazza is a key person involved in the creation of Ornge air ambulance, and it's the committee's belief that it's important that he come and give testimony before the public accounts committee. For that reason, the committee has decided to ask for this Speaker's warrant.

Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent that the question on my motion for adoption of this report be put immediately without debate or amendment.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Miller has asked consent for his question to be put. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr. Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka, has moved adoption of the report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, requesting a Speaker's warrant for the appearance of Mr. Chris Mazza. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Report adopted.

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PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made in the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that Mr. Milligan assumes ballot item number 41, Mrs. Elliott assumes ballot item number 35, Mr. McNaughton assumes ballot item number 35, and Mrs. Elliott assumes ballot item number 60.

PETITIONS

WATER QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: I've been waiting for that particular order of the day. On behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham, I'm pleased to present a petition that reads as follows:

"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"—I'm happy that the Minister of the Environment is here listening;

"Whereas many of these small drinking water systems are located in homes," some "operating bed and breakfasts in rural Ontario;

"Whereas private homes that are the sites of bed and breakfasts already have potable drinking water used by the homeowners and their families every day;

"Whereas many of these bed and breakfasts have established the quality of their drinking water through years of regular testing;

"Whereas these home-based businesses are facing high costs" due to compliance with this new regulation, government regulation 319/08;

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

"That the Ministry 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;

"Furthermore we, the undersigned, ask that bed and breakfasts operated within a private home with a drinking water" system meeting all regulations "of a private home not be subject to regulation 319/08" when tests have proven with no negative results.

I'm pleased to sign and support this on behalf of my constituents and present it to Brady, the page for my riding of Durham.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, this petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and I have another 3,000 petitions to go with the many thousands I've already received.

"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 agree with this and will sign my name to it, and Katarina will bring it down.

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;

“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.”

Je suis d'accord avec cette pétition; je vais la signer et vous l'envoyer par notre page législatif, Shaumik.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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

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

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

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

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

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to protect our water and prevent contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt.”

This is signed by members of my community who are particularly concerned. I have affixed my signature, as I am in favour of this, and want to give it to page Carley.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: It is my pleasure to present this petition.

“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 proudly add my signature to these thousand and send it down with page Vincent.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Phil McNeely: I’m pleased to present this petition on behalf of parents of the Avalon Public School in the riding of Ottawa–Orléans.

“To the Legislature of Ontario:

“Whereas the current enrolment of Avalon Public School is 687 students;

“Whereas the student capacity of the school is 495 students, as determined by the Ministry of Education’s own occupancy formula;

“Whereas the issue of overcrowding and lack of space makes it impossible for Avalon Public School to offer full-day kindergarten until the overcrowding issue is addressed;

“Whereas Avalon Public School is located in a high-growth community;

“Whereas the enrolment at Avalon Public School is expected to continue rising at a rate of 10% to 15% a year for the foreseeable future;

“Whereas the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has made building a new school in Avalon a top capital priority;

“We, the undersigned, call on the province of Ontario and Ministry of Education to provide the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board with the necessary funding to build an additional school in Avalon, to open no later than September 2014.”

I support this petition, and I send it forward with Gillian.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty’s Liberal government is forcing Ontario municipalities to build industrial wind turbines without any local say or local approval; and

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“Whereas the McGuinty government transferred decision-making power from elected municipal governments to unelected and unaccountable bureaucrats; and

“Whereas Ontario’s largest farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until the serious shortcomings can be addressed, and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning; and

“Whereas the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus has committed to restore local decision-making powers and to building renewable energy projects only in places where they are welcomed, wanted and at prices Ontario families can afford;

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

“That the McGuinty government restore local decision-making powers for renewable energy projects and immediately stop forcing new industrial wind developments on municipalities that have not approved them and whose citizens do not want them in their community.”

I agree with this petition, and I shall sign it.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I’m pleased to present a petition 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 agree with this petition, have affixed my name to it, and will submit it with page Jenny.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition here signed and addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which states:

“Whereas a progressive Ontario budget calls for bold and decisive deficit reduction action to ensure that Ontario remains the most attractive and competitive place in North America to set up or relocate a business, raise a family or build a career; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario has introduced a budget that sets out a five-year deficit reduction, leading to a balanced budget by fiscal year 2017-18, while preserving Ontario’s progress in infrastructure, health care and education; and

“Whereas the 2012-13 Ontario budget proposes \$4 of expense reduction for every dollar raised in new revenues, with such expense reduction including implementation of key recommendations in the Drummond report, eliminating overlap and duplication, and compensation restraint in the Ontario broader public sector;

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

“That the elected members of all parties support the comprehensive set of financial measures and expense reductions proposed in the 2012-13 Ontario budget to enable Ontario to balance its budget on schedule; enhance its world-leading position; and attract, build and retain the people, careers and companies to build a strong Ontario for generations to come.”

I support this petition, and I affix my signature and send it with page Ranbir.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition 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 more than a dozen private entities that enriched former senior officers and left taxpayers on the hook for” more than “\$300 million in debt;

“Whereas government funding for Ornge climbed 20% to \$700 million, while the number of patients airlifted actually declined by 6%;

“Whereas Ornge was paid \$7,700 per patient transported by land ambulance despite subcontracting this service for \$1,700 per patient, a full \$6,000 per patient less;

“Whereas, after receiving questions of serious concerns at Ornge from the opposition in 2010 and early 2011, the Minister of Health did not provide adequate

oversight, ignored the red flags and reassured the Legislature that all was well; and

“Whereas, on March 21, 2012, the Legislature voted to create a special all-party select committee to investigate the scandals” at Ornge;

“Whereas such a committee provides protection from disciplinary action against employees who testify;

“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” at Ornge.

I agree with this petition and I will be signing it.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

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

“Whereas a company’s resumption of production with replacement workers during a legal strike puts undue tensions and divisions on a community; and

“Whereas anti-replacement legislation in other provinces has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes”;

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario “to enact legislation banning the use of replacement workers during a strike.”

I fully support this petition, Mr. Speaker, will affix my name to it and ask my little page Ranbir—not too sure how to pronounce the name; we’ll learn, though—to bring it to the Clerk.

IMMIGRATION POLICY

POLITIQUES D’IMMIGRATION

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: 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;

“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 and will sign it—and will offer the member from Trinity–Spadina an opportunity, as he seems to be indicating his enthusiasm—and send it to you via page Vincent.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The time for petitions has expired.

Orders of the day.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to revert to motions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has sought unanimous consent to return to motions. Agreed? Agreed.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 35 be waived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Bradley has moved that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 35 be waived. Agreed? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

ONTARIO FORESTRY INDUSTRY REVITALIZATION ACT (HEIGHT OF WOOD FRAME BUILDINGS), 2012 LOI DE 2012 SUR LA REVITALISATION DE L’INDUSTRIE FORESTIÈRE DE L’ONTARIO (HAUTEUR DES BÂTIMENTS À OSSATURE DE BOIS)

Mr. Fedeli moved second reading of the following bill:

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

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. It's my great pleasure to be introducing this bill on behalf of the forestry industry and on behalf of all of northern Ontario.

Forestry, as you know, is a vital part of the northern economy, and it has been hit hard over the past decade. Over the past several years, some 60 lumber mills have closed across the north and 10,000 resource-sector jobs have disappeared.

It's my hope that this bill will help reverse the damage that has been done and help kick-start a revival in the forestry sector of northern Ontario.

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Back on March 20, I was pleased to be joined at my news conference here at Queen's Park to introduce my bill by Mr. Jim Lopez, president of Tembec, one of Canada's premier forestry companies; Mr. Michael Giroux, president of the Canadian Wood Council; and Marianne Berube, Ontario executive director for Wood WORKS!

We have worked very closely for a long time with the industry to develop this legislation. For that reason, it does not promote the use of one construction material over another, but rather focuses on the tangible benefits this change could offer to all of Ontario.

The Ontario Forestry Industry Revitalization Act is an act to amend the Ontario building code to permit wood frame multi-use buildings to be constructed up to six storeys instead of the current four storeys. This seemingly small change could provide a tremendous boost to the forestry industry by increasing domestic demand for Ontario lumber, supporting 200,000 jobs and stimulating 103 forestry-dependent communities.

With the national building code updates not coming until 2015, that means the Ontario code won't be updated until 2017. This bill, Bill 52, will then fast-track that process. My bill will also allow Ontario to respond to lower export demand for its softwood lumber and stimulate the forestry sector in the north by creating tariff-free local markets.

Ontario's softwood lumber industry is reliant on the housing sector, with between 60% and 70% of provincial production being currently exported to the United States. But with Ontario's population projected to rise by nearly 35% by 2036, the demand for more higher-density, multi-family residential buildings will continue to increase.

Market experts estimate that the mid-rise sector could represent 8% to 10% of the entire multi-storey market in Ontario in the next 20 years, up from 3% today. This bill will give wood frame mid-rise buildings an opportunity to help meet that demand.

As well, through the growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe and the Places to Grow Act, Ontario and almost all municipalities are committed to reducing urban sprawl. By 2015, at least 40% of all residential development in the greater Golden Horseshoe must be built on land already designated for residential or commercial use. By making construction of mid-rise structures 12% to 15% more affordable, wood frame buildings

will allow municipalities to build up instead of out and to adopt higher densification policies.

The proposed building code changes also include proven fire safety measures which ensure that wood frame buildings will perform as well as or better than buildings permitted under the current version of the code.

British Columbia is already seeing the benefits of changes to allow more wood construction in their mid-rise buildings. B.C. enacted their Wood First Act in 2009 and fast-tracked changes to its building code in 2009—it took them nine months, that's all—to allow wood frame construction up to six storeys. Since then, 11 projects have been completed or are under construction; 98 are at the design, permit or construction stage; and the B.C. government themselves have recently issued a request for proposals for a 10-storey wood frame building.

On a market scale, introducing a wood frame option has made building mid-rise structures considerably more cost-effective.

The increased consumption of lumber brought about by this bill will stimulate Ontario's forestry sector in response to the economic weakness and decreased demand from the United States. Bill 52 will create jobs and growth in northern Ontario communities dependent on forestry, while reducing construction costs, and help southern Ontario meet targets to reduce urban sprawl. Wood frame construction will also reduce the carbon footprint and increase the energy efficiency of mid-rise buildings. Speaker, this is a win-win-win-win.

At its board meeting last week, the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities, FONOM, which represents 110 municipalities, towns and cities in northeastern Ontario, passed the following resolution in support of Bill 52. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities has previously gone on record as supporting a change in the building code such as that contained in this bill;

“Now, therefore, be it resolved that the FONOM commits its support to this proposed legislation; and

“Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be sent to the member of provincial Parliament for Nipissing.”

In addition, the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, NOMA, has backed my Bill 52. In a letter from President Ron Nelson, he states, “We thank you for your support of the forestry industry in Ontario, and we offer our full and unreserved support to this legislation which we trust will be unanimously supported by members of the Ontario Legislature.”

In addition, the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce has expressed support for Bill 52. In addition, the chamber says it will bring forward a resolution to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, which reads as follows:

“That the Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the government to give its full support for the proposed changes to the Ontario building code regarding the use of wood in mid-rise construction, and urge that the proposed

changes be incorporated into the revised edition of the Ontario building code.”

Their e-mail to me goes on to say, “We applaud your bill, which will make the necessary changes to the current Ontario building code.”

Speaker, as you can see, my bill has broad support across northeastern and northwestern Ontario and from the important industrial forestry partners.

As you’re aware, the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan will bring forward a very similar bill this afternoon. Sadly, it’s an attempt by the Liberals to boast that they love Ontario’s lumber industry even more than us because this bill mandates the use of wood in provincially funded buildings—this despite closing most of northern Ontario off from development through their Far North Act.

In a fashion typical of the government, they’ve created a bill that increases regulations and unnecessarily interferes in the construction sector. In short, they’ve taken a great idea from our caucus and made it complicated, while using it as an opportunity to add red tape to the bureaucracy. In fact, it does the one very thing the industry told me in all of my extensive consultations on my Bill 52 they did not want to see, and that was a requirement to favour wood over other construction material.

It would also increase regulations by requiring builders working on a provincially funded project to submit a report to the minister in accordance with the regulations that demonstrate that the building will be constructed using wood as the primary building material. More troubling is the new authority the minister will have, including the ability to recommend best practices and to “advise on the form and content of agreements and other arrangements respecting the design or construction of provincially funded buildings.”

Speaker, it’s clear that this additional regulatory burden will increase the cost and construction time for these taxpayer-funded projects.

The goal should be to reduce red tape regulations and the seemingly endless list of approvals that are major issues in the construction sector. Instead, their bill, which we’ll hear shortly, comes up with new ways to add to these problems. That said, this issue is critically important to our forestry industry, and this legislation should be viewed in that context.

In closing, Bill 52 promotes the use of wood in construction, but does so without increasing the regulatory burden and the government’s control over the private sector. It is my hope that members of all political stripes, especially my fellow colleagues from northern Ontario, will see the merits of Bill 52 and support it in the Legislature today so it can receive proper scrutiny at committee.

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I come from the city of North Bay in the riding of Nipissing. We have 66 manufacturing companies within our community. My riding includes the town of Mattawa and the municipalities of Powassan and Trout Creek,

both heavily dependent on the wood sector. We have seen Mattawa be devastated by various things that the government has done, including the Far North Act and Bill 151, the forest tenure act. Those have been so harmful to all northern Ontario communities, especially the hard-hit community of Mattawa, where the men and women from Mattawa need to go out to the Alberta oil sands to find work, and the families are left with one parent at home.

This is an opportunity to bring back the forestry sector, bring life back to those 103 communities like Mattawa, like Trout Creek, like Powassan, that are dependent on the forestry sector. This is an opportunity for those 10,000 resource-related jobs that have been lost throughout northern Ontario and those 60 communities that have been devastated by the loss in the forestry sector.

Speaker, my bill, Bill 52, is supported by FONOM, supported by NOMA and especially supported by the industry themselves, who have pushed so hard for this bill. I’m looking for unanimous support of this bill.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to Bill 52, an act to amend the building code.

Some of you might not know that before I was an elected official to this Legislature, many, many moons ago I used to be a cut and skidder operator. I worked for an owner/operator for Cherokee Logging, and I also worked in a sawmill environment for Gogama Forest Products at various positions within the mill. So I come from the grassroots of the importance of what the forest industry means in northern Ontario. I’ve been part of the many, many communities that have been affected by this.

My family, along with many of my friends in the north, relies solely on the forestry industry. During my time working in the forestry sector, many of my friends lost their jobs due to the low demand for wood supply. I saw communities devastated by closures of sawmills, and I also became one of those statistics.

According to the CIBC World Markets report, when it comes to job losses and mill closures in Ontario, Ontario has the worst reputation across Canadian provinces. The Ontario Forestry Coalition has reported that since 2002, the forest industry has shed 10,000 direct jobs and as many as 40,000 direct and indirect jobs.

Without the appropriate public policies in place, the loss of jobs and economic prosperity is likely to continue. Failure of this government to act and to protect the forestry sector will impact sustainable economic development for communities across northern Ontario, including members of First Nations who are looking to forestry as a means to improving the economic standings of their respective communities.

In my riding, we have several mills which are operating at lower capacity, experiencing job losses and, in some unfortunate cases, have complete closures. In my riding alone, Weyerhaeuser mill in Wawa: 160 jobs lost;

mill closed. Domtar closed in White River; approximately 236 jobs lost. They also temporarily closed their operations in Nairn Centre, and many still continue to be affected. Dubreuilville Forest Products: This community was built on the bones of three brothers who stood together to build this community; 400 direct jobs were lost there and countless indirect jobs were lost there. The mill is still closed today. The Domtar sawmill in Chapleau: The mill closed. Tembec is running in Chapleau; however, they've had 140 employees who have experienced layoffs and are under threat of job loss due to some fibre supply issues, so there are big concerns there. The Midway mill in Thessalon: The lumber mill is surviving; however, almost 200 permanent jobs were lost there.

If I look here, there are 48 mills that I'm not even going to mention at this point in time. So the list goes on and on, and I've only mentioned—these are just sawmills. There are many other jobs associated with this industry that are experiencing job loss. My staff and I spoke to some loggers last night who can't find a contract, or the contracts, the ones that are offered to them, they just can't do them because they're offered below operating costs. We have folks working in the trucking companies who transport to these mills, and they too are losing their jobs at staggering rates, not to mention the recent increases to commercial licensing fees.

So, Mr. Speaker, I wish I could be optimistic that this bill will improve the economy for northerners working in the forestry sector and I do want to believe that it will. However, this is one small step. Obviously, we need to address the high cost of electricity as well.

People in the north are not impressed. Day to day, we have policies which disproportionately disadvantage northerners. It's about time this government stood up for northern Ontario workers and made policies to improve the economy in the north, not destroy it. Many other provinces and countries have developed wood-first strategies. It's time we recognize and assist the forest industry after many, many years—too many years—of neglect.

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

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm pleased to join in this debate. It's kind of an unusual afternoon because we've got Bill 52 before us, which we're debating right now, and later we've got Bill 61, a similar bill which has got some additional provisos in it. While I do understand the reason for the member from Nipissing bringing forward this bill, I suggest that the House take a close look at the member from Nipissing's bill and the bill from the member for Thunder Bay, Bill Mauro, which is Bill 61. These two bills are very, very similar but there are very subtle differences.

I've read over carefully and thought carefully about the member from Nipissing's bill. Of course, his bill raises the building height limit from four to six storeys for a wooden building, and it's surprisingly close to the bill brought by the member from Thunder Bay.

I know the member from Thunder Bay has been working on this issue for months and months and months.

He's been a member here since 2003, and I remember talking to him in past years about this issue. So it's surprisingly strange, when the member from Thunder Bay gave notice a while ago that he was going to bring this bill forward to increase the construction heights from four to six storeys to benefit and increase the demand for wood products in the north, that immediately upon the member from Thunder Bay introducing this bill, what happens? The member from Nipissing quickly jumps on the wagon and introduces his own bill, and now we've got this sort of odd situation where we've got essentially two bills dealing with the same issue on the same afternoon. But I have taken the advice of the member from Thunder Bay, who is intimately involved with these issues and has been a champion of this cause for several years now, since I've known him in this Legislature.

So what are the differences in the two bills? You have to keep in mind that they're very, very subtle, but here are the concerns that you've got to keep in mind and why these concerns are really a criticism of Bill 52, which does not go as far as Bill 61.

So what are the two core issues here?

Well, number one, there's a concern about the time frames contained in Bill 61, the bill put forward by the member from Nipissing. I think, reading the bill through and making my own professional inquiries from people in the safety industry and in the lumber industry, that he's rushing a little too fast here. If we're going to pass a bill allowing construction from four to six storeys and using lumber products, there are a number of safety issues and building code issues, and especially issues that the firefighters of Ontario have raised.

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It's no secret that in wooden structures, there's a higher risk factor of fire and the like. Bill 61, put forward by the member from Thunder Bay, has got a different set of time frames involved in it so that these safety concerns can be addressed and we can make sure that we get it right.

We want two things here: We want the increased use of lumber in construction, and we want to do it in the safest possible way. Those things have to be married together, and that will achieve two things: That will help our economy, and it will do it in a way that has the most safety we can get for people who are using those residences and for people who have to deal with safety issues that may arise under various building code requirements, and particularly our provincial firefighters who may have to attend to these safety issues.

The second big difference in the two bills is—and this is also very, very important—that Bill 61 goes much farther than Bill 52, in that it requires, here in Ontario, that all publicly funded buildings use and increase their wood construction in those buildings. That's a huge one-up, if you will, on Bill 52. Bill 52 leaves it up to private sector buildings; they can optionally use lumber. The member from Thunder Bay has taken it a step further and required that all publicly funded buildings in Ontario increase and use wood construction. That's a huge boost for the lumber industry.

The member from Nipissing made reference to his time as mayor and how he has been interested in this issue of wood construction and so on, and I do understand that. I just want to take this moment to thank the member from Nipissing for being such a great supporter of our provincial FIT program. I understand that when he was the mayor, up until his election here to this chamber, he was instrumental in seeing that the city hall in North Bay installed solar panels on their roof. I'm glad that he did that, but I find it strange that he sits opposite during the rest of the time and is critical of the FIT program.

I'm also wondering whether the member opposite, rather than sort of jump on the bandwagon of Bill 61 that Mr. Mauro from Thunder Bay has introduced and trying to sort of crowd him out for the credit there, as a member from Nipissing and a proponent over the last number of days since we introduced the budget—and he's been highly critical of our plans for the Ontario Northland Transportation, or what's affectionately known as the ONR—why he hasn't, on his own initiative, introduced a private member's bill to make sure that the ONR is kept. I'd just make that observation.

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

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's my pleasure today to stand here and speak in support of Bill 52, the Ontario Forestry Industry Revitalization Act. Also, I'd like to take an opportunity to thank my colleague from Nipissing for tabling the bill when Ontario is in desperate need of creating jobs and revitalizing key economic sectors, especially in the north.

Bill 52 will directly contribute to Ontario's recovery and create more jobs. Forestry is a key component of our province's economy, and has been for well over 100 years. It's the second-largest industrial sector in Ontario, supporting 200,000 jobs and the livelihood of over 103 northern communities.

The Ontario forestry sector has been grappling with numerous disadvantages, among them the fact that the sector relies heavily on the US market. Between 60% and 70% of our wood is exported to the US. However, as a result of the downturn in the US housing market, the global recession and the US government's protectionist policies that aren't getting better, the forestry sector has been suffering from atrophy. In recent years, 60 lumber mills and over 45,000 forestry jobs have disappeared from this province.

Furthermore, the current Ontario building code put our lumber producers at a further disadvantage by limiting the height of wood frame buildings to four storeys. If this Legislature passes Bill 52, construction companies will be able to build wood frame buildings as tall as six storeys. The change to the building code will create tariff-free markets for Ontario wood and consequently stimulate the forestry sector, which badly needs it, and create high-quality, non-subsidized permanent jobs. We'll see thriving logging and lumber mill towns in northern Ontario once again, just like we have over the past century.

Bill 52 is a job creation strategy. I'm confident that all of my admirable colleagues here today, regardless of their political stripe, would agree with me that job creation is Ontario's top priority right now. I know it is in Barrie. While Ontario lags at the bottom of Confederation, Barrie actually has one of the lowest employment rates in Ontario and continues on that path. Therefore, it's important that we work together to pass this bill.

Bill 52 will create more affordable housing. First, the bill would help contractors build affordable homes faster. In British Columbia, contractors building six-storey wood frame buildings have realized an average of 12% to 15% savings compared to building steel and concrete buildings of the same height. Furthermore, contractors can erect a wood frame building in 70% of the time needed to construct a concrete building of the same height.

I know that the need for affordable housing is desperate in some communities, especially, I know, in my own community of Barrie, where there are over 5,000 families—not 5,000 people but 5,000 families—waiting for affordable housing, and in the past 10 years, there was only one affordable housing project that was implemented in Barrie, in my own ward. The fact that there has been only one in the past 10 years is deplorable. In a lot of cases, it's because of the lack of affordable materials. This would go a long way to help create more affordable housing, not just in northern Ontario but all over the province, and also help stimulate the building industry.

Bill 52 is presented in light of the success of the Wood First Act in BC. I'd like to argue that Bill 52 is an improvement on the Wood First Act, passed in British Columbia. The BC Wood First Act vitalized the forestry sector there by raising the height limit for wood frame buildings from four to six storeys. However, it has a severe downside. The law requires that all new provincially funded buildings be built using wood as the primary construction material. In each construction project, contractors use a wide range of building materials. It is up to the team of craftsmen, engineers, designers, contractors, accountants, lawyers and bankers involved in the project to determine which material is best suited for the job, in light of technical, environmental, economic and practical considerations.

I would like to argue that it is a flaw in the BC Wood First Act to allow politicians to severely limit professional contractors' freedom of design and of selecting the best-suited material. As a result, any gain made by the BC lumber industry is offset by losses incurred, for example, in the concrete and steel sectors. We don't want this to happen at the expense of any other economic sector. We don't want to take, you know, two steps forward only to take three back. That's not the point, and Bill 52 addresses this.

Those are the unfair provisions of the Wood First Act.

In contrast, Bill 52 is a fair bill. It takes the necessary steps to level the playing field for Ontario's wood sector by raising the height limit of wood frame buildings. At the time, it does not impose any limitation on profes-

sional contractors in terms of what material they can use. Thus, Bill 52 encourages competition and innovation without favouritism. Needless to say, Bill 52 is superior to any bill that plagiarizes the BC Wood First Act almost verbatim in a frankly pathetic attempt to buy the confidence of Ontarians with political gesturing.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to speak in favour of Bill 52, introduced by the member from Nipissing. An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 with respect to the height of wood frame buildings.

As you all know, I represent the riding of Nickel Belt, a riding in northeastern Ontario where, for us, wood products mean forestry jobs. So I thought that I would read to you a list that I have read in this House before but I think it is worth repeating.

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It goes like this: Cascades, Thunder Bay, lost 375 permanent jobs; Abitibi-Consolidated in Kenora lost 350 permanent jobs; Norampac, the containerboard division from Red Rock, lost 300 permanent jobs; when Columbia Forest Products, the veneer plant, closed in Rutherglen, 63 people lost permanent jobs; Columbia Forest Products in Hearst closed, 76 permanent jobs; Weyerhaeuser, one paper machine and the wood room in Dryden, lost 115 jobs; Weyerhaeuser, the sawmill in Dryden, lost 385 permanent jobs; Weyerhaeuser in Sturgeon Falls, 125 permanent jobs lost; Excel sawmill in Opasatika, 76 permanent jobs; Domtar sawmill in Chapleau, 67 permanent jobs; Smurfit-Stone, the containerboard division in Thunder Bay, 100 permanent jobs lost; Temagami Forest Products in Temagami, 55 permanent jobs; Tembec in Smooth Rock Falls, 230 permanent jobs lost; Tembec in Mattawa, 111—hopefully those jobs will be recreated, but so far they're lost.; Tembec, Kapuskasing, 65 permanent jobs lost; Kruger, Longlac Wood Industries, in Longlac, 350 permanent jobs lost; Domtar pulp and paper in Espanola, 115 permanent jobs lost; Domtar sawmill in Nairn Centre, 140 permanent jobs lost; Devlin sawmill in Kenora, 30 permanent jobs lost; Patricia Logging in Dryden, 35 permanent jobs lost; Sturgeon Timber, 70 permanent jobs lost; Weyerhaeuser plant in Kenora, 41 permanent job lost; Bowater in Thunder Bay, 157 permanent jobs lost.

I could keep on and on like this, Mr. Speaker, rhyming off lists of sawmills that closed in northern Ontario and, if you were to keep track, you would count, just in my part of the northeast, 5,234 permanent jobs lost in the forestry industry in northeastern Ontario. Some of the examples that I give come from northwestern Ontario. So when I see a member from northeastern Ontario stand up, bring forward a bill that is balanced and that gives hope and opportunity, I speak in favour of this.

I didn't speak about Fryer Forest Products, in my riding, that is barely hanging on. Last week, Hydro came and turned the hydro off for unpaid bills because they're sitting with a tonne of wood and no buyers. The Home Depots of this world are not moving wood, so it sits in

his yard; tonnes of money sitting in his yard with no buyer.

This bill may give a little bit of hope to all of those 5,234 families who have lost their jobs in the forestry industry and who are looking to people like us, leaders in our communities, to give them a little bit of hope. I will be supporting this bill.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate and speak to Bill 52, which is the bill that's being put forward by the member from Nipissing today.

Obviously, I don't come from a northern community, but from the years that I've spent here and from talking to my other colleagues from other communities around the province of Ontario, I certainly understand and appreciate the impact that forestry has, and the impact that it has on the Ontario economy.

Right from the outset, Speaker, let me tell you that I will be supporting this bill that's being put forward because I think it's one that allows us all to work together on issues that affect the province, whether you be from the north or from the south of this province. I think it's a good effort by the member to bring forward an idea. And quite often private members' bills are simply that: They're simply ideas that are brought forward because of what somebody's heard from a constituent, what you may have heard from a stakeholder, what you may have thought all along, maybe something that might make a piece of good legislation or maybe even a good addition to another piece of legislation. I think Bill 52 probably qualifies on a number of those fronts.

It's interesting that we do have two bills before us today that are very similar. I think both of them are seeking the same intent, and that is to ensure that the economy of northern Ontario remains one that is strong and one that is prospering and growing.

The bill we have before us—I know there will be some people who will say that they would not be in support of this bill, and I've heard from some of them. Some people are coming forward and saying that a six-storey building is too high for a building that's made primarily from wood; that it represents to them some safety concerns and that they would see it as a step backwards.

What happens if this bill were to pass today is that it would go on to committee and we'd hear from those groups, obviously. But we'd also be able to hear from those other people that I've heard from as well, who have told me that great strides have been made in this field and that you can now engineer buildings out of wood in a much more safe manner than you could in the past and that, I think, is something that we need to take into account.

So I will be supporting Bill 52 that we have before us. Bill 61, which is the next one up after this, which is the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan's bill, I think takes the good parts of Bill 52 and takes them a little bit further and actually talks about what the government could do to

increase its own usage of the wood products from our province. So I see the two bills as complementary.

I know that others have passed comment here today that I would not share or I would not associate myself with, that somehow these two members have ulterior motives. I see two members who are simply trying to support their own constituents and the industries in their constituencies.

Certainly, I sit next to the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan; I know we’ve been talking about these issues. I tell him about the problems that are facing Oakville; he tells me about the problems that are facing Thunder Bay. Mr. Fedeli and I will probably have a talk about North Bay at some point over the term, I’m sure. But I think that’s how we get to understand the province better: by listening to each other. I know that I’ve talked, for some time, to the member from Thunder Bay about issues that face his community, and a lot of those issues are around forestry and are around the changing face of the forest industry on a global perspective, and what Ontario’s role is in that.

So as those changes take place, there is always a role for government. Bill 52 I think speaks to that role and says that perhaps we ought to rethink something that we changed in the past. In the past, we limited the buildings to four storeys and that was with the old technology, that was with old wood, that was with the building practices of the day. What I believe the member is trying to tell the House today is that we may be able to move to six storeys. That is a common thread that we also see in Bill 61, that six storeys may be the new figure that we should be looking at in the future and that the rationale for that exists and that engineers and the engineering industry itself would be supportive of this in some manner.

So contrary to what we’ve heard from other people, I see the two bills as being very complementary. I applaud both members. I won’t be speaking to the next bill, but I’ll tell the member from Nipissing that I’m supporting his initiative and I would hope that he would support Bill 61 when it comes for passage.

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

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak about Bill 52.

I must say, in regard to the member from Algoma–Manitoulin, that I as well ran a cutter-skidder operation in my past life for a while and know what it’s like to run a saw and everything else that’s required. Mine was a small operation; I was an owner/operator. I was the number one supplier for a cedar mill and a red pine mill in southern Ontario, so I have a bit of experience in operating some of those aspects and know a little bit about that.

But you know, there’s a lot more to this bill than just the building component. And yes, that is one of the key components that we’re speaking about. Once upon a time, we had two-by-four construction in the province of Ontario; now we have two-by-six construction as a basis for many of the wood frame construction.

I know that the new member, the member from Nipissing—he was first elected, his first time around, in October of the past year, and within that time frame he’s brought this bill forward. I know that there’s posturing back and forth and I think that both members will agree that they’d be more than happy to work together, to work in the best interest of all the forestry sector in Ontario.

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Individuals need to realize—I know the member from Nickel Belt mentioned the number of jobs that were lost in so many places. But from a community such as southern Ontario and Oshawa, where I’m from, when you talk about losing 76 jobs, it’s more a case of, “Oh, did they close a Lowe’s or a Rona or a new Building Centre?” whereas in northern Ontario, it’s the lifeblood of the north. The building sector and the forestry sector and the mining sector are the lifebloods of the north. That can represent entire small communities in northern Ontario, and their main substance for income is the forestry sector. When you lose those jobs, it has a huge impact, Mr. Speaker. I feel that it needs to be mentioned that it’s a lot more than just the people working inside the mills, as well, if you look at all the cutters that are out there working in the bush, or the ones that are transporting the logs back and forth.

Most people don’t realize that the number one cost in the operations is the energy costs involved in producing the lumber that’s involved here, whether it’s transporting it back and forth from the location where it’s cut to the mills or it’s the actual energy cost that’s used inside those mills to be cost-effective, and that’s one of the huge factors.

If we’re able to, as mentioned, increase the number, about a 12% to 18% increase in wood sales as a result of this, I think it will be a huge benefit for Ontario as a whole. You’ll see many of those sectors, not only inside the mills but all those support sectors around, whether it’s the restaurants and the gas stations and everything else that takes place, the repair shops that take care of the trucks, and on and on and on, or the ones that maintain the roads—it’s a whole separate industry, and it’s hard for individuals in southern Ontario to gain that perspective. When you go cut the bush this way, you go cut through and you put in a new path, that’s got to be maintained, Mr. Speaker. All that aspect of putting in that new road and everything that takes place there is very key for the development.

I can see this as moving forward. As I mentioned earlier on, once upon a time we had two-by-four construction in so many different ways. That two-by-four construction has now been replaced, basically, by two-by-six, and if you take that up, as other jurisdictions have—the example of British Columbia has been brought forward—that should be moving forward to Ontario as well.

The forestry sector has been substantially hit. We’ve heard from our members, our colleagues from the third party, about the number of mills that have been shut down in the province of Ontario.

I can recall another aspect, something else in Bill 61 that the member from Thunder Bay is going to be debating shortly after this, where he was talking about moving forward with government buildings as well. When I was given the privilege and honour to be the Minister of Natural Resources, it was in Thunder Bay at the Wood WORKS! event where I stood up and I announced at that time that all MNR buildings at that time, moving forward, would be all-wood-construction buildings in order to support that industry, because you can see it had such a huge demand in northern Ontario.

But also it's southern Ontario that benefits from the wood and the cost reductions that are brought forward by utilizing wood for these mid-range facilities. Anything that we can do to make life more affordable—simply the cost of gas. You only have to look at the cost of gas today, Mr. Speaker, as to the impacts on families. My sister-in-law is looking at downsizing her vehicle simply because she can no longer afford the gas in the vehicle that she was driving, and now is trying to find something more affordable. Affordable life in so many different aspects—

Interjection.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: What was that? I missed the member from Peterborough's comments.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Chevrolet Volt.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Oh, the Volt. Yes.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Great product.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Yes, well, there are a number of General Motors—great crews and so many other ones that work. And yes, in Oshawa we're very dependent on General Motors, as it is in Peterborough. It used to be the number one employer but I think it's now—is it still the number one employer or number two now in Peterborough? We see how the industry—and the automotive industry is a comparator—benefits other communities like that of the member across the floor in Peterborough, and it's the same for the wood industry.

I can recall a mill being shut down in one community because the bureaucracy—and the member from Timmins–James Bay knows very well, because we worked on this issue—allowed the wood to be transported to another mill, unbeknown to the minister. Lo and behold, that individual lost his signing rights for any future impacts because of the impact not only on that, but on the cutters and everything else in the forest industry. We then met with the mayor at that particular time, where we continued to allow the cutting to take place, and the transport, because of all those jobs involved in that.

It's working together as an organization, and I know my colleague from Nipissing, as I mentioned earlier on, first came forward in October of this year. This is a key issue in supporting that sector. He's more than willing to work together with the member from Thunder Bay on Bill 61 to try and make this happen for the north, and anything that we can do as a government to move that file forward, to get those jobs in northern Ontario so that southern Ontario can receive those benefits, I think we should work toward.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's my honour to stand here and speak in favour of Bill 52. I might not get a chance to speak about Bill 61, so I'd also speak in favour of Bill 61 at the same time.

Anyone from northern Ontario knows how important forestry is, and I'm proud to stand beside a member from northern Ontario who stands up for an industry in northern Ontario.

I don't say this for political reasons, but forestry is a big part of my riding, as is ONTC. I am a bit concerned when members from other parties in the north don't stand up for ONTC, because the extra cost of shipping the wood in and out might negate whatever happens in this bill.

Having said that, I truly hope that the members work together and the parties work together and make one bill that actually works, as opposed to what we're seeing with other bills where we're doing the posturing thing. In the end, the people in my riding, in Kirkland Lake, Larder Lake, Cochrane, French River or Englehart, don't see any benefit from what we're doing here. It's really important.

For those of you who have been here a long time, I think we could build six-storey buildings, but I'm not a building inspector, so I want to do whatever is safe. I also have cement plants in my riding. We do whatever works, okay? But let's do it.

The fact is, we have lost an awful lot of forestry jobs. Something no one has talked about yet—and I had this discussion with the member outside this chamber. In my riding, the trees are still getting cut, and then they go to Quebec and get processed. Neither of those two bills—we can still have the same thing happening: You cut the trees, they go to Quebec because hydro is cheaper, and then they come back here. So we could all be talking for nothing.

Having said that, I support both bills. I hope we can all work together to make one or two bills that work, and I hope we really talk about the issues that really, truly impact the north, because that's a big one. When I see the trees crossing the border and when I see the water spilling over the hydro dams, that hurts northern Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member from Nipissing, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. First I'd like to thank the members from Algoma–Manitoulin, Willowdale, Barrie, Nickel Belt, Oakville, Oshawa and Timiskaming–Cochrane for standing up to speak.

It's evident that there is seemingly universal support for our bills—my Bill 52 and the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan's Bill 61. How we got here—I can tell you, I'm a new member. I've been here six months. When I go to visit the town of Mattawa and see the people who aren't working there, I know that something needs to be done in the forestry sector.

When the forestry industry approached me about two days after I was elected, I began working on my bill,

which turns out to be Bill 52, the Ontario Forestry Revitalization Act. I will honestly say to you, Speaker, that I had no idea that the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan had a similar bill under way. Had I known that, I would have sat with the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan and said to him, “Is there any way I can be involved to support your bill?” Unbeknownst that there was an additional bill, I have gone ahead and prepared Bill 52.

I am most eager to see something happen, whether it’s my bill, the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan’s bill or a joint bill. I think it’s universal. We need something to happen in the forestry sector. We’re so close here. I would absolutely hate to see both of them get blown up just for politics. I extend an opportunity to the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan to somehow—I’m not a legislator. I don’t know the technical points. I’ve only been here six months. I don’t know how we go from here to join them, but I am offering an opportunity to be able to work together with the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, who has obviously worked long and hard on his bill. I offer that now, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much. We will vote on this bill later.

1430

ONTARIO’S WOOD FIRST ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 PRIVILÉGIANT LE BOIS EN ONTARIO

Mr. Mauro moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 61, An Act to enact the Ontario’s Wood First Act, 2012 and to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 with respect to wood frame buildings / Projet de loi 61, Loi édictant la Loi de 2012 privilégiant le bois en Ontario et modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment en ce qui a trait aux bâtiments à ossature de bois.

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

Mr. Bill Mauro: I appreciate the opportunity this afternoon to speak to my bill. It does two things, which I will go through quickly before I get into my remarks. The purpose of the act is to facilitate a culture of wood by requiring the use of wood as the primary building material in the construction of provincially funded buildings in a manner that is consistent with the Building Code Act, 1992, and there is contained in the bill an allowance for regulations to be formed in that regard.

The second piece I want to reference that the bill does—there are two themes here, basically: “The building code shall allow a building that is six storeys or less in building height to be of wood frame construction.” As well, this is the piece that has some sensitivity for some groups in the province. I want them to know that my private member’s bill that is being put forward here today does allow for an accommodation through regulation,

and they’re important enough that I want to read for people:

“For greater certainty, subsection (1)”—this is the part referring to the six-storey piece—“does not prevent the building code from,

“(a) imposing reasonable requirements on buildings of wood frame construction, including requirements relating to safety;” and clause (b) of that states, “prohibiting specified classes of buildings from being of wood frame construction.”

So without reading the whole bill, that’s specifically what it does.

The question then becomes, why is this necessary and why do we feel the need to do it? I want to speak to that a little bit. Most of us who have been around this place long enough know, or who have been from northern Ontario for long enough are aware, that the history of the forest industry has always been cyclical. It has always experienced significant ups and downs. But what happened over the course of the last seven, eight, nine years, and I think you could go back to the beginning of the new millennium—you could say the change that has occurred has been fundamental.

What occurred this time in the forest industry was not the same as what happened before, where we had the ups and downs and then it came back. What happened this time was completely fundamental. It was a major shift in what occurred. There are primarily two pieces to the forestry industry: sawmilling and pulp and paper. I’m speaking to why we feel this is necessary here today.

Speaker, what happened in this industry was incredibly dramatic. When we came to government here in 2003, the Canadian dollar was at 73 cents. The reason I need to put this on the record is that for seven years I listened to primarily the NDP blame the Liberals for the demise of the forest industry. It does not hold up to even the most superficial discussion or argument, and yet for five or six or seven years the NDP would continually criticize our government as somehow being responsible for the demise of the forest industry in northern Ontario and the loss of thousands of jobs. It was a ridiculous, it was a vacuous, it was an empty argument, and for five, six, seven years we listened to it. For those reasons, I will put some of these things on the record again as I have done in the past.

When we came to government, a 73-cent Canadian dollar—a year or two before that, when the Conservatives were in power, it was at 63 cents. For one pulp and paper mill in my riding, AbitibiBowater, now called Resolute Forest Products, one penny of appreciation in the value of the Canadian dollar represents a \$3-million expense to them on their bottom line—one penny. It went from 73 cents to \$1.10 at one point. It’s now around \$1. One cent of appreciation represents about a \$90-million to \$100-million expense on their bottom line. But the NDP primarily would tell you that it was somehow the Liberal government’s fault.

Now, AbitibiBowater had more than just one mill in Ontario; they had several mills in Ontario. That one cent,

for them, province-wide represented a \$15-million expense. But primarily the NDP wanted you to think that somehow the Liberals in Ontario were responsible for what happened in this industry.

Speaker, we weren't competitive. We've got the best tradesmen in the world in Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario. I used to be one of them before I went back to university, and I can speak directly to the quality of work that we do. But do you know what? At the end of the day, if nobody is going to buy what you make, you've got a problem.

The member from Nickel Belt, in her remarks on the previous bill, just stood up and expressed her concern about a mill in her riding that just had the power turned off, and what did she say? They got the wood in the yard, but they've got no buyer. They don't have a buyer. She just made the point, right, Speaker? You could give them free energy; you could take the taxes off of their property tax; you could give them free water; you could cut labour costs in half, but if nobody buys what you make, you've got a problem, and that's a big part of also what happened to this industry. The US housing market collapsed. The member in the back row—I apologize; I don't have the riding at hand—from the Conservatives who spoke to the bill spoke to that, and I thank him for that. He said how most of the market is in the US, and that's the truth.

In my riding, the Buchanan sawmills, most of them—90% of his product was exported into the United States. Ninety per cent of it went to the US. We all know what happened to the US housing market: It collapsed. There are more houses for sale in the United States than there are houses in Canada. We all get a lot of stats around this place—more houses for sale in the United States than there are houses in Canada. So what does that do to the demand for wood products? I go back to the point the member just made. Yes, you can have lumber sitting in your yard and you can produce it as cheap as you want, but if there's nobody to buy your product, you've got a problem.

Speaker, Quebec, BC and Ontario are the three leading jurisdictions of forestry in the whole country. In Quebec and in BC, they lost more jobs in the forestry sector than Ontario did. If you talk to the NDP again, they're going to tell you that it only happened here and they're going to link the problems directly to the price of energy. They made a living off of that for six years. I say to them, as I said: The argument does not stand up to the most even superficial discussion. If it was as simple as that, why didn't a pulp and paper mill that was operating in Ontario transfer its capacity to Quebec or transfer its pulp and paper capacity to BC? Well, because they were closing there too; because it had nothing to do with electricity costs. It had to do with the decline of the housing market and it had to do with the decline and disappearance, to a large degree, of the newsprint market, or else they would have simply transferred their capacity, but they didn't do that.

Quebec, with their lower electricity costs, lost more jobs than Ontario. BC, with their lower electricity costs,

lost more jobs than Ontario. Ontario lost a lot of jobs, and we all know that the forest industry in Ontario took a kicking. But the suggestion, Speaker, that somehow that can be laid at the feet of this government as a result of electricity pricing is incredible.

I don't know where they get their 45,000 job number that they use all the time, because the number is actually—it's high, and a lot of people and a lot of families were affected, but it's more in the range of 10,000 to 11,000. They keep throwing 45,000 around. I'd like them to know—the member read a list. Maybe she can see if it adds up to 45,000 or not. I don't know.

Speaker, we have brought supports to this industry in a large way. Part of what we're doing here today is trying to help to create an environment for the use of more wood. That's something we can control, and that's something we should work together on, and that's something we should try and find a way to create a demand. But, Speaker, we have done lots over the past number of years that I want to reference.

Right now, in the last little while, the Resolute Forest Products mill in Thunder Bay has hired 100 people. A lot of people probably don't talk about that, but the sawmill there in Thunder Bay, associated with Resolute Forest Products, has hired 50 more people, so they're doing okay. They're hanging in there. We've given about \$10 million or \$11 million to Resolute Forest Products just about a year ago to create a cogeneration facility there. When that project is finished, they will take another 30% of their energy requirement away from having to buy it from the grid and they will generate it internally, meaning that 60% of their energy requirements will be generated internally. That cogen project, when it's finished, will lead to the creation of about another 50 jobs.

Currently in this budget—which, in three or four days, the NDP might stand and vote against, forcing an election, possibly—what we brought in to support the forest industry some time ago was the NIER program, the northern industrial energy rebate program. It's giving \$20 off per megawatt hour to the large industrial users in the province. We can impact that. They've still got some market. We've had that program in place for a number of years, as well as a significant number of other programs.

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We took back the cost, by the way, I should mention. We took back the cost of construction and maintenance of the primary and secondary forestry roads in the province of Ontario, a cost that was downloaded by the NDP in the early 1990s on to the backs of the forestry companies. It used to be a crown responsibility. In the early 1990s, the NDP downloaded it on to the backs of the forestry companies. We took that cost back. That was, I think, a \$225-million program over three years for the construction and maintenance of primary and secondary forestry roads in Ontario. There has been a lot that we have done in this regard to support this particular industry.

As I said before, in addition to that, I will mention one other thing. When we brought those supports in that we

could for the forestry industry as it existed—and there always will be the traditional industry there. There will always be sawmilling; there will always be pulp and paper to some degree. But we realized that if we wanted the industry to flourish in northern Ontario, we had to look for different products from our historical wood basket.

We brought into play an organization called CRIBE. CRIBE stands for the Centre for Research and Innovation in the Bio-Economy. We put \$25 million into that particular program. We worked very hard. We got the CRIBE head office established in Thunder Bay. Through CRIBE, we are doing a lot of good work at finding out what we can extract from the traditional wood basket in terms of creating new products in northern Ontario. CRIBE has had some successes. There is quite a cool lab constructed at the Resolute Forest Products mill in Thunder Bay. Ph.D. students from the university working there are seeing what new products they can extract from the traditional forest basket.

So Speaker, this private member's bill that I've brought forward today is trying to control the things that we can control. It's not about pretending that if you lower the price of electricity by two cents, somehow you're going to find a buyer for a product that there is no market for. We can't control that. What we can do is help where we can help.

Through this private member's bill, the attempt is to create some market internally here in Ontario to generate some demand for that product as well as moving off in a new direction on the work that we're doing through CRIBE that I've just described—\$25 million to try and generate, in addition to the traditional products that we produce, new wood products that we can get from our wood basket that will create high-end, well-paying, value-added jobs.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I rise today to speak to Bill 61, the Ontario's Wood First Act, the purpose of which is to amend the Building Code Act to allow for wood frame construction in mid-rise buildings up to six storeys instead of the current four storeys. It sounds so familiar. I'm having a déjà vu moment.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Just use the same notes.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I almost will use my same notes.

I'd like to take some time, Speaker, and address how we got here in terms of the severely depleted state of the forest industry in Ontario and why legislation allowing for six-storey wood frame construction could be a tremendous boost for the sector at this point in time. No one will argue that the forestry industry, not just in Ontario but across Canada, was hurt during the softwood lumber dispute of the past decade. However, policy decisions over the past nine years have continued to take chop after chop out of the trunk of the industry that is so vital to so many northern Ontario communities.

The forestry sector supports some 200,000 jobs in Ontario in more than 100 forestry-dependent commu-

unities. In fact, there are 103 forestry-dependent communities, especially in northern Ontario. Unfortunately, we've seen 60 lumber mills close across northern Ontario, which has resulted in the loss of some 10,000 resource sector jobs and thousands more indirect jobs.

Speaker, why is this and why has this happened? One of the key reasons is the decisions related to energy costs. We know that from 2008 until 2010, energy costs rose 26% in Ontario and will rise another 46% by 2015. That's a statistic that the Auditor General gave us in November. Indeed, energy costs are one of the largest inputs for forestry operators and mill operators. Incidentally, it's also one of the largest inputs for mining operators, as we have heard loud and clear from Xstrata Copper, formerly of Timmins, Ontario, as they left Ontario to move to Quebec for cheaper energy. Sadly, we've seen mill after mill shutter across the north.

In addition to that, we've also seen the Far North Act, which makes half of northern Ontario a virtual museum by closing off the north to development. I've stood and talked about that many times in this Legislature, the Far North Act, which not only affects forestry but mining. I have said it before and I will say it one more time: Had the Far North Act passed only a short time earlier, we would never have seen the Ring of Fire be discovered.

Nonetheless, that brings us to today and the need to look at creative solutions to help our battered forestry industry. That's why, while sitting as the mayor of the city of North Bay and now as the MPP for Nipissing, I have discussed with the wood construction industry on many, many occasions for many years now ways we could work together to stimulate activity in the forestry sector. Some of those thoughts have culminated in the creation of my own Bill 52, which we heard about a half-hour ago.

Make no mistake, Speaker: There is a need for the building code amendment to allow construction in buildings up to six storeys. I think that's something you've seen all of our parties are agreeing on today. I'm going to repeat one of the statistics: With Ontario's population projected to rise by nearly 35% by 2036, the demand for more high-density, multi-family residential buildings will continue to increase. Market experts estimate that the mid-rise sector could represent 8% to 10% of the entire multi-storey market in Ontario in the next 20 years, up from 3% today. My bill—let me reword it to "these bills"—will give wood frame mid-rise buildings an opportunity to help meet that demand.

As well, through the growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe and the Places to Grow Act, almost all municipalities are committed to reducing urban sprawl. By 2015, at least 40% of residential development in the greater Golden Horseshoe must be built on land already designated for residential and commercial use. Speaker, they're not making land any further. By making construction of mid-rise structures 12% to 15% more affordable, wood frame buildings will allow municipalities to build up instead of out and to adopt higher densification policies.

The proposed building changes include proven fire safety measures which ensure that wood frame buildings will perform as well as or better than buildings permitted under the current version of the code.

As you've heard from all parties, British Columbia is already seeing the benefits of changes to allow more wood construction in mid-rise buildings. BC enacted the Wood First Act in 2009 and fast-tracked the changes to their building code in 2009 to allow wood frame construction up to six storeys. Since then, 11 projects have either been completed or are under construction, 98 are in the design, permit or construction stage, and the BC government has recently issued a request for proposal for a 10-storey wood frame building. On a market scale, introducing a wood frame option has made building mid-rise structures considerably more cost-effective.

Speaker, if any of that sounds familiar to what I said about a half-hour ago, it should, because they're very similar words I used in promoting my own bill as I am in speaking to Bill 61.

But something that I heard very loud and very clear in my consultation was this: The wood construction industry does not want legislation that favours the use of one construction material over the other. They believe, and I believe, that because use of wood can and has proven to actually reduce construction costs, the market itself can and will determine that greater and more extensive use of wood in mid-rise construction makes economic sense.

That's where our bills differ, but at the end of the day, the residents of northern Ontario aren't interested in differing over wording of one or wording of another. They know that we are in trouble north of Steeles Avenue and that we have men and women who are sent down here from the north, and this is an opportunity for us to work together on a bill that can satisfy the demands of northern Ontario. We've got an opportunity here, Speaker, to be able to do something positive for the north. All parties have spoken in favour of the bill, in terms of trying to do something for northern Ontario's forestry sector—we all called it “the beleaguered forestry sector.” We know that a six-storey building is going to use a tremendous volume of wood that is not already being used. We have an opportunity here, and it's my hope that members of this House will listen to the advice of NOMA, FONOM, the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce and the wood construction industry and vote in favour of this bill this afternoon.

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Let me stress again: The building code amendment could be a vital boost to a battered forestry industry. It is important to northern Ontario that this proposed change, the six-storey building change that we're all talking favourably about, will at least have a chance to be debated at committee.

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

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I rise today to speak on Bill 61, Ontario's Wood First Act, as proposed by my northern colleague from Thunder Bay–Atikokan. If I was a cynic,

I'd question the member's motivation for introducing this bill, which is aimed to help the forest industry, when not too long ago he suggested that people in the forest industry need to just basically deal with it and move to Alberta like everybody else. But I'm not that much of a cynic. Needless to say, those comments didn't go over too well in northwestern Ontario.

Interjection.

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

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I am trying very hard to do my best to work with all parties—

Interjection.

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

The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, come to order, please.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm doing my very best to work with all parties and all members to achieve positive results for my riding, I'll tell you, but it's comments like those, like the comments that were made not too long ago by the member opposite, that make it very difficult. Again, I do question his motivations when he makes those comments.

So, as a proud northerner, I firmly believe that we need to work together to move the region forward, and it's for that reason that I'm proud to offer my support for this bill. I certainly hope that my northern colleagues will join me in supporting our region's tourist information centres and making sure that they remain open.

As we know, there are four main industries in my region. There's forestry, which has been on the downswing; tourism; mining, which we're hoping will grow; and spinoff industry that's created from the combination of these three. Of course, as little as 10 years ago, one could make the argument that forestry was the primary driver of our northern economy, but that simply isn't the case anymore, although we do remain hopeful that the forest industry will rebound and we can return to our past economic prosperity.

The first thing that I want to address with this bill is the fact that this bill is very similar to the bill that was introduced previously by the member for Nipissing, but I'm not going to get bogged down in a chicken-and-egg discussion about whose bill came first. The point is that we're getting support from all sides of the House. Like my colleague from Nipissing did say, it seems that everybody is speaking in favour, so I'm hoping that when these two bills go forward to committee, we're able to come up with something that really combines the best of both.

As somebody who did work in a sawmill myself to help put myself through school, I know the importance of the forest industry. It's a shame that the mill that I worked in to put myself through school is no longer open, so that other students are no longer able to find that good-paying job and put themselves through.

I would like to take few minutes to point out some of the shortcomings of this bill. The most obvious is the omission of the word “Ontario” in front of “Wood.” Aside from the title of the bill, which is Ontario's Wood

First Act, there is nothing in the bill that actually requires that Ontario wood be used in any of the structures that it talks about. So there's no guarantee that having this requirement will actually benefit our forest industry in northern Ontario.

During the election, my party proposed a very strong buy-Ontario policy for government operations, a policy that makes a lot of sense. Ontario taxpayer dollars should be used, where possible, to encourage Ontario industry. Food purchased by the Ontario government for government functions should be Ontario food. Wood used for buildings should be Ontario wood. Vehicles purchased by the government should be vehicles made in Ontario. We ask our constituents to shop local and I firmly believe that we, as politicians and as a government, should lead by example.

We, as legislators, need to be active participants and, again, we need to lead by example. If there's one thing I'm proud of from my election campaign, it's that all of my materials were produced in my riding: the signs, the bumper stickers, the magnets, the flyers, all produced there. And it turned some heads because it opened up some markets for some of the very good quality materials that are produced in northwestern Ontario and it allowed those products to be showcased. It's my hope that we can do the same thing with the wood that's produced in our province.

That brings me to another suggestion that I'd like to make. Requiring wood to be the primary construction material is a good start but I think that we could go one step further and make it just a little bit better by encouraging that all secondary and additional materials, where available, come from Ontario as well—for example, granite. We have some thriving granite operations in our province and it's my understanding that granite from my riding was used to help build the presidential library in the United States, so I don't see any reason why we wouldn't be able to use these products in our own facilities as well.

As I've said, I do like the buy-Ontario spirit this bill seems to be championing, at least in the title, but I do find it troubling that there isn't anything further that would require Ontario wood to be used. Let's face it, the single biggest thing that a wood procurement policy could do would be a buy-Ontario-wood policy. But this bill doesn't include that. It doesn't go that far.

In order to help the industry, we have to make many changes provincially, including changes to the province's wood tenure act and allowing communities and not companies to have control of their wood supply. This would ensure that our resources are used to create jobs rather than have resources exported to other regions. This bill is a good first step and I hope my colleague from Thunder Bay–Atikokan and all my northern colleagues will work together to make positive changes that will allow us to move forward.

I thank the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan and the member from Nipissing for bringing both of these bills forward, and I hope that they both receive speedy

passage so that we can start rebuilding our once prosperous forest industry.

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

Mr. David Oraziotti: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to lend support to my colleague from Thunder Bay–Atikokan on Bill 61, Ontario's Wood First Act.

I want to just highlight a couple of aspects of this member's work because he has been a long-standing member of the Legislature and has worked tirelessly on behalf of his constituents—to highlight a number of important issues.

As some members of the Legislature are aware and others may not be aware, I want to reference a couple of points. Mr. Mauro, the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, promoted greater access for PSA screening for prostate cancer for men in the province of Ontario. That was a measure that was adopted by our government. It is now, with a referral from your physician, provided through OHIP coverage, which is a fantastic addition to the OHIP system—and certainly recognize the importance of that.

He also helped to deliver an important angioplasty program to northwestern Ontario. He's fought for a law school at Lakehead University. He's also helped to bring new infrastructure and new programs to his community. He has fought for a buy-Ontario-first program when it came to mass transit, adopted as well, and it supported thousands of jobs in the community of Thunder Bay with respect to the Bombardier plant in Thunder Bay. It certainly speaks to his commitment to his community, to his commitment to the province of Ontario and making our province a better place.

There were comments made earlier by the member from Kenora–Rainy River referring to Mr. Mauro suggesting that individuals losing their jobs in the forestry sector should somehow leave the province. Nothing could be further from the truth. This individual, in my estimation, has been a tremendously tireless advocate for the forestry sector and I would love to see that. So I'm happy to lend my support again to Bill 61.

1500

I also want to highlight a couple of other measures that we've taken, certainly over the last number of years, in respect to the downturn that has taken place in the forestry sector. We all recognize that the significant economic downturn that we face, that took place in the forestry industry, occurred before 2008. Our government took some fairly dramatic steps to put in place programs that would be effective in helping to support the forestry sector. In fact, in total, we introduced a program valued at about \$1.1 billion; it was the largest forestry aid package in the history of the province—and the NDP voted against it. This program, the forestry sector prosperity fund—uploading of the roads program that was downloaded by the NDP, and the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan has highlighted that—over \$200 million; an additional \$10-million program to highlight the wood inventory program that was needed by the government to

ensure we had adequate resource inventory under our watch with respect to the forestry sector. So, Speaker, there were a number of measures that were taken by our government over the last number of years to help support the forestry sector.

The fact of the matter is that the largest individual factor affecting the downturn in the forestry economy was the rapid rise in the Canadian dollar. I certainly, in talking to forestry sector folks in my community, recognize that that was the case. You heard the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan highlight the example in his riding of the millions of dollars in losses that it represented with the dollar moving north in our community. We had a mill, a vibrant part of the economy—the reality was that every time the dollar moved up one cent, they lost \$1.5 million. The cumulative effect from about 65 cents to 90 cents or so, thereabouts, was estimated in the \$40-million range—a huge impact to any business, an impact that has negatively affected and tremendously affected so many of our forestry businesses.

So what I see in the member here bringing this bill forward today is his continued commitment to fight for northern Ontario jobs, northern Ontario businesses and in particular the forestry sector. And to highlight some of those key features, the member, in Bill 61, is calling for an amendment in the Ontario building code from four to six storeys to allow construction. He's also requesting that there be priority in the provincial funding of buildings that, where possible, wood be used; and also, and importantly, in this piece of legislation that's being proposed, is that we ensure that there are adequate and appropriate safeguards with respect to the safety standards. We'll work with the Ontario firefighters' association, firefighter organizations across the province, to ensure that we get it right with respect to safety standards. No one in this province, no one in this Legislature wants to see safety standards compromised in any way with respect to this legislation, and the member has quite correctly highlighted this aspect as part of his bill.

I see this bill in respect to the forestry sector as somewhat of a stimulus package or a stimulus support for the forestry sector in addition to some of those measures that we've been taking over the last number of years. And it's appropriate to take these steps, where possible, within existing trade regulations. The member from Kenora–Rainy River said, "Well, look, I don't see it's got to be Ontario wood." The reality is that we all respect the free trade agreement; we respect the softwood lumber agreement. We have to work within these international parameters and guidelines. It would be nice to do that, but the member also needs to recognize that there are other businesses in Ontario that rely on those agreements and would be retaliated against by other jurisdictions. That's a reality and you could be compromising jobs in our province by suggesting that. We need to make sure that we're doing this within the existing legislation and international regulations that govern our industry and our sector.

Speaker, it's very clear that the proposal has merit with respect to the province of British Columbia. They

passed legislation in 2009 highlighting the change from four to six storeys, amending their building code, and we have seen the benefits of that. There are other provinces as well, if I could take a moment to highlight that. In BC, they've seen 104 mid-rise building projects in addition as a result of this legislation. Quebec has implemented a wood use strategy seeking to increase the use of wood. New Brunswick announced, in the fall of 2010, the intention to create wood-first legislation, which has not been implemented to date, but the province is committed to pursuing that. Alberta's forestry industry has also called on the province to implement similar legislation, so clearly there is a precedent for this. There is evidence across the country where there are benefits to this, and I would obviously be lending my support to the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan with respect to this bill.

A couple of other things: It's important to highlight that we are taking steps to use wood fibre and the forestry products that we find in Ontario to ensure that we can expand businesses. I think of a company called Rentech that is using pelletization and adapting jet fuel. In testing that has been done, that's seen to be a tremendous benefit to the Ontario economy. They're setting up a company in the Algoma–Manitoulin region, which is an absolutely fantastic news story.

Speaker, I need to stop there because I want to make sure that my colleague from Peterborough has the opportunity to comment. I want to lend my wholehearted support to the good work from the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, and I will certainly encourage members in this Legislature to support this legislation.

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

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I appreciate the opportunity to comment on Bill 61 as well. The member from Sault Ste. Marie made a number of comments, as did the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, regarding the bill and the impacts on the industry. Although energy costs may not be the singular cost factor, although some companies—as was mentioned, Xstrata certainly expressed a concern regarding the cost of producing fibre—or, in that case, the mining costs. It is one of the key components. When you add the other aspects coming forward—when you talk to the industry, and the member would know that very well, whether it's the caribou management strategy that has been brought forward by the province of Ontario and the species at risk and the impact that has taken place on the forestry sector in regard to that, the implementation guidelines and sometimes the interpretation of the implementation guidelines throughout northern Ontario are very different from office to office. The difficulty with that is, when a forestry company is out operating and they have a number of locations, they have different guidelines for the same species throughout northern Ontario.

The point I'm trying to make is that there are a number of aspects that come forward that make it very difficult for a forestry company to operate in Ontario. Certainly the energy cost, I believe, is one of them. When

you talk to those in Iroquois Falls, they're upgrading a lot of mills there in order to make sure that they could supply what they needed in that area to manage. But part of the problem is that when companies like that, and particularly the time in Iroquois Falls I can recall—they were more concerned because they would shut down the mill in order to sell the energy as opposed to cutting the fibre at that time. The difficulty with that is not just the individuals working in the mill but all those other individuals that are supplying the mill. They were making more selling energy, which was part of a problem that needs to be addressed.

I think some of it is that, as a whole, we as a province need to look at value-added and how we can move forward with adding value to the wood forestry sector. Quite frankly, the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan has a great log home construction industry. I talked to Paul Poulin out at Stanley. He runs a great operation up there, and he flies around the world building log homes in New York and in Europe and in so many other locations. That's another way to add to that industry from another component. It builds the skilled trades necessary with it in order to add different or more value to the wood sector. There are so many other ways, whether it's the mill in Chapleau that uses a lot of the underutilized fibre for predominantly softwood cuts in log homes. He was building an aspen or poplar log home construction out of that area. That is very beneficial and can be transported in many areas.

These are other ways that the member from Sault Ste. Marie was talking about, how we can assist the industry in finding methods. But I believe that, moving forward with Bill 61 and 52 and bringing them together to find a common ground, we can work together as a province to aid that forestry sector in so many other ways in finding a benefit from added value to the forestry sector and providing jobs in the north. Anything that we can do as a government for the province of Ontario would certainly go a long way in ensuring the longevity of the forestry sector.

1510

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to be on the record for both similar bills today; we have two bills that do somewhat the same thing, and I just want to say that obviously I'm lending my support to both bills because I think they're essentially trying to do the same thing, and I'd just, for the record, make a couple of points.

These bills, if enacted, would allow us to change the building code so that we're able to do essentially what's being done in other countries. If you look at British Columbia and you look at different countries around Europe, there have been amendments to the building code after study to make sure that safety concerns when it comes to fire etc.—safety issues—are looked at. Those particular jurisdictions have amended their building code.

I want to commend the members for bringing this forward, because it's high time. It is a little bit of a no-

brainer, in my view, that we try to figure out a way we can maximize the use of what is a renewable resource in this province, which is trees. It seems to me ultimate good sense to move in that direction.

Now, all of this being said, it's going to take a little bit of work in order to make sure that some of the other things need to happen in order to pass this legislation into law. I would imagine the government is going to have something to say in regard to some of the concerns that were raised from the cement industry and others. I tend to think that those are things you can work around. Currently, for example, we have four-storey buildings, all wood construction in Ontario. Moving to six is not going to make a huge issue of safety in my mind, but I'm sure there are people who think that—and we'll hear that—coming to committee. I'd be interested to hear what they have to say.

However, that being said, I think the bills are a step in the right direction, and allow us to maximize the use of wood. Some of the amendments I'd be interested in seeing when these bills go to committee are the following: One, why don't we make it mandatory that they use Ontario wood? We have sawmills across this province that are struggling to keep their doors open, and that would like to see their market increase as far as being able to sell the wood. If going this way will allow us to sell more wood in Ontario, it seems to me that we should have a provision in those bills that says, "This is from Ontario sawmills." To allow it to come from anywhere kind of defeats the purpose. Aren't we trying to assist so that our mills are able to get wood?

Now some will say, "Oh, Bisson, you New Democrats are protectionists." It's not a question of being a protectionist. It's a matter of saying, "We have natural resources in this province that we want to see put to good use." If you look at the province of Quebec, they have no problem making sure that they put in place policies that favour the province of Quebec. If you look at Alberta, my good friends in Alberta have policies that benefit the province of Alberta when it comes to the oil sands. There's a whole bunch of other jurisdictions that might not like it, but for Albertans, that's the right thing to do.

I think it's high time that Ontario recognizes that, yes, we are one of fathers of Confederation; yes, we are the largest economy in Canada; yes, we have something to say and we have—well, now we're a have-not province, but let's not go there. The point is, we should be advocating for ourselves. So one of the amendments I'd like to see in both of these bills, should they get to committee, is that we actually look at something that says, "Let's make the wood come from Ontario."

The other thing I just want to put on the record—it's apropos because it is related to the wood industry, and I know Mr. Vanthof had been talking to shippers along the Ontario Northland railway. From all the way up in Constance Lake, all the way down to North Bay, you have sawmills and paper mills and others that are using that rail line as a way of being able to ship goods. If you privatize, which is essentially what you're doing when

you say you're going to divest, nobody is going to buy the railway. There's no money to be made in a railway. There's not a jurisdiction in the world that doesn't subsidize the railways, but they're a necessary part of the transportation infrastructure. Why? Because it allows us to move great quantities of equipment and great quantities of natural resources and other things and not have a bigger footprint when it comes to the economy.

If we have to shut the railway down—and that's what is going to happen when you divest the Ontario Northland—I'm sure the buses will be bought by somebody, and I'm sure that the ferry services will be bought by somebody. But when it comes to the train, for darned sure it's going to be sold. If that was not the case, why did the government not divest the Polar Bear Express going from North Bay up to Moosonee? Why? Because they know that nobody would buy it. There's no money to be made. You have to subsidize that particular service.

So I would say that we need to keep the Ontario Northland, and I look forward to trying to finally get some support from the Conservative caucus and Mr. Fedeli, because I know they're big proponents of divestiture. They believe in privatization. Mike Harris tried to do the same thing. The Tories are essentially supporting the Liberals on this one, but I would ask that you put your partisanship and your ideology aside and say, "Listen, for northeastern Ontario the right thing to do is save the Ontario Northland so that shippers along the route are able to stay in business." I much fear that there's a lot of economic activity in northern Ontario that's going to be in jeopardy if we shut down that railway, let alone what's going to happen to citizens: Lecours Lumber, Tembec when it comes to shipping, Abitibi out of Iroquois Falls, and the list goes on—Cochrane and others.

I urge members to support these bills. I urge members in the Liberal Party to change their position on the divestiture of ONTC. I invite the Conservative Party to take a step to the right side, which is the left side of the issue, which is you will not divest Ontario Northland.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The member from Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's indeed a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to get a few words on the record on Bill 61. I was here to listen to the debate on Bill 52—similar bills to achieve similar objectives to improve the state of the forestry industry in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I took the opportunity—I happen to follow Mark Carney very closely. He is the governor of the Bank of Canada. On April 2, 2012, he delivered a very interesting speech to the Greater Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, talking about Canada's economy the way it currently is and exporting in a post-crisis world. He had some interesting things to say.

He said, "Of course, there have been occasional setbacks over the past 125 years, with more than 20 recessions, one depression and one near miss. In general, the recoveries that have followed have relied importantly on exports. However, this one is" dramatically "different.

Exports still have not regained their pre-crisis peak, and in fact remain below their level of a decade ago. Canada has steadily lost global market share throughout this period."

He goes on to further look at another area, "A Unique Recession and Recovery." He said, "The broad economic strategy in response to the global financial crisis has been to grow domestic demand and to encourage Canadian businesses to retool and reorient to the new global economy.

"On the former, we have been successful. Even as pressure on the export-oriented manufacturing sector has intensified, domestically oriented sectors such as services and construction have remained resilient. With strong domestic fundamentals and a well-functioning financial system," and stimulative monetary policies, domestic demand is showing a robust recovery.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that essentially what we're talking about today is two bills that would really fire domestic demand, particularly in the forest sector. My colleague from Thunder Bay–Atikokan has been involved in this, converting the coal-fired plant in Atikokan to use biomass.

But one of the things we have to be very cautious about is that we do live in an open economy. We trade with other countries; we trade with other provinces. I'm told right now that we take ore from the province of Quebec, and it is processed in Sudbury, where that generates over 1,000 jobs. So there is always this give-and-take when it comes to setting policies in place that encourage domestic demand.

But when you look at both of these bills, the need to use more wood, I can think of a wide variety of structures. For example, we're about to embark on building a lot of structures related to the Pan Am Games. Mr. Speaker, this would be a perfect opportunity to look at how we can incorporate wood into building those kinds of structures. That would provide a huge incentive to the forestry industry in the province of Ontario and support both the bills from my colleague from Thunder Bay–Atikokan and the member for Nipissing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thank you to the members from Nipissing, Kenora–Rainy River, Sault Ste. Marie, Oshawa and Timmins–James Bay.

To the member from Nipissing, I have to say that the fact that you would stand and say that if the Far North Act had been enacted one or two years earlier there would be no Ring of Fire is quite remarkable. I have no idea how you draw a conclusion like that. Maybe perhaps we both need to sit down and read the act together.

Where it might have got stopped is the NDP platform that was on their website in the last election that said "no development at all north of 50 or north of 51." That might have stopped it, but certainly not the Far North Act.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We never said that.

Mr. Bill Mauro: It was on your website for three years.

To the Kenora–Rainy River member still pretending, still blaming: Northern caucus has worked on these issues for a very great deal of time. To suggest that somehow we are dismissive of the forestry industry is a very, very serious issue.

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Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, give me a break.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I will tell the member from Timmins–James Bay that it was on your website. It was on your website in the election, so you need to check it out. It's there.

To the member from Oshawa, I would say—he's still here in the chamber, and I thank him for staying. I thank him for his comments—again, a little bit of a link on the forestry challenges that we've experienced for about 10 years to electricity.

I would say on the sawmilling side that electricity was not and is not a significant input cost for them. If, in fact, that was the case, we would not have seen the closures that occurred in BC and in Quebec, where everybody acknowledges their electricity prices are much lower than they are here in Ontario and have historically always been. If it was the case, we would have simply seen our sawmills transfer their capacity to those other jurisdictions. That didn't happen, because they were all closing, and they were closing for other reasons.

Speaker, our northern caucus has been working on issues related to forestry for a very long time. I thank all the members of the northern caucus.

This bill today: We know it's not going to revolutionize and bring the industry back, but it's one more piece. It's one of the things that we can control. It's one of the things that we can try and have an impact on. It's not about blaming, not about making up arguments as we go along; it's about trying to have a positive impact on the things that we can control. I look forward to the support of all the members.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We'll take the vote on this item at the end of regular business.

PROVINCIAL DEBT

Mr. Ted Arnott: I move that, in the opinion of this House, after the provincial budget is balanced, the government should begin paying down the provincial debt by creating a new line item in the budget, committing to making a payment on the principal of the provincial debt of at least 2.5% of the program spending of that fiscal year.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: This past Tuesday's Globe and Mail contained an article by Adam Radwanski which was noteworthy. The title of the article was, "Ontario Set for a Top-to-Bottom Review." The subtitle informed readers

that the Minister of Finance was about to unleash productivity teams in the hopes of meeting deficit reduction targets. A more apt but somewhat less flattering title for the article might have been, "Conversion on the Road to Damascus." The only problem with this metaphor is that Paul's conversion was preordained, and the minister's conversion is, well, politics.

According to the article, it would seem that our friend the Minister of Finance has finally come to the conclusion and is finally prepared to publicly acknowledge that the government of Ontario has a spending problem.

Let's think back a while. Remember back to the fall of 2003, eight and a half years ago, in the early, heady days of the McGuinty government just after they were elected. Their members were filled with enthusiasm, but they started off whining and moaning about the deficit they claimed they had inherited, neglecting to mention that they had assumed office in the middle of a fiscal year, that they could have tried to reduce spending in the second half of that year—but instead they ramped it up, consistent with what was to come—and that their so-called Auditor General's report was in fact the report of a hired consultant who gave them the report that they had paid him to write. Let's remember what they did.

Our party, in our last budget in 2003, projected a balanced budget for that fiscal year. We knew it wouldn't be easy—it never is—but we were going to try. Then came the SARS outbreak, which hurt our tourism industry. Then came mad cow disease, which hurt our agriculture industry. Then came the hydro blackout, which hurt our manufacturing industry. All of these unforeseen crises were addressed one by one by our government. None had originated in Ontario—no one in Ontario was at fault—but we faced them head on. Leadership was necessary, and the Progressive Conservative government provided it. However, there was an economic cost for each crisis, which impacted our revenues and obviously the budgetary outlook that year.

The election date was fixed. It was to be October 2003, ironically about halfway through the fiscal year. Now, if we had been re-elected, no doubt we would have sought savings in-year and made a genuine effort to balance the budget in the second half of the fiscal year. But we were not re-elected, and the Liberals took office.

They decided to misuse the professional credibility of Erik Peters, who was by then retired as an Auditor General and was a paid consultant, to validate their shell game. So they ramped up spending in the second half of the fiscal year, pretended to throw up their hands and blamed the deficit on the outgoing government. Mr. Speaker, was it a half-truth or was it an outright fabrication of the truth? I've drawn my own conclusion. But it's interesting to note that the deficit that they run today is almost three times the number they whined about in 2003, just as it's three times the deficits of the other provinces in Canada combined.

The fact is, they were ready to come into this House and spend. Invest in public services, they said—health, education, yes, which we all support—but also every

other spending idea that they could think of. Year after year, under the McGuinty Liberals, overall provincial spending went up 6% to 8%, while inflation was about 2% and economic growth stalled and then receded. And the spending continued; indeed, it accelerated.

When the word got out that the McGuinty Liberals had opened up the vault and they were handing out the taxpayers' money with abandon, not surprisingly, the interest groups lined up. Spend, spend, spend and then spend some more, and ideally have the local MPP—or the closest local Liberal MPP, I should say, geographically—deliver the cheque in person, with the requisite photo op and with the nice speech, all to take credit. If anyone in the government noticed that the vault was starting to empty out, nobody had the nerve to mention it to the Minister of Finance or the Premier. They had a formula, they had a template for photo-op events, and they raised it to an art form through sheer repetition.

Politically, it served them well in the short term, in that they were re-elected four years later, in 2007, but in that the government of Ontario had totally lost control of its overall spending, the people of Ontario began to lose. This is where we're at today.

I need to go back again, because no government spending crisis emerges overnight. It develops over the years, as fiscal discipline is first ignored and then forgotten altogether and irresponsible patterns of money mismanagement become the norm.

In my very first speech in this place, more than 21 years ago, I wrote my maiden speech and said these words in this House: "We in Wellington understand the economic value of hard work and the social value of personal responsibility. From this understanding stems a serious concern when our government refuses to live within its means, when our government grows until it begins to inhibit overall economic growth, when even excessive taxation does not prevent the expansion of our government debt."

In those days, I was sitting over there, our caucus was known in the House as the third party, and Bob Rae was the Premier of Ontario. Fiscal responsibility was not really something that initially troubled Premier Rae, at least not until he was faced with the news, around 1993, that the province would soon be bankrupt, which led to the social contract, which infuriated his supporters, which directly contributed to the NDP's defeat in 1995. But all this is ancient history, before Mr. Rae attempted to reinvent himself, this time as the interim and now aspiring permanent leader of the Liberal Party of Canada. The fact remains that the provincial debt essentially doubled during his five years as Premier, from 1990 to 1995.

Dalton McGuinty isn't far behind. After just over eight years as Premier, he's on track to soon double the debt yet again. Last week, I had the chance to speak to a local service club in my riding. I was asked to speak about the budget, and so naturally, I talked about the deficit and the debt, since the red ink of this government is their signature legacy. I told them the unvarnished facts. Despite the government's rhetoric that this is an

austerity budget, in fact, there is very little austerity in it. Spending is actually up over last year—up by almost \$2 billion, from \$124.6 billion to \$126.4 billion. Last year's deficit came in at \$15.3 billion. This so-called austerity budget projects a deficit of \$15.2 billion. Over the past year, the overall provincial debt will rise from \$237.6 billion to a staggering \$260.4 billion. The net per capita debt, in effect the amount of the provincial debt that each Ontarian owes, will rise from \$17,766 last year to \$19,243 this year. It was \$11,339 when the McGuinty government came to power in 2003. This government will have increased that number by almost \$8,000 for each and every Ontarian, in just nine years. This year alone, they will pay \$10.6 billion in interest to service the debt. This does not even begin to pay down one penny of the principal of that debt. The \$10.6 billion that they will pay to service the debt this year is the third-highest provincial expenditure in the budget, behind only health care and education. This year, they will pay more in interest on the debt than they will spend on post-secondary education, more than they'll spend on transportation infrastructure and more than they will spend on economic development, for example.

This is at a time of historically low interest rates. According to the Auditor General's report, page 29, a 1% increase in interest rates would result in an additional \$500 million in interest each year at our current debt level.

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After I'd finished going through some of these numbers with the service club, a man I'd known for a long time, who I like and respect, came up to me. He was angry—even livid. He said to me, "You've got to go down there and tell them that they're taking my grandchildren to the edge of a cliff, and they're pushing them off."

My resolution is for his grandchildren, for all of our children and grandchildren, and for anyone else who cares about Ontario's long-term future. It is a modest proposal, but it speaks to a larger principle that has so often been overlooked, the old-fashioned value that our parents' generation taught us but so many have forgotten: You shouldn't spend what you don't have. You need to live within your means. It recognizes that we simply should not continue to rack up the debt and leave the bill for our children and grandchildren to pay.

My resolution asks that, when the budget is finally balanced, the government commit to making debt repayment a line item in the budget. It suggests that we should commit to a goal of making a significant payment on the principal amount of debt, not just the interest. It is endorsed by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and it has also been endorsed by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents in Wellington-Halton Hills believe that with the right leadership and the right policies, Ontario's best days are yet to come—the promise of the future. But in the past few years, we have seen Ontario, once the economic engine of Canada, an

become a have-not province. We have seen the provincial debt climb higher and higher each year. This is why I introduced this resolution today. No one on this side of House believes the McGuinty government will ever balance the budget. They simply lack the will and they lack the wherewithal to get the job done.

In 2003, just after the McGuinty Liberals had been elected, I introduced a motion calling on the government to commit itself to a long-term debt repayment plan. Not surprisingly, in light of the spending spree that they planned and was to come, the Liberal members voted it down.

Ultimately the task of balancing the budget and beginning to pay down the debt will most likely fall to a successor government, after a provincial election, when we have a government that's serious about balancing the books; when we have a government that offers more than just rhetoric about getting our spending under control. This resolution makes the point that we need to start making payments, however modest, on the principal of our debt and begin to strengthen our province's balance sheet. It's the right thing to do. It's the responsible thing to do. We have a duty to our children and our grandchildren.

Let us pass this motion, and let it be said by future generations that on this day, in this place, the Legislature embraced the promise of the future.

I ask all members to support my resolution today.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to say upfront we're going to be supporting this resolution, but we would do it in a very different way than the Conservatives are suggesting. To suggest that we have to cut spending as the only means to be able to find a way to apply money to the debt and to the principal, I think is a bit of a stretch.

I want to remind you of people like Tommy Douglas, who took over in Saskatchewan back in the first times that they took government. The Liberals there had driven that province literally into bankruptcy. The province was not able to borrow money, they were in terrible shape, and Tommy Douglas for 16 years as Premier of Ontario balanced the books—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Premier of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Excuse me, Saskatchewan—balanced the books and brought that province to the position it is now.

New Democrats across the country have proven that if you take a look at what's happened with Mr. Doer in Manitoba and his successor, you take a look at what we did in Saskatchewan, British Columbia, what we're doing in Nova Scotia and, I would argue, what we would have done in Ontario—that brings me to the point of the Conservative member. He talks about how they worked to balance the books. Listen, if we have a deficit today, a large part of it is what the Conservative government did when they were in power by way of the tax cuts.

Bob Rae had put in place—and I hate to use that name, but we put in place a plan that would have eliminated the deficit about a year after we left office—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He's not there anymore.

But the point is, the Harris government came in and accelerated and put in place tax cuts that essentially took revenue away that we're still paying for today. I think it was part of the plan. I think what the Conservatives are all about is, they don't like government. They would rather we all go on our own and pay for our own health care and pay for things ourselves because they don't believe in doing things in common, as I do as a social democrat. So they said, "What better way to undo government than to take away the money?"

So, like George Bush in the United States and a whole bunch of people around the world, they've adopted the right-wing mantra: "Tax cuts are the way to prosperity." Well, my friends, tax cuts have caused pain in this province—pain that we're still feeling today because what it's done is taken away the revenue that we need in order to make sure that people are not left behind.

Yes, I will vote for this resolution because as a social democrat, as a New Democrat, I believe we need to balance the books and we need to live within our means. But my friends, there are many ways to the road to Damascus, and the Conservative option is not one of them for me.

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to stand in this House today to speak to the opposition motion. This motion comes forward as we are obstructed on a daily basis from having that debate on the budget. I have to start off with that.

Who has solved problems in this country? I would think that we have to mention that the Martin-Chrétien government that got Canada out of a \$45-billion deficit has to be lauded. I have to repeat as well what Clinton had done: They looked at surpluses going ahead as far as they could see. George Bush, with his far-right policies, only worried about the taxes on the very rich and kept reducing those, kept reducing his revenues, and of course left the western world in an awful mess because of what they did. So this idea of who is best, whether it's Liberals or Conservatives or the third party—we've had good records of both.

We should first of all speak about the budgets generally, as this motion speaks about budgets. I'd like to say what is important to me. Parts of the budgets since I've been here in 2003, the parts that are important to our children and grandchildren—and we can talk about the slash-and-burn attitude of the opposition government or we can talk about the important changes that, with the support of the third party, have been brought in since 2003. They are many, and that's so important. The slash-and-burn is not good for our children and grandchildren because it takes away the hospitals; it takes away the schools. We have now done a great job.

We all agree in this House that jobs are number one as well, and a balanced budget will make the economy stronger and make our province better and able to create

the jobs, while keeping education and health care strong. That's important. We have to get the deficit down and we have a plan, a five-year plan, that is going to accomplish this while protecting what is really important: the education for our children, full-day kindergarten, the smaller class sizes from 1 to 3 and the graduation rates which are so important. Imagine, in the last five or six years there have been 100,000 more high school kids who have a graduation certificate—100,000 in this province—because of the changes that this government brought in over the years for early intervention, helping these kids, not only saying, “Hey, it's all academic and that is the way we go.” The people with technical skills are able to proudly accept that certificate and go on to a college and get a better job. Those are the things that are important. A balanced budget is one thing, but certainly the services for our kids are more important.

In 2003, when we came in, in good times, there was a \$4.5-billion deficit left by the Conservatives. We cleaned that up. But there wasn't only the deficit in dollar terms, there was a deficit in hospitals; so many hospitals had been closed. We had the longest wait times in the country. Our schools were in trouble. We had millions and millions of days lost because we were fighting the teachers. We were going along—I think it was three or four balanced budgets after that, which is excellent. We were doing what we wanted to do. But, unfortunately, there was the financial crisis in 2009 that they want to disregard—that didn't happen. But we're one of strongest countries and one of the strongest provinces in the world after that terrible crisis almost on the same basis as the Great Depression.

Cheap labour from offshore has come in and made a big change for us. The high dollar, going from—we were talking about the lumber industry and what it did to that, or the paper industry. I remember the 65-cent dollar—going up to over par and now back to par. So 70% of our products go to the US. The US markets are not as strong as they were; they're in terrible shape. And that's the Bush, that's the conservative, that's the tax-cut, far-right, Tea Party approach to doing things.

We lost over 300,000 jobs in manufacturing after 2009, but we've seen 450,000 jobs come back. That is great. Just last month, there were 46,000 new jobs in Ontario, over half of all the jobs created in Canada. So we're doing well. Unemployment rates are down from 9.4% to 7.6%. So, we can't—we have to go with the proper things. Our green energy strategy is on track to attract 50,000 jobs.

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This motion would apply once we have our balance back in 2017-18. I know I would support paying down the debt. I've always been that way with my own personal dollars. I think that is a good endeavour, but we don't want to strap a future government with that kind of thing. You know what saved the auto sector was a major investment by this government and the federal government, and we protected 300,000 jobs. It would be unwise to tie any government's hands. Who knows what the priorities, what the options will be when that happens?

We reduced corporate taxes and brought the HST down, and all the real leaders knew we must do that. It was needed. We supported the HST. You did until you saw it was hurting you in the polls. We had the courage to bring in the HST, and now we are an economy that is rated the best place other than California to invest in, in North America—the best. The HST had a lot to do with that. You cowards would not do that. You would not support that.

I see my time is run running out; I have to leave some. I'd like to end with two quotes:

“To get there, the government is making some tough but necessary choices”—Janet Ecker, president of the Toronto Financial Services Alliance.

“I disagree with Mr. Hudak, he's talking about swift action,” cut and burn, “and swift action would mean a deep recession ... swift action in terms of cutting spending even further or raising taxes. So this budget must balance austerity with growth, that's a very tough act but I think they've done a pretty good job.” —Patricia Croft, former chief economist, RBC Global Asset Management.

Speaker, we could go on for hours on the right things we've been doing creating jobs and protecting our health care, but I have to turn it over and leave some time for my associates.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Since we have an opportunity, stop the clock right now.

The cross-debate is not helping me here or any speaker. All of us have come here on behalf of our communities, and we should just agree to disagree but not shout at each other.

Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I must say that argument from across the floor was certainly interesting, wasn't it?

I'm pleased to speak today in favour of debt reduction and in favour of today's motion “that, in the opinion of this House, after the provincial budget is balanced, the government should begin paying down the provincial debt by creating a new line item in the budget, committing to making a payment on the principal of the provincial debt of at least 2.5% of the program spending of that fiscal year.” What a novel idea.

The member from Wellington–Halton Hills deserves our thanks for putting forward this motion. I know that this issue has been a major priority for him for many years. I congratulate him on his persistence and leadership and in drawing attention to the need to pay down the provincial debt. He has been a long-serving member of this Legislature and could not have been such a successful politician if he did not put the needs of his constituents, and indeed of Ontarians, first.

It should be our goal to pay down the debt, and not to slow its growth, not to sweep it under the rug and somehow hope it disappears. Sadly, the Liberal approach has been even worse than that. The provincial debt is on track to hit \$280 billion by 2013, double the size of the debt when this government took office in 2003. In other words, Premier McGuinty will have racked up as much debt as every other Premier since Confederation combined.

Now, after more than eight years of reckless spending, they want us to believe they get it. They want us to believe they understand the need for restraint. Nobody should believe it. The Liberal budget, if it's passed, will actually add a projected \$5.2 billion to Ontario's debt. That's one reason I can't support the budget.

As my colleague has said, Speaker, this government is already spending more in interest on the debt than they're spending on post-secondary education, transportation and economic development. What's their plan for when interest rates rise, as they almost certainly will? Of course, they don't have a plan. The only plan is to keep spending and hope that our grandkids can foot the bill.

This motion actually represents a plan. It's ambitious, but it's also realistic. There is no good reason that the government couldn't set aside 2.5% of the money it spends on programs to start paying down the debt. We work hard to pay down debt in our households and our businesses, and the government needs to do it. And when times are tough, we don't go on spending sprees, and neither should the government. The time has come to take responsibility and I hope that all MPPs, whether on the government or opposition side, will agree. I hope they will support this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member from Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I must say, it has been a very long day for you. You've done a superlative job filling in, so, way to go.

It's always a privilege and a pleasure to rise in this place. Truly, I think my role here is to speak for those who usually don't have a voice here. One such group came to visit us this afternoon—many missed it—the Put Food in the Budget group, who had walked here carrying a stuffed mannequin of Dalton McGuinty, to talk about how the budget had affected them. We're talking about the Liberal budget; I would say, the Liberal-Conservative budget, unlike the Conservative-Conservative budget in Ottawa.

To talk to my friend over here, though, and the motion that he's put forward: It's a just a little bit rich for a Progressive Conservative, particularly one who actually spent time here during the Harris-Eves days, when they added more than \$50 billion to the debt. That's chicken feed in comparison to our friends across the aisle, who have doubled the debt, but there's a kind of competition going on here, Mr. Speaker, of fiscal irresponsibility. I'm standing as a social democrat saying that, guess what? Social democratic governments, NDP governments in this country, have the best record of fiscal responsibility. We have balanced more budgets than all of you put together, seconded by the Conservatives and thirded, of course—expectedly so—by our friends across the aisle. So that's the actual reality.

I would argue that the reason for this—it is a fact; you can play with other things, but this is a fact—is because we see budgets and fiscal responsibility clearly because we don't want to give any more money to the banks either. We want to give money to education. We want to

give money to health care. We think that's where taxpayers' dollars should go, not to interest payments to large multinationals and banks. That's not what we're about. And so we take taxpayers' dollars to be precious commodities and we ask for and we always administer tax fairness.

What's not being talked about here is tax fairness. In what world is it fair to freeze social assistance rates and then to completely ignore the incomes of the wealthiest people in this province? In what world is it fair to ask middle-class Ontarians and those who live in poverty to shoulder the problem of paying off the deficit and not ask those who are making hundreds of thousands of dollars a year? There are 550,000 unemployed in this province, and I love the fact that the member from Ottawa–Orléans thinks it's a good thing that we have 7.6% unemployment. What? In what world is that a good thing? Five hundred and fifty thousand people unemployed in this province, and what we're asking for, Mr. Speaker, and we don't have an answer yet, is just a modicum of an increase on those making \$550,000.

1550

Now, I know that most Ontarians think that's the way to go. In fact, some 76%—I think 78%—of Ontarians think that's the way to go, and we do as well. We're just waiting. We're waiting for our friends to give us some indication that they agree with us across the aisle, because this is—oh, my goodness, what a modest proposal. And not only is it a modest proposal, but today our leader, out of the generosity of her willingness to make this government work, said we'll even take one of our demands off the table.

Let's make this government work. That's what Ontarians are asking us to do. They elected us with a mandate, and that is to make this minority government work.

My friends to the right have no intention of doing so. That's clear. But the question remains, do our friends across the aisle have an intention of doing so? That is the question, and that is the question that all Ontarians should be asking themselves. When it comes to playing chicken here, the question is—this shouldn't be about who blinks first. This should be about collaboration and co-operation to actually get the best deal, the best and the fairest deal, for the vast number of Ontarians. So really, that's what we're talking about.

We're also talking about a totally different approach to the way you administer a budget. And that, we have shown in our history, by being the best at balancing budgets in the country of Canada and in provincial governments generally. I won't talk about that one guy, the one guy who went on to federal Liberal politics. I won't mention his name. God forbid I mention his name.

But in the vast majority of provinces that we have been governments of, we have balanced budgets; in Manitoba, nine balanced budgets. My goodness. Social democrats know what to do with taxpayers' money. They know how to handle it. They know how to treat it, as I said, as the precious commodity it is.

It is a modicum of—I might even say amusement to hear from the member about chipping away at the debt.

It's no doubt a good thing to do, but to come from a party that added \$15 billion to it, hmm, somewhat suspect. Certainly the party across the aisle has no credibility on this issue. We get that.

So, here we are: New Democrats, social democrats, the fiscally responsible ones, looking at ways to do that, and being responsible in a minority government by asking the government and asking, of course, the official opposition to work with us to make this work. We've had their answer. We know their answer: No. We haven't yet heard from across the aisle.

I would leave some moments for my friend. But I'm just saying, when will we hear? What will we hear? I leave in hope.

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

Mr. David Zimmer: Speaker, I find it passing strange that the member opposite who has brought this private member's bill forth has brought a matter that he wants to address in the budget by way of a private member's bill. And yet, since we introduced the budget, we've been pleading with the other side in this minority government situation to sit down with us and talk about the budget and perhaps even negotiate some items, and the answer has always been "No, no, no." In fact, the leader of the official opposition, within an hour of the budget being presented on a Thursday a couple of weeks ago, was in front of the media publicly staking out his position that under no circumstances would they support the budget.

That is not in the spirit of minority government, so it seems very, very strange that rather than sitting down with the government and the third party and the official opposition and trying to have some meaningful, thoughtful conversations to structure a budget that is acceptable to all members of this House—what are they doing? They're tinkering around with these dinky little things, a private member's bill on a Thursday afternoon that's going to do something about paying down the deficit by—why don't you sit down with us on a substantive basis and let's negotiate and talk about the budget and the overall effect and all of the details in the budget? It's passing strange.

The second point I want to make: They've been whining about what a bad budget it is and they can't find anything in it, but what does informed opinion outside of this House say about the budget? And informed opinion among Conservative leaders, well-known Conservatives, former Conservative finance ministers? Let me put into the record a couple of comments.

Here's a comment from the DBRS credit rating agency: "Overall, DBRS views the continuation of the fiscal recovery plan and the increasing emphasis on cost containment as an encouraging step in the right direction."

What does Janet Ecker, president of the Toronto Financial Services Alliance and former Conservative Minister of Finance say? She says this: "And while we have questions about some of the individual items, we strongly support their efforts to eliminate the deficit. It is an

important step for Ontario's future economic growth and will help support continued growth of financial service sectors in the province."

Mary Webb, senior economist at Scotiabank: "The challenge for this government in this budget was to provide a credible repair plan, and so it has. It has provided a broad-based plan—detailed, strategic—that they hope will keep them on the deficit reduction track even with more moderate growth."

Why wouldn't the opposition parties sit down with us and have that kind of a discussion that the economist for the Bank of Nova Scotia refers to—a detailed, comprehensive discussion—instead of playing around with these things by way of a private member's bill?

TD Economics: "Overall, today's budget carries with it prudent economic growths assumptions and more details behind the medium-term fiscal plan in. In this vein, the budget should be well received by credit rating agencies."

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce: "The Ontario Chamber of Commerce has called for a two-pronged approach to balancing the books: deficit reduction and a clear focus on growth and transforming the Ontario economy for the 21st century. Overall, today's budget positions us to move in this direction."

These thoughtful people outside of this chamber, some of whom are distinguished former Conservative politicians and indeed finance ministers, recognize what we're trying to do in the budget. They're supportive of it, they've given it their imprimatur, and yet across the aisle, within an hour after the budget, they condemned it. They not only condemned it, they said, "We're not going to talk about it anymore." They haven't talked about it anymore since then, several weeks ago, and now, late in the game, Thursday afternoon around 4 o'clock, two days before the budget vote on Tuesday, they bring forward a private member's motion to tinker with the budget. That's not being responsible.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: Speaker, I'm going to tell you, my friend from Willowdale used the term "passing strange" twice in his three and a half or four minutes. I'll tell you what's passing strange. I just listened to a contribution to what, to me, seems like the budget debate, when that's not what's being debated here at all. What's being debated is a motion by my friend from Wellington-Halton Hills that is very similar to two other motions that he's brought before this House, once in the 1990s and once in 2003, voted down by your party in 2003.

The bottom line on this is the most—I'm hearing from the member from Ottawa-Orléans that somehow or other we're being irresponsible. The only irresponsibility I see here is not taking the responsibility that this motion calls for. This motion, which was not evoked by the budget that we're considering now, this motion, which was evoked by a great sense of responsibility by my friend from Wellington-Halton Hills, is about taking the responsibility of paying down the provincial debt on a

go-forward basis with mandatory rules and regulations—2.5% of the principal every single year. You know what?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. The member from Willowdale, if I could bring you to order. You had your chance to speak and I would ask you to keep order for the other side to give their comments.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I appreciate that, Speaker, because it's hard to think when you have someone who's the epitome of "Methinks the lady doth protest too much." No lady, him.

1600

Anyway, the point is this: This motion calls for a 2.5% reduction of the principal that exists on the provincial debt on an annualized basis, and it would only kick in, if this motion were passed, at a point where we balance the budget. Well, right now, we aren't anywhere near balancing a budget. They're talking about 2017-18. I'm going to tell you something: It's going to snow in July before they balance the budget by 2017-18. We're looking at \$15.3 billion this year, and we're looking at a government that is so arrogant that it looks across the way at me and says that I didn't sit down with the finance minister or that somehow or other my 36 colleagues, my leader and I are at this point forfeiting our right to even comment on the budget because of the fact that we haven't sat down and been collaborative.

You know what the truth is? If you'd listened to my debate yesterday, you'd know what the truth was. The truth was that we had 20 people in the lock-up, that we parsed that budget chapter by chapter, that we sat down in front of whiteboards, that we considered it with our leader—I, as critic of finance, and with my colleagues—and we came to the conclusion that you don't even come close; you don't even come close to a scenario where you're running a proper government at this time, much less balancing the budget in 2017-18.

The point that my colleague is bringing forward makes eminent sense, but under your government is virtually impossible.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to rise today to add my comments to the bill brought forward by the member from Wellington-Halton Hills. I see I have two minutes and 50 seconds. It should be plenty of time to resolve this debate, as far as I'm concerned.

The member spoke of a duty to our children. There certainly is a duty to our children: a duty to ensure that they have proper education, proper health care, a clean environment. Those are things that don't come about with the singular focus of cutting taxes. That cannot be achieved, and of course we will never achieve the progressive society that we need with an all-out abdication of our responsibility as government here. It just hasn't happened. It will never happen. In fact, it is what got us into this position in the first place. It happened through measures of deregulation and privatization in other jurisdictions that created the domino effect that led to the

global recession, global economic downturn. These are points that have been clearly articulated within economic circles around the globe, and yet it seems as though it's on the periphery here in terms of our discussion.

I'd also like to point out to all members in the House that we have so many wonderful businesses in this province, and I can't find too many of them that don't operate with a functioning debt and don't have the ability to carry debt and to prioritize their needs to make capital investments in their businesses, but also to acknowledge that that debt is actually a healthy debt. In fact, I have debt. I have some credit card debt; I have some student loan debt. And as it accumulates, guess what happens? The credit card companies call me up and say, "Hey, you've got some debt. We want to up your limit. We want to give you some more credit, actually." They're evil. But yet, I'm able to manage it. Maybe they recognize that I'm fiscally prudent with the management of my debt.

We can do that here, Mr. Speaker. We can prioritize the debt that we embark on. All members in this House, all affiliated parties, are guilty of adding to the provincial debt at some point in history or another. You should all own that, but own it and be responsible with it. Don't back away from it as if it's something you can't handle. Either you can manage this province and manage its debt or you can't, because the province and the people of this province are going to ask you to do that. You're going to have to be able to show them that you can.

That's why my colleague points out, quite accurately, that New Democrats across the board, in all the provinces that we've ever represented, have the best fiscal record in terms of managing their debt, investing in their social economy—electrifying, where Tommy Douglas electrified Saskatchewan, brought in health care. Those are all things you can do when you're proper stewards of the finances of the province.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I had some prepared notes here, but as I sit back and listen to the debate on both sides, I think we have lost sight and lost focus of what this particular motion is truly all about. It's not about how well the NDP or how well the government has been performing in the past, or how well the PCs. That's not what this is all about, as I see it. I see it as simply this, and what we are saying is this: Once the budget is balanced, the motion calls for the government to begin paying down the provincial debt by at least 2.5% of program spending of the fiscal year.

This debate has been focused, so far, on everything but what my colleague and esteemed member has been talking about. So it forces me and causes me to lead back to my inaugural speech where I talked about, for all of us to be successful here in the House, you've got to have HEART, and I want to tell you what HEART is all about.

The H stands for honesty. We need to be honest with ourselves, but we also need to be honest with each other—nothing more, nothing less. The E is all about

effort, and we need to take a look at the effort we're really, truly putting forth and not wasting our time. We need to be getting down to business to do the business we've been elected to do. My colleague, with this particular motion, is all about getting down to doing what we need to do.

The A, for me, is all about attitude. We need to attack it with the right attitude, not with these partisan thoughts and ideas about, "Because you're an NDP or a Liberal or a PC you're not right; you don't have it right." We need to do a checkup from the neck up and look at how we're doing things.

The R in HEART is all about responsibility/accountability. You know, I was always told: To thine own self be true. We need to be responsible individuals here in this House. We need to be accountable to the people who have put us here. We need to be looking at these numbers and stop playing all this partisan stuff.

And the last thing: We need to look at being team players over there. We need to be team players and learn how to get along with everybody in the sandbox and quit throwing sand at everybody.

You've got to have HEART. If you want to be successful in your riding—if all of us want to be successful—we've got to have HEART.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to just sort of lower the tone a little bit. I believe that the previous speaker was excellent, but we're here out of respect for the member from Wellington–Halton Hills. As has been said earlier today, in all fairness this really isn't about the budget specifically. It's about after the government of Ontario—whoever that happens to be; it will probably be Tim Hudak—balances the budget in a respectable way, then what you need to do is make a commitment to the people of Ontario to pay off the credit card. That's what the thing is about. In fact, the member has discussed this since, I believe, 1998 was the first time, a similar bill that would look at a long-term strategy, a commitment to paying off the credit card.

When I look at the pages here and the young people and at student debt today, the accumulated debt is actually debt. Somebody holds that debt. It's an IOU of some sort. Now, we know that the economy is such that interest is very low today, so the cost of debt in Ontario now is about \$10 billion-and-some a year, the third-highest expenditure. But interest will be higher than inflation, or it should be, and if interest goes up, the debt could go from \$10 billion to \$20 billion, and we'll get nothing for it, because we've already spent the money. We're using somebody else's money to keep the economy going. Now, the argument here is, let's have a responsible solution and priorities for the province. You can't spend your way out of debt. Do you understand? It means some discipline has to occur.

Now, not all debt is bad. Debt for hospitals and universities is good debt. Capital debt is probably good debt; infrastructure is very important. But operating debt

is a structural deficit. In fact, Auditor General McCarter, in the pre-election report, told you that you have a structural deficit. He said that. On February 27, 2009, Don Drummond said that even if you look at the deficit, Ontario has a structural deficit. That means your growth in expenditures is faster than your growth in revenue. Look at the economy. It's flatlined; it's about 1.2%. You're actually creating more debt as we speak, about \$1.2 million an hour; each and every hour, you're spending more than you're receiving as revenue. This is debt on our children.

Do the responsible thing. Listen to the member from Wellington–Halton Hills. Have a plan—all we're looking for is a plan—that addresses how you're going to deal with the debt. A fool and his money are soon parted, and Dalton McGuinty is doing that to Ontario.

1610

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Member for Wellington–Halton Hills, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Ted Arnett: I'm pleased to respond to the MPPs who offered comments with respect to my resolution this afternoon. I want to thank the member for Perth–Wellington, the member for Chatham–Kent–Essex, the member for Durham, the member for Thornhill, and acknowledge the government members as well as the New Democrats who spoke to the resolution.

At least one of the NDP speakers indicated that they were going to support the resolution, and I want to thank the New Democrats for that. I'm not so sure about the Liberal members. We'll see what happens.

I want to respond to the member for Ottawa–Orléans, who said that he didn't want to tie the hands of future governments with respect to the finances of the province. What I would say to that member is this: With a huge deficit adding to the debt each and every year, with interest rates and interest costs likely to go up, does he not realize that that's tying the hands of future governments? Does he not understand that future generations will have to pay higher taxes year after year if we can't live within our means as a generation at present?

I would also commend him to read the most recent Auditor General's report, which he obviously has not read, page 29, where the Auditor General concludes in his section on the consequences of high indebtedness, "Once annual deficits are no longer the norm, one strategy for paying down debt is to hold the line on any future debt increases and use the additional revenues generated by a growing economy to start to reduce the debt. In any case, regardless of what strategy is contemplated, we believe the government should provide legislators and the public with long-term targets and a strategy for how it plans to address the current and projected debt burden."

Again, Mr. Speaker, I brought forward a resolution in 1997 that was, in fact, passed by the Harris government, which called upon the government to commit itself to a long-term debt repayment plan. When we balanced the budget after 1999, we did begin to pay down the debt. Of

course, in 2003 I brought forward a similar resolution after this bunch of Liberals was elected. They voted it down because they planned to spend like there was no tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is now here, and we've got to start to make plans to pay down the debt with regard to future generations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

ONTARIO FORESTRY INDUSTRY
REVITALIZATION ACT (HEIGHT
OF WOOD FRAME BUILDINGS), 2012
LOI DE 2012 SUR LA REVITALISATION
DE L'INDUSTRIE FORESTIÈRE
DE L'ONTARIO (HAUTEUR DES
BÂTIMENTS À OSSATURE DE BOIS)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 28, standing in the name of Mr. Fedeli.

Mr. Fedeli has moved second reading of Bill 52. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is referred to—

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Regulations and private bills.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has moved to refer his bill to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills. Is the House in agreement that the bill go to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills? Agreed? Okay, there's agreement.

ONTARIO'S WOOD FIRST ACT, 2012
LOI DE 2012 PRIVILÉGIANT
LE BOIS EN ONTARIO

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Mauro has moved second reading of Bill 61. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is referred to—

Mr. Bill Mauro: The Standing Committee on Social Policy, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy. Agreed? Agreed.

PROVINCIAL DEBT

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Arnott has moved private members' notice of motion

number 17. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

I believe the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1614 to 1619.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would all members please take their seats?

Mr. Arnott has moved private members' notice of motion number 17. All those in favour please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

| | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Arnott, Ted | Klees, Frank | Prue, Michael |
| Barrett, Toby | Mantha, Michael | Shurman, Peter |
| Bisson, Gilles | McNaughton, Monte | Singh, Jagmeet |
| Campbell, Sarah | Munro, Julia | Taylor, Monique |
| Fedeli, Victor | Natyshak, Taras | Vanhof, John |
| Gélinas, France | Nicholls, Rick | Walker, Bill |
| Hardeman, Ernie | O'Toole, John | Wilson, Jim |
| Hillier, Randy | Ouellette, Jerry J. | Yakabuski, John |
| Jackson, Rod | Pettapiece, Randy | Yurek, Jeff |

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Albanese, Laura | Hoskins, Eric | Moridi, Reza |
| Berardinetti, Lorenzo | Jaczek, Helena | Oraziotti, David |
| Bradley, James J. | Jeffrey, Linda | Piruzza, Teresa |
| Brotten, Laurel C. | Kwintar, Monte | Sandals, Liz |
| Colle, Mike | Leal, Jeff | Sergio, Mario |
| Coteau, Michael | MacCharles, Tracy | Sousa, Charles |
| Crack, Grant | Mangat, Amrit | Takhar, Harinder S. |
| Damerla, Dipika | Mauro, Bill | Wong, Soo |
| Delaney, Bob | McMeekin, Ted | Wynne, Kathleen O. |
| Flynn, Kevin Daniel | McNeely, Phil | Zimmer, David |

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 27; the nays are 30.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2012 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 18, 2012, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has moved government order number 2. At the adjournment of debate, Mr. Shurman had just finished his presentation, so we now move to questions and comments.

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened, you might say, remotely yesterday to the member from Thornhill in his response to the budget. I think he unequivocally explained that the current government has no desire to deal in any responsible way with the budget. He made it very

clear that he made initiatives to the Minister of Finance right after the election in October to get together with the Minister of Finance, knowing full well how dismal a shape the budget was in.

Now, the government always likes to sort of work the numbers and then act like they're surprised. There was no surprise in the fiscal mess. What they did is they got Don Drummond to take the issue of the deficit and debt off the table over to Mr. Drummond—and I have a copy of his report here; I'll be speaking on it this afternoon.

But if you look at the history, I think this is important to put on the record. This is the report that I'm putting on the record here. It's by the Auditor General of Ontario, Jim McCarter. He issued a report in June 2008 and he told the Premier he had a structural deficit. He said his revenue forecasts in the election document were aggressive. So he alerted the people of Ontario that they had a structural deficit. He said that they've been spending at about 7% additional spending per year on average over their eight years, increasing it every year. He's saying that's not sustainable. Somehow they've manipulated this whole discussion about the careless, reckless spending, and I thought the member from Thornhill's speech yesterday was spot on. I commend him for those remarks, and I commend it to the members to get the Hansard from yesterday and read it, and you'll see that it's well done.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to rise today to add my comments.

You know, what an opportunity we have today, Speaker. What an opportunity the Liberal Party has, a government that undoubtedly has been off on the wrong track—off the rails, some would say—for the last eight years. They have a gift in front of them, perhaps no more evident than in a recent poll that indicates that one of many of our great ideas that we've proposed to them—it's one of many, but the one that seems to particularly have struck a pleasant chord with Ontarians is that 78% of Ontarians like our plan to raise taxes on those earning more than \$500,000 a year. I don't know if there's been a Liberal policy in the last eight years that has received that much of a glowing endorsement. Certainly it wasn't the HST; certainly it wasn't the eco fees. It certainly could not have been any of your other initiatives.

But here's one that as a gift we present, a wonderful proposal, one that will add some credibility to the government side, some fairness—much, much needed fairness—that I think this province has been lacking in terms of its legislation, in terms of its focus, for quite some time. It's one that we hope—and that's what my colleagues here were talking about today. It is hope that we cling to, that some of you on the other side have understood and have listened to our proposals and taken them seriously.

I can assure you that when you return to your ridings, that 78% approval rate will be there in your ridings as well. So that's why I say it's a gift to you. It's an idea

that we gladly didn't keep for the next election, which could be who knows when? We've given it to you right now—given it to you now to go back to your ridings and say, "Look: We're finally doing the right thing."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: Well, it's always interesting to listen to the official opposition, because they say on one hand that they're in favour of fiscal responsibility. On the other hand, I know that their members are advocating for a number of projects:

—in Cambridge, the Cambridge Memorial Hospital expansion;

—in Burlington, the Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital expansion;

—in Wellington–Halton Hills, the Groves Memorial Community Hospital in Fergus;

—in Perth–Wellington, the North Wellington Health Care, Mount Forest site renovation;

—in Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, the Renfrew Victoria Hospital dialysis program expansion;

—in Elgin–Middlesex–London, the St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital renovation;

—in Leeds–Grenville, the Brockville General Hospital expansion;

—in Burlington, of course, in highways, they're looking for the rehabilitation of the Burlington Skyway;

—in Barrie, the Duckworth Street interchange at Highway 400 is exceedingly important;

—in Wellington–Halton Hills, the new GO train station in Acton;

—in Parry Sound–Muskoka, the widening of Highway 69 north of Parry Sound;

—in Durham–Oshawa, the building of the 407 extension to Highway 35/115, with my friend Mr. O'Toole in favour of that;

—Simcoe North, the resurfacing of Highway 11 through Orillia, and surely the local member is advocating for that;

—in Chatham–Kent–Essex, improving the Highway 401 interchange at Highway 40 has to be high priority;

—in Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, rehabilitating the Mississippi River bridge on Highway 17 in Arnprior; and

—in Simcoe–Grey, replacing the Crown Hill overpass bridge at Highway 400.

They all want these projects to proceed, but they want to do as the old commercial says: They want to spend like Santa and save like Scrooge. You can't have it both ways.

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

1630

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm very pleased to respond to the remarks given by the member for Thornhill, always someone who is able to provide the kind of analysis that people need to have in order to be able to understand some of the key parts of this budget. But when I talk to people, I'll give them two numbers, because people have

difficulty remembering a whole group of numbers and what they mean. The first one that I choose to use is the half a million people that are out of work in this province. As a member of the caucus, as an MPP for part of York region, I remind my listeners that the population of York region is just over one million. If you were to take that half-million unemployed group and put them in York region, you would safely be able to say that there would be not one employed person in that area. I think that it shocks people when they hear that because it suddenly brings it home that this is the impact, first of all on individuals who can't find a job, and the impact that it has on their families, but it's also the devastating impact that it has on a community. So when we look at the kinds of job losses that have brought us to this point of half a million people, it demonstrates the severity of the position that we find ourselves in in this province at this time. The budget has not demonstrated that it is a job-creating budget.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you very much, Speaker. I listened with interest to the comments of my friends from Durham, Essex, York-Simcoe and, yes, even St. Catharines, despite the fact that the minister, the member for St. Catharines, didn't comment at all on my speech but rather preferred to read a laundry list of all the spending that he's doing around the province.

It's an interesting thing, this spending. I want to talk about spending for a minute. We're concerned with the fact that this government claims that spending is down because it's only up by \$2 billion, which is kind of a contradiction in terms. Nobody ever said you shouldn't spend—and, by the way, you have to spend in NDP ridings and Progressive Conservative ridings and Liberal ridings; you just have to spend within your means. That's what this government has proven for eight and a half years now that it's not capable of doing, and that's what the complaint is on this side.

In terms of collaboration, collaboration is a two-way street. Collaboration is not just saying, "Come and tell us what you want"; it's actually sitting down in a reasonable time frame and taking some of the ideas from the opposition parties and saying, "Yes, we'll integrate them," not waiting until the eleventh hour and trying to work a deal to get two extra votes with the third party.

Our party has stood on its principles. Our party has never wavered from the fact that (a) we need a jobs program in Ontario right now—we need one desperately; and (b) the spending is out of control. The debt at \$15.3 billion is, contrary to what the government has to say, not something that should be celebrated.

I also spent a fair amount of time talking about the fact that question periods these days, as far as the Premier and the Minister of Finance are concerned, seem to be nothing much more than a branding period, trying to hang an election on us, which is patent nonsense, saying that we didn't sit down and collaborate, which is patent nonsense, and suggesting that somehow or other we have

forfeited our right to comment on this budget. We will never forfeit our right, and we will never forfeit our pledge to our constituents, which is to come here and represent their best interests.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: It's always a pleasure to stand up and talk about economic matters.

I had the privilege of going to that lock-up. Just a few weeks ago, there was a lock-up. For those who have never been in a lock-up, those watching on TV, you go over there around noon, you go into a room, and you have to sign all kinds of oaths and say you're not going to discuss it with a single, solitary soul. You sit there for about four or five hours, and you read all these documents. You go into a lock-up with the press and you talk about what you think you've just read. Then you're all paraded over here, and you have to walk in a straight and solitary line with OPP officers watching your every move until you get into the Legislature.

You have a pretty good idea at that point what the finance minister is going to say. You're handed a copy of the finance minister's speech, and you get to read it as he is on his feet.

I will tell you, that was a disappointing day for me when I heard what the government was going to be doing in their budget, when I listened to the finance minister's speech, when I walked outside of this room and talked to ordinary people who did not have the benefit that I did of being in the lock-up, but who came here so full of hope and who saw that hope dashed on so many fronts. You had to know that this was not a budget that Ontarians were going to like.

Now, over the course of the last couple of weeks, I have seen Liberals stand up, cabinet ministers, parliamentary assistants, the Premier himself—you know, all of them standing up and saying that back in their riding people like this budget. I beg to differ. Back in your ridings, people do not like this budget. Some of them recognize that some of the harsher measures may have to be done, but they're not happy with it. They are not happy with where we have found ourselves today and the fact that their position in society, in their community, is very much at risk.

We, in the New Democratic Party, that day could have done the easy thing. We could have done exactly what my colleagues in the Conservative Party did. Before I went with our leader Andrea Horwath into the press scrum, I watched Mr. Hudak, the leader of the official opposition, and Mr. Shurman, the finance critic for their party—I watched what they had to say and I watched—right away, they weren't going to be supporting this budget. They obviously would not have had an opportunity, except what they would have had over four or five hours, to read the entire budget, but they probably had a pretty good handle on why they would not support it.

So I knew instinctively at that point that, in a minority Parliament, it fell to us. We had to do everything, and we did do everything, I think, to behave in a mature and

responsible fashion in looking at a budget that none of us liked—none of us like to this day. We looked at it. We went into caucus meeting. We went out to the public. We have elicited some 35,000 or 40,000 people; they have responded to us and told us what they like and don't like about the budget.

We also asked them the very tough question: If you don't like the budget, are you prepared to have an election at this time? And I will tell you that the results we got were almost exactly what the newspapers have printed from polls in the last couple of days. We got the majority of people saying they don't like the budget. We also got the majority of people saying they didn't want an election now. So we, in the New Democratic Party, have had to sit down and think this through, and we've done, I think, a pretty good job.

What we want and what we are asking for is reflecting the desires of the people of the province of Ontario, not just the 35,000 or 40,000 who have responded to us but the response from all of the people across the province, particularly through their local newspapers, through their members of provincial Parliament, through the polling that has been done.

We, as New Democrats, do not want to support a budget that only sacrifices middle and modest and poor people and does not ask the rich to sacrifice as well. Surely they cannot be immune from the course of actions that are taking place, or from the world economy or the economy that this province finds itself in. They are not special people, isolated out there who cannot be touched. They are part of us, and they have to do their part as well.

We cannot support something which puts the north at a disadvantage, and I'm speaking here particularly about the train—Ontario Northland. We cannot put a whole population that lives above the French River at some kind of disadvantage and isolation. We cannot do that. We have to make sure every opportunity they have in the north to develop the economy, to keep jobs at home, to keep young people wanting to live in those communities, to keep small towns and villages vibrant and alive is taken, and we cannot support shutting down something like the Northland.

We have to think about the 60,000 people who rely directly or indirectly on the horse racing industry. You cannot simply throw out 60,000 jobs and say, "Tough. We're taking your money, and you're losing your livelihood." We, as New Democrats, can't do that, and the government should not do that either.

1640

We cannot, with all conscience at all, abandon the poor, the elderly and children in this budget, as we see the budget has done. It's all well and good for Liberals to stand up all the time and say, "We're so much better than Conservatives. The Conservatives, when they were in power, cut the welfare rates by 21%. We are so humane and so wonderful, we're going to freeze them."

My goodness. Think about what has happened over these years. Think about when the minister stands up and says, "We've done a wonderful job for the poor," as he

did today. He said, "We've raised the welfare and ODSF rates seven times in the last eight years." Yeah, you have, but you've raised them in such piddly amounts they haven't even kept up with inflation, so the reality for the poor and the children and the destitute is that they are actually worse off under this government than they were under the government of Mike Harris. Nine years later, they're worse off today, and to freeze them is to freeze them in a situation that is destitute.

So the NDP decided we had to try to do something. We had to try to work with a government that just didn't seem to get it in the budget, and we have to try, if we can, to make this budget work. It's been a tough task. I would have thought some of the stuff we would suggest to the Liberals would have been no-brainers, particularly those Liberals who have a conscience, particularly those Liberals who come from the centre or left of centre of that party, which there seems to be all too few of.

We put together a list of 10 recommendations and we are simply asking that you look at these and that you agree with them, because if you agree with these 10 recommendations, I will tell you I won't have any difficulty keeping this government in power until after the budget day, which is the 24th, next week.

We have asked for a new tax bracket. This is an idea that is not new. This is an idea that's taking place all over the world. It's taking place in France, where it's wildly and hugely popular. President Obama has suggested the same thing in the United States; it's one of his key planks for re-election in this election year in the United States. And we, in the NDP, put this proposal forward because we thought it was the right thing to do.

Liberals must know it's the right thing to do politically, at least today, because today when I opened up the Toronto Star—I try to read it every morning, that and the Sun, because I need to know what both sides are saying—there was an article, and here it is. The Toronto Star, on page 6—I'm sure every Liberal read it four or five times, to digest what's in it. It says "NDP Proposal to Tax Rich a Hit, Poll Finds." Robert Benzie, Queen's Park bureau chief, who sits here amongst us all the time, wrote, "Ontarians overwhelmingly favour NDP leader Andrea Horwath's proposal to raise taxes on people who earn more than \$500,000 a year, a new poll suggests."

"Horwath has put forward the wealth surtax as one of her party's conditions for supporting Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty's budget, which will be voted on next Tuesday.

"More than three quarters of people surveyed—78%—like her idea, with only 17% opposed and 5% unsure, according to the Forum Research poll."

Then, inside the article, there's a sub-quote: "It's hugely popular. You never see that—that's huge," Forum president Lorne Bozinoff said Wednesday."

That's one of the things that's out there. It is contingent upon some of the other things we hope the Liberals are going to do, that they have the money to do. We have costed this. We believe this will bring in some \$570 million. The Liberals are saying maybe it will only

bring in \$450 million. Let's saw it off in the middle and say it's going to bring in half a billion dollars.

What can half a billion dollars do to help the people of Ontario? It's the question we ask and the question we ask of you. If you want to avoid an election, these are the kinds of things you can do with half a billion dollars. You can create 4,000 child care spaces, some of which are at risk across this province. You can make sure that 4,000 more families have adequate child care and that women, particularly women, have an opportunity to go out and work or to go back to school. This is a huge social thing that's desperately needed.

The second thing you can do is, you can increase the ODSP. It is not fair to people who are on welfare or ODSP to find themselves in the circumstances where their monies are being frozen. It is absolutely unconscionable to ask someone to live on \$1,000 a month or, heaven forbid, if you are on Ontario Works, \$599 a month in the province of Ontario. It is not right, and every single Liberal knows it's not right. If you had \$500 million, you could make sure that at least something was being done.

We have suggested capping CEOs' salaries. This is not going to make a lot of money, but it is hugely popular as well. Again, from that same Toronto Star article, later on down the article, because they also asked about this: "The survey also found strong support for Horwath's proposal to cap provincial executive salaries at \$418,000 a year—or twice the Premier's pay. About two-thirds—65%—approve of that, with only 22% opposed and 13% uncertain."

Again, what we are having is a huge, huge popular thing that the people of Ontario want. If you do that, you're going to save some \$20 million. If you look at this, if you look at capping the salaries, what you're going to do as well is you're going to make sure that some people, those who are right at the trough, those who are CEOs of some of the bigger hospitals in this province, actually earn only twice as much as the Premier. I note two of the examples that easily come to mind are—well, one is a hospital and one is OPG. There's Mr. Mitchell of the OPG, who last year got a raise of \$495,000—a raise of \$495,000. This would put an end to that kind of stuff. That's more money than most people earn in 10 years—that was his raise. I think he was earning \$1.7 million at public expense. Then you've got just a little hospital in eastern Ontario which also came to mind, the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, where the raise there for their CEO, Mr. Bilodeau, was \$73,000, which is twice the average industrial wage of a person working in Ontario. We want to make sure that the cap stops all of that and that the money is funnelled back into better health care.

The fifth thing we wanted to talk about is \$100 million to put towards local health care where needed. Those monies would come both from taxing those who can afford it and from capping the salaries.

The sixth thing we looked at that won't cost the government any money but surely will make sure that there's

far less scandals in this province is whistle-blower protection. We want to do this for any organization that receives more than \$1 million in public funds. If this kind of whistle-blower protection was out there in places like Ornge, we wouldn't have an Ornge. If this whistle-blower protection was out there in public institutions, we wouldn't be standing here in the Legislature day after day decrying the fact that people are wasting government funds and that the government itself does not have a good ear to it and isn't paying appropriate attention to it. We want to make sure that every single public dollar spent is spent wisely.

The seventh thing we want to do is to look at job creation. We want to have tax credits for job creation, just like Mr. Obama is recommending in the United States. But also, just like Mr. Santorum was talking about before he dropped out of the race for the Republican Party, when you give money to industry, it can't be just government corporate welfare to industry—it has to be tied to job creation. We are suggesting this as well. This doesn't cost anything. You're already giving \$3 billion a year away. It's going to save money and it's going to create jobs. We demand to be listened to on this particular file.

1650

The next thing we talked about was an electricity review, and I had to chuckle a little over the government's attempt at this yesterday. It was half-hearted. It was two tiny little corporations that are probably way overblown in their corporate salaries. I noticed that one of them only had 143 employees, and over 100 of them were on the sunshine list. There it is.

We have to do something about the electricity review. I commend the government for starting the process yesterday, but a whole lot more needs to be done. We are asking that that be done, too, and a greater role for public power companies.

We are asking that the Ontario Northland be saved, that it remain in public ownership. The Ontario Northland is the lifeline for everyone who lives above the French River. It is the lifeline if this province is really serious about developing the Ring of Fire. It is the lifeline of people who want to travel and who do not have an automobile, who live north of the French River, to travel to see their friends and family, to travel to doctors' appointments, to come south. It is the lifeline for companies. It is the lifeline for people who live in Moosonee, Moose Factory, and it could and should be expanded if we are serious about northern development. If we are serious about the possibilities of our north, then one of the things not to do is to get rid of that railway. We know—and you know—that it's impossible to build highways in much of the north once you get where the permafrost is going to wreck them up. That's why there are no highways and roads into the First Nations communities at this point, and we know that taking out the only lifeline that some of them have is the wrong thing to do.

Last but not least, we've talked about the horse racing industry. Surely the government should have given more

thought than what they did. Oh, I know it's tempting for government to look over and say, "The horse racing guys get 10% of the rake-off of the slots revenue. We can take that 10% and we can use it." It was a pretty good deal that the government gave them, but they have stood up to that deal every single inch of the way. They have done exactly what they were supposed to do. They let their facilities be used in order to collect the revenue so that the government of the day, an NDP government, a Conservative government and a Liberal government all took advantage of this so that the slots would go into those racetracks, the racetracks would be kept alive and the horse owners would have a job.

The government walks in there without even a thought. I firmly believe, even if the government doesn't, even if the government pooh-poohs it, that there are 60,000 jobs at risk—not just those who breed horses, not just those who train horses, not just those who ride horses or exercise horses, but also those who provide the feed, the veterinary services, the parimutuels, the tracks, the trailers. All of those things are—not just to say they're gone; that's 60,000 people who aren't going to have a livelihood. That's 60,000 potential people who are going to end up on the welfare rolls. What are they supposed to do? These are people who have spent their entire life around farm animals. These are people who don't have, by and large, university educations. They may or may not be computer literate, but they have a talent that has put Ontario to the top of North America for horse racing and for breeding and all the other things. Surely something should be done.

We as New Democrats are putting this down. It's not a gauntlet; it is a firm statement. The government has brought forth a budget with which we do not agree. It can be made so that we agree with it. It takes only a little bit of political will over there, and that political will must be forthcoming. New Democrats are not afraid of an election. We are not. Perhaps the government should be, and you should be taking a very hard look at what we're asking for, which is going to cost less than one half of 1% of the total budget revenue, and do the right thing. We ask you to do it.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: I want to thank the member for his very thoughtful speech and for once again having by far the most decorative tie in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. He has, each and every day, a new and different tie, and they're all absolutely excellent.

One of the challenges that you run into—and I, first of all, appreciate the approach that the NDP has taken. I notice that you're not yelling in the House. You're not banging desks. You're not going wild. You're not putting on shows. You're asking thoughtful questions, and hopefully you're getting answers which, from time to time, you find yourself in agreement with, but other times you may not.

So I want to, first of all, like the approach of making some suggestions instead of simply rejecting the budget

out of hand, as the Conservative Party—and it's their will to do so, and it's their right to do so. I think it's a big mistake.

An interesting dialogue is taking place. In the context of that, I would like you to go to a book by Janice MacKinnon, who was Minister of Finance in the province of Saskatchewan. It's called *Minding the Public Purse*. What it portrays is what a person has to do when in government. I was in opposition a long time, and I know it's much easier, in opposition, to offer suggestions and make criticisms. That's an important part of the process, and I appreciate that. For instance, in Saskatchewan they had to close 52 rural hospitals. Were they a mean government? They certainly weren't. Were they a government that didn't care about health care? That's certainly not the case. But they had to go through that process. I remember reading that particular chapter in the book and how difficult it was.

We appreciate many of the suggestions that have been made. We're taking into account those suggestions, trying to cost them out, trying to find a balance, I think, that the people of this province are looking for. I do want to pay tribute to the third party for their approach.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to add a couple of comments, as I listened carefully to the member for Beaches–East York.

A few moments ago, I talked about key numbers in the budget and mentioned the question of the number of unemployed people in the province. Another number that I think is a really important one is the amount of money that it costs to service the debt.

Sometimes people have difficulty understanding what's the deficit and what's the debt. When the books don't add up, then you throw the leftover debt that you can't match and you put it in the debt pile. Today we're looking at a cost of servicing of over \$10 billion, and by the government's own reckoning, that is scheduled to increase in the next two fiscal years in the medium outlook. I think that people need to understand—I'm sure they have difficulty understanding what's \$10 billion—how much that reflects on things you can't afford because the debt has to be serviced. It's like feeding the monster in the back of the room. It means that it's more than what is spent in several ministries combined. It means that for every dollar that goes into that pile, you can't provide any kind of program; you can't find savings. It's a constant drag. That's just one more number that people need to understand in this budget.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I want to say thank you to our member from Beaches–East York for a thoughtful and provocative presentation. As finance critic, he does an incredibly good job. Way to go. Really, what he did was delineate the choice that this government across the aisle has to make, and that is, will they stand with us and the vast majority of ordinary Ontarians or will they stand

with the Conservatives who constantly want to cut corporate taxes and stand with the wealthy? The question is, where do they want to stand?

We put forward a number of proposals. Our leader, Andrea Horwath, stood up today and made some impressive comparisons, and they're important comparisons. Do you stand with those who make over half a million dollars a year, or do you stand with those who are on social assistance? Do you stand with those who need child care, or do you stand with those who make over half a million dollars a year? Do you stand with large corporations, as you have in the past, or do you stand for education and health care and the services that we value in this province? That's the real question. That is the question.

Again, the proposals we've made are practical ones. They've been costed out. They're modest ones in the great scheme of the possibility of proposals.

1700

Truly, the government has a choice. The choice is, are they in fact Conservatives or are they those who represent those people—who elected a minority government, by the way—not a majority one; a minority government—who wanted collaboration, wanted the best ideas from all parties, wanted us to work together? Will this government work with us, and through us, with the people of Ontario, or will they stand with those, really, who make over half a million dollars a year and are forever wanting tax breaks without being willing to share the tax burden? That's what we're saying as New Democrats. We want an answer.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: There's no doubt about it: The member from Beaches–East York—in the almost nine years I've had the privilege to be here, I think he's been their finance critic over those nine years—is an individual who knows the public finances of the province of Ontario extremely well. I always recall he used to tell us that first thing in the morning he would watch CBC Newsworld to see what was happening in the markets, both here and around the world. So he is taking a very serious interest in the domestic, national and international economy, which is very important when you're a finance critic.

He was, of course, the last mayor of East York, and as a former municipal—

Hon. James J. Bradley: And a good mayor at that.

Mr. Jeff Leal: And a good mayor at that. As you know, Mr. Speaker, when you're in municipal politics in the province of Ontario, municipalities can't run a deficit by law. You always have to have your books balanced in municipalities across the province of Ontario, and the member from Beaches–East York comes from that very fine municipal tradition.

He also took the time today, I think in a very articulate fashion, to kind of lay out a number of policy options that I could say we're taking very seriously and taking into great consideration over the next number of days, to look at them from the broadest perspective. It's no secret

there's a poll that appeared, I think in the *Globe and Mail* today, that talked about increasing the marginal rate of taxation of those individuals who make half a million dollars or more in the province of Ontario. I'm just going by recall. I think it was almost 68% to 70% that—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's 78%.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Seventy-eight per cent—thank you very much, member from Essex—indicated that that was a public policy that people in Ontario want to support, so I want to thank the member for his speech this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Beaches–East York, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'd like to thank my colleague the Minister of the Environment and my colleagues the members from York–Simcoe, Parkdale–High Park and Peterborough for their comments and for actually listening to what I had to say.

A couple of things here: The member from York–Simcoe talked about servicing the debt, and I want to assure her that what we costed out will actually make the government money, because after today, when we withdrew one of our key planks in order to facilitate further discussion and hopefully some bending from the government, there is actually going to be money left over, and when you take an extra half a billion dollars and don't spend it all, that can't be a bad thing in terms of the debt.

I want to say to the member from Peterborough: Yes, it's true that when I was the mayor we could not run a deficit. But I tried to do one other thing; that is, we paid down every single debt the municipality had in the five years up until the very last payment was about to be made, when we got amalgamated. So, by the time of amalgamation we were debt-free, because I also understand that has to happen. That is why I supported the private member's bill today to try to pay down the debt each and every year, because if you don't, you're going to end up with a lot of expenses.

I am mindful of what the Minister of the Environment had to say about minding the public purse, and we all need to do that. We cannot spend more than we have, and we have to be very careful. But we as politicians have choices. There are choices out there of things that can be done, and we are taking a very responsible and publicly favourable position of taxing those who can afford another 2%.

I'm not going to say that the guy who wrote about the Visigoths in the *National Post* today—I don't think he has anything right; he doesn't even know his history. But if the only answer is that people are going to cheat and steal, so therefore don't do it, that's the wrong answer. We have to trust that we will get that money and that we will spend it in an appropriate way for the benefit of the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to have 20 minutes this afternoon to speak on the budget motion. I feel the need,

I guess, to begin by apologizing to my constituents. I had a two-minuter on this yesterday, and I announced in that two-minuter that I was going to be speaking in about 20 minutes' or an hour's time. That was yesterday, Wednesday, the 18th. What has been occurring for quite some time in this place occurred again yesterday, where one of the members of the official opposition chose to ring the bells to adjourn the debate. Unfortunately, that has been occurring on quite a regular basis here over the last period of time.

It's interesting to discuss, I would suggest, given that there is not a more important debate that takes place in this Legislature on an annual basis than the debate on the budget, and yet that particular member, as well as other members of the official opposition, felt it was okay to ring the bells and severely limit the amount of time that we have in this Legislature to speak on the budget motion. As I've already said, there is not likely a more significant or important debate that occurs in this Legislature on an annual basis. So instead of being able to speak to my constituents on this issue yesterday, it's now a day later.

It's after 5 o'clock here in Toronto, Thursday afternoon, April 19. That's relevant, Speaker, because less than a month ago we introduced our budget, on March 27, here in the Legislature. As I've said, it's now April 19. On Tuesday of next week, April 24, we will be back here and it is at that time that we will learn, clearly, whether or not the two opposition parties, the Conservatives and NDP, will vote as one and defeat our budget on Tuesday, plunging Ontario into an election some six or six and a half months after the last one, in early October 2011. There are still a lot of people in my riding, I would suggest, that are not aware that this is a possibility, so I think it's important that I take a minute just to speak to that.

On October 6, 2011, we were given a mandate, albeit a reduced mandate, to govern in the province of Ontario, but nevertheless that is only some six and a half months ago. The cost of an election, I'm told, is anywhere from \$100 million to \$150 million. So we will learn, as I've said, on Tuesday next week if the two opposition parties, Conservative and NDP—and if there was ever a strange marriage, that might be considered one—will vote as one and defeat our budget.

I would say as well, Speaker, on that issue, that we find ourselves in a minority Parliament, and of course that's why the two opposition parties can vote on this particular budget as one and defeat it and put us into an election. You can't help but appreciate the distinction that is here now. I wonder, what is it that they are going to suggest—if they do vote us down—was in this budget or was not in this budget that was so egregious, so severe, as to substantiate and defend their decision to send us to an election after only six and a half months? I think it's a question that constituents in all ridings across the province will be asking their members, should we be on the campaign trail come Tuesday or Wednesday of next week. I know it's one that I will be speaking very clearly to, should we find ourselves in an election.

On the Conservative side, the main piece I'm hearing back from the Conservatives is that they're not satisfied with the budget deficits and the budget balance position we find ourselves in. I would remind them and my constituents and those people in Ontario who are interested in this issue that in the election in October 2011, their campaign commitment at that time was exactly the same as ours: to bring the province back into a balanced position by 2017-18—exactly the same position as ours. This budget is the first step in that process, yet they seem to find themselves now taking a position that is opposed to where they were in the election just six or seven short months ago.

On the NDP side, they have taken a bit of a different approach. They have said, "We're not ready to vote against it immediately. We're going to go out and consult and listen to what people in Ontario have to say." I will say I've had a couple of people in my riding who have been consulted by the NDP on this issue and asked me why it is that the NDP are asking for their postal code when they are doing that particular consultation. I suppose we all have our own thoughts on what that might be about. Nevertheless, a slightly different approach: They are promoting, I would say, some tangible ideas that we are seriously giving consideration to, some that I think many of us over here find common ground with, some not so much. We'll see where that lands.

I'm not sure if the members of the third party and the leader of the third party are finished with their proposals or not. I think we're hoping at some point we'll be able to say, "This is it," and we will take them en masse and make a determination as to how we go forward on them, but it's nice to see a slightly different approach.

1710

My final point before I get into my main remarks is that it is interesting, the dynamic that exists in a minority Parliament. I've been here since 2003 and have been fortunate to be in government—as many know, that's more difficult—but not only in government, in a majority government. But now in a minority we're finding that all of a sudden it's a little bit more difficult actually, I would suggest, for the members of the opposition. When you are in opposition and it's a majority, it is much easier to champion every cause in your riding. It is much easier to make—

Mr. Michael Prue: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member from Beaches—East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Is quorum present?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would the table please verify we have quorum?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A quorum is present. Member from Thunder Bay.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Yeah. It's pretty thin ranks over there in the opposition benches. Our side seems to be holding up its part of the bargain.

As I was saying, it's a little bit easier when you're in opposition when it's a majority government because now, of course, the votes and the decisions made by both of the opposition parties have consequence.

I started my remarks by saying, should they vote on Tuesday together, the Conservatives and the NDP, to send us into an election six short months after the last vote on October 11, this will have serious and significant consequences. It is, in fact, the central point that they will have to defend on the campaign trail.

So I would say, going forward, that it was easier for them in the past to criticize, to champion all causes and to go out and scream and yell and vote against everything—not quite as simple for them now. It's interesting to watch some of the gymnastics that go on in this place as people start to stake out their territory and their turf.

One example I could give on that is the fact that when we were a majority government, we received a tremendous amount of criticism from the NDP on a particular piece of legislation, the Far North Act. That's when we were a majority and they could oppose everything.

What we saw a short time ago was a private member's bill introduced by a member of the official opposition, the Conservative member, on the Far North Act, to repeal it. Lo and behold, now that we are in a minority, the NDP understood that if they voted, it would be repealed. And guess what? Instead of criticizing us on that legislation, like they had for the previous two or three years, this time they voted with us to not repeal the Far North Act.

So it really does shine an interesting light on what goes on in this place and the differences that occur when you're in opposition to a majority government and when you're in opposition to a minority government. All of a sudden, sometimes, the positions that you held one week or one month or one year ago are not the same positions that you're able to hold when you find yourselves as part of a minority.

I want to talk a little bit about some of the things that are at risk, should this budget fail. The pieces I'm going to talk about initially are pieces that are specific to northern Ontario, to northwestern Ontario. Some of these are pieces that I'm very proud of, that personally I've worked very hard on, that our northern Liberal caucus over the last number of years has worked very hard on. We've had them included in this particular budget so that we could speak to the people of northern Ontario and let them understand that their concerns are still being addressed and that these programs that we've brought into place are protected in this budget. Should this budget fail, they are at risk of not being there when we return.

I'll talk to only three, four, five of them as quickly as I can. I'm down to only about 10 or 12 minutes.

I should say that the most recent numbers that just came out are showing Thunder Bay's unemployment rate at 5.2%. It is one of the best rates in the province. The unemployment rate in Thunder Bay has consistently, over the last three or four years, been one of the best unemployment rates in the entire province, and it speaks to a lot of what good is going on there. If I had more

time, I could speak to the particulars of that. I don't have that time today, but it's important that I share that with my community. We're doing pretty well, and I will say, on a relative basis in Thunder Bay, we're doing quite well in Ontario.

The first program that I want to talk about the NIER program, the northern industrial energy rebate program. That is a program that our Liberal caucus fought very hard for, and we brought that in to bring energy relief support to our large industrials. Now, this has been a point of contention for quite some time. I've spoken on this at length, and I say quite frankly that when individuals and parties speak about energy being the responsible reason or the fundamental reasonable for the collapse of the forest industry, it is the most vacuous, empty argument. I've been waiting to debate somebody one on one on that, and I've challenged people to that, for the last five or six years, and I've never had a taker on it. The argument does not stand up at all.

But it is one of the things we can do to help. So this particular program we've introduced, going into its third or fourth year now, provides \$20 per megawatt-hour reduction to the large industrial users, including the one in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan, the former AbitibiBowater pulp and paper mill now called Resolute Forest Products—still there in the budget, at risk should this budget fail.

Another one that our northern Liberal caucus asked for and succeeded in achieving—I will say on this one, the Ontario clean energy benefit, this came back in the Drummond report, and Mr. Drummond recommended that this Ontario clean energy benefit be removed. I don't mind saying I disagreed with Mr. Drummond on this. We had worked very hard to get it. That Ontario clean energy benefit is the 10% reduction that people are getting off of their monthly electricity bills every month. That started on January 1, 2011, and has been in place now for some 15 or 16 months.

A third piece that I want to talk about that we've protected in this budget is the northern Ontario heritage fund. I will say, when the NDP were in government, this particular fund disappeared. They took it into general revenue, took \$60 million away from northern Ontario and put it into the consolidated revenue fund. Not only have we not taken that approach, we took that \$60 million over the last three years, and we've increased it to \$100 million. It is having a tremendous impact on job creation in northern Ontario, and not only that; we're keeping it. It would have been easy to take that \$100 million out. We've kept it. It's in this budget. It's secure, but it's at risk should we go to the polls again.

Northern highway program: We have been spending at record levels over the last three to four years as a Liberal government on northern highways. Previous to our election, the peak was \$250 million. We peaked at about \$770 million one year. I think the last two years we've been around \$650 million, \$680 million. The four-laning project in Thunder Bay that people have been asking for for 25 years between Thunder Bay and Nipigon is going

forward. We've protected all those projects that have been announced. They're protected in this budget. If we go to the polls, that's at risk.

One that I've worked very hard on, Speaker, is a conversion of a coal plant in Atikokan. All parties in the 2003 election committed to closing coal. None of them ever said anything about keeping them open in any other shape or form. I've worked very hard on that. It's an expensive project. We're moving forward with it; we're converting it to biomass. It's a great project. I would suggest to you very clearly that that's at risk if we go to the polls again.

Speaker, there are many more projects that we have done, northern-Ontario-specific, that I don't have time to speak to. I'm down to about seven and a half minutes.

I want to talk about some of the things that are being put out there. Yesterday, I was here when the leader of the third party was speaking, and she was talking a bit about the Ring of Fire. Almost offhanded, not directly, she just throws it out there: "If we're mining ore in Ontario, we need to process ore in Ontario." Well, who wouldn't love to do all of that, Speaker? Wouldn't we all love to keep all of it here?

The reality is, that ore has been allowed to leave Ontario for 25 or 30 years. In fact, when the NDP were in power—and the leader would know this, and I would expect that the two members of the NDP that are here would know this. When they were in power, they also were doing OICs, orders in council, allowing ore to be shipped out of the province of Ontario. I say that to the people in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan because, should the NDP and the Conservatives force an election next week, this would be a plank in their platform; I have no doubt. It's important for the people in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan to know that when they were in power, they did it.

Do you know what, Speaker? There's good reason for it. If you're a small mine like Lac des Îles in northern Ontario, you're taking ore out of the ground, but you're small enough that you probably can't afford to build your own smelter. So what do you do? You have to go to the other guy, the big guy who's got it. So you go to Xstrata or the guy in Sudbury who's got the big smelter. He could hold you up. He could charge you a lot of money that you can't afford, or maybe he doesn't have the capacity in his smelter for what he's pulling out of the ground.

So if we took this very simplistic approach offered by the third party, the NDP, it could actually become a significant job killer in the province of Ontario. Do you know what bothers me the most, Speaker? They know that. The Lac des Îles mine, as an example, quite possibly could have had to make a decision, if all of their ore always, forever into the future, had to be mined in Ontario, not to open the mine in the first instance, because maybe you don't have the capacity, you can't afford to build your own smelter, or the other guy who's got a smelter in Ontario holds you up and he makes it so expensive you can't afford to operate anyway.

1720

I close by saying, Speaker, that the third party, the NDP, know this. That's why, when they were in government from 1990 to 1995, through order in council, their cabinet signed it off and they said, "Yes, here you go. Take it out. We understand. We know why you have to ship ore out of Ontario."

We would all love to keep it here, and we do our best.

It's my belief, on the Ring of Fire issue, on a go-forward basis, we're going to see some wonderful announcements related to that project and a whole host of other mining-related initiatives in northern Ontario in the very near future. I really do believe that's going to happen.

So I just felt the need to address that because, Speaker, if you're around here long enough, you can see what's coming, and it's a bit disingenuous, I would say, the way it's being put out there that they're the champs. Man, I could go on about what they did when they were in government. We could talk about Elliot Lake and what happened to Elliot Lake and the decisions they made. Again, there was good reason for it.

Mr. Michael Prue: Isn't Bob Rae your leader?

Mr. Bill Mauro: There was good reason. The member knows that.

You can't have it both ways, Speaker. You can't suck and blow at the same time. You have to take a position.

So I thought, on the Ring of Fire and the smelting and mining and everything 100% in Ontario, I needed to speak to that. From 1990 to 1995, when the NDP allowed ore to go out of this province to other jurisdictions, there was good reason, we understood it, and that's why from time to time it still occurs.

Currently, today, in Ontario, if they did it tomorrow, you'd probably lose 1,000 jobs, because right now ore comes from Quebec into Ontario to be smelted here. For whatever the reasons may be in Quebec—they don't have the capacity, or they can't afford it, or you're a small mining company who doesn't have a smelter in Quebec—you ship it to Ontario.

So there are reasons, Speaker. These policy pieces sometimes take a little longer to explain than we have when we're doing the 10-second sound bites on the radio, but there's good reason for them sometimes. That's why I'm pleased to have had this opportunity to speak to that particular piece today, because you can see what's coming.

Speaker, here are a few of the other things that are at risk that I want to talk about. In this budget, as has been our practice since 2003, our priorities have remained, quite clearly on a regular basis—and I think this is acknowledged even by the opposition parties—health care and education. That has been consistent.

In my own riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, and for the communities in my riding outside of Thunder Bay–Atikokan—Conmee, O'Connor, Gillies, Neebing, Oliver Paipoonge—they all understand and recognize the enhancements we've made.

One of the projects that I'm most proud of is the angioplasty program at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences hospital. We're seeing 800 to 1,000 people a year get that service in Thunder Bay now. Before, all of those people, every year, had to be shipped to southern Ontario. That was an investment in health care dollars that shows incredibly strong, tangible results for the people in my riding.

On health care more generally, right across the province, this is protected in the budget. I'm not talking about things that we haven't already done or that we're promising to do. These are things, Speaker, that we've already done. I'm saying these things into the record today because it's my belief that some of these things are at risk, should the NDP and the Conservatives vote to bring the government down on Tuesday.

In health care today in the province of Ontario, there are 3,400 more doctors working than when we were elected in 2003. There are approximately 12,000 more nurses working today in Ontario than when we were elected in 2003. We have the lowest surgical wait times in the entire country.

Speaker, on the family doctor piece, northern Ontario communities like mine have been chronically underserved when it comes to the provision of primary care. Many people are what were called orphaned patients. There are thousands more people in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan today who have access to a doctor or a nurse practitioner than was the case when we were elected in October 2003—thousands more. There are still some—I get the calls at my office—who don't have a primary care provider, but we've made great strides.

These are not small numbers: 3,400 more doctors, 12,000 more nurses. About two million people in the province now have a primary care provider who didn't when we were elected, as I said, including thousands more in my riding.

Finally, on education—I'm running out of time—13,700 more support staff work in our schools in the province of Ontario; 8,500, up to maybe 10,000 more teachers, and if you're a young teacher out there, you're one in this number. Out of that 8,500 to 10,000 more teachers—the young teachers: You're one of those people.

Two hundred thousand more spaces, with 60,000 more to come, in our colleges and universities—accessibility to our post-secondary institutions. The knowledge-based economy is coming. We're making it available.

Speaker, all of these things are at risk, should the two opposition parties, on Tuesday, decide to send us back to the polls.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan makes some very cutting remarks with respect to the NDP and the Conservatives.

I want to put one thing on the record, and this is sort of an announcement—you could take this as a press release.

I believe, from listening today and to question period in the last couple of days, that there has been a secret backroom deal by the Liberals and the NDP. You should know, there's a secret deal.

The vote on the budget is next Tuesday at 11:30, and I'm speaking to the TV audience now. There will be a vote at that time, and I'm telling you now, it's a done deal. There's a secret backroom deal between Dalton McGuinty and Andrea Horwath. This is a done deal. This is all smoke and mirrors. The only person really standing up on behalf of the people of Ontario to stop the hemorrhaging of debt and deficit is Tim Hudak.

Interjection: It's John O'Toole.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, it's Tim Hudak. I want to put one thing on the record—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's not me, Mr. Speaker.

This late in the day, on a Thursday, of all days—here it is. I'm reading—these are third party comments. It says, "The Ontario"—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Pardon me. They're speaking over there. They can't hear me.

This is from the Financial Post. It's dated March 29, and the title is "Ontario Budget 2011: Not Credible." I'll go on here to what they say. "The unfortunate reality for Ontarians"—the government says they have a good record.

"For starters, since being elected in 2003, Premier Dalton McGuinty and his colleagues have proven inadequate at managing Ontario's finances. Our recent study, Measuring the Fiscal Performance of Canada's Premiers, found that Mr. McGuinty performed worst among 10 provincial Premiers at managing the government's spending, tax policy, and deficits and debt."

The people of Ontario should know that it's not credible. That's the whole story. I want you to vote with us and vote with Tim Hudak.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: I would like to respond to the comments from the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

He spoke about the consultation that we're having. The public is happy that we're actually having consultation. The Liberals chose not to have any hearings on the budget, and certainly the public has told us that they're not happy with the fact that they weren't consulted by the Liberal government. He also talked about us asking for postal codes. We didn't ask for addresses. We asked for postal codes, because we wanted to know what area of the province people were actually from.

I find it interesting that the member is really picking on the NDP in his comments, and I want—

Interjection: He does that all the time.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I wonder if it was because the results of the last couple of elections were so close between the NDP and the Liberals, and the Conservatives really aren't in that picture.

He also talked about positions changing from a minority to a majority government. But those positions also changed from your party platform when you were campaigning, as they did with the Liberals, to today when we're in a minority situation, or even when they went from a majority to a majority. I talk about the housing issue and their promises that they failed to keep.

He also talked about nurses that they hired in the province, but in fact 2,000 nurses got laid off in this province in 2011-12, and there are more to be laid off with this 0% budget to the hospitals. So we're going to have more job losses in the health care sector.

He also talked about the impact of health care in communities. The impact in my community is devastating: a \$4.5-million cut to the Niagara Health System.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the comments.

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

1730

Mr. Jeff Leal: I was in the House for most of the speech of the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan, and look, we heard his passion this afternoon on his private member's bill in order to create more jobs in the forestry industry in the province of Ontario. He's a guy who has passion. He articulates the needs of those constituents in his riding in northwestern Ontario. In fact, I want to share a little story.

You may recall this past Monday that Bombardier had a reception right here at Queen's Park. The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan single-handedly helped to revive that Bombardier operation in Thunder Bay. You know, I was told that it was on its last legs, down to—what?—300 or 400 workers. Last Monday, we heard in the report from the executives from Bombardier that has grown to 1,400 workers providing streetcars and subway cars right here in Toronto. That was the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan being a champion for the good people up there in Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

You know, when you get the time to travel to Thunder Bay, Ontario, there's a buzz in that community, and the buzz has been created by that member working in the field of post-secondary education, in the medical field, health care, providing new highly paid jobs—CAW jobs; Ken Lewenza at that Bombardier operation.

Hon. James J. Bradley: He was in St. Catharines last night.

Mr. Jeff Leal: He was in St. Catharines last night singing the praises of the member from St. Catharines. There are 400 new jobs there at that transmission plant, General Motors in St. Catharines. I know when we provided the transition dollars for General Motors we saved the pension of the member for Durham, and that's very important for him. We want to look after him.

Interjection: Well, he doesn't have an MPP pension.

Mr. Jeff Leal: He doesn't have an MPP pension, but we saved his General Motors pension.

But in all seriousness, the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan is doing a heck of a job.

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

Mr. Rod Jackson: I'm somehow not surprised that Ken Lewenza was in St. Catharines with the member from St. Catharines the other day. I'm just wondering if Pat Dillon was there as well for dinner. Just asking.

You know, when we're talking about the budget, we've got to talk about the size and cost of government, and there are a few things that weren't addressed in this budget. What we find when we look at the budget is that it does nothing but put window dressing on a lot of things and asks to explore and to expand and to study—really short on actions. What we really need are actions, and clearly this is short on actions for jobs and for reducing the size and cost of government.

I happen to come from a city that has among the highest unemployment rates of all cities in Canada, right along with Windsor—bouncing off the bottom with Windsor. Only a few short years ago, Barrie was bouncing off the top. What has happened? We have seen a dramatic decrease in jobs, and there's nothing in this budget that shows the people of Barrie that there are going to be jobs coming or that there are jobs on the horizon. That is inappropriate, and that's why we can't support a budget that does nothing to help the people that I represent. Until it does, there's absolutely never going to be any support from this side, until there's actual real action that's tangible, that can be seen, that can be felt by the people who elected me to come here and fight for them, to get them jobs.

Reduce the size of government—we just see the growth of government and the spending. This budget actually increases spending by \$2 billion, and the debt, or the deficit is right where it was last year. I mean, really? We can't chip away at that just a little bit more and make it more manageable, be a little more responsible about it? It's not a real budget; it's an election platform. So who's busting for an election? I think I just need to look across the floor to figure that out.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, thank you very much. I want to thank the members from Durham, Welland, Peterborough and Barrie for their comments.

The member from Durham is still here. I have to say, I don't know, once in a while, the member from Durham and I agree on things, but he always makes me smile. I've got to tell you, the member from Durham can always make you smile. He talked about some secret vote that occurred apparently between us and the members of the third party. I just want to let the member from Durham know that if there was a secret vote, I wasn't there, I didn't get invited to that meeting, so I'm not sure if it really occurred or not, but you apparently have some information that I'm not privy to. We're out of here very soon. Maybe you'll share it with me.

To the member from Welland, I would simply say on the consultation, congratulations; it's good. I think, as a government since 2003, we have consulted a lot. But as I said in this place not that long ago, I think we all run a risk of watching consulting and consultation become the new industry. Let's just be a little bit careful. At some point, we're elected to come here and we're elected to make decisions. There are people who get tired of new plans and they want to see some decisions that are made. I forget what the issue was that we were speaking on, and people were asking us to consult even more. That's fine; you're doing your job and you are taking your approach. At some point, the decision will be yours to make.

Member from Peterborough, thank you very much.

To the member from Barrie, I would say on the budget and what's contained in the budget that very much of what is there mirrors what your party and your leaders were advocating for in the election in October 2011. In fact, the date at which we intend to bring the province back into a balanced position is exactly the same date as you were putting forward in October 2011, in an election only six months ago. You exactly mirrored what we were going to do. So I'm not sure I understand completely the comment.

Speaker, a very serious vote coming up on Tuesday: The NDP and the Conservatives will decide if they're going to vote together as one and bring down this government: a \$100-million or a \$150-million election six months out. We will see on Tuesday, Speaker.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to put an order here. This is government order number 2, resuming the debate from April 18 "that this House approves in general" the budget policies of the government. That's what this is about. Now, here's the issue: We have a significant problem

here. We can't support those things. There's a deficit and a debt.

We want to make sure the people of Ontario understand—the democratic process is the right to free speech. Now, we've called on the wasteful, scandalous spending on Ornge helicopters—billions of dollars. Frank Klees has raised this issue, and we've dealt with it, but we've called—and the Minister of Health was here—for a select committee to get to the bottom of this scandalous spending on Ornge helicopters. So with that uncertainty and lack of confidence in this government, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. O'Toole has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the debate be adjourned? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, please say "nay."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This is a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1738 to 1808.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can all members take their seats, please?

Mr. O'Toole has moved adjournment of the debate.

All in favour of the motion, please stand.

All those against, please stand and remain standing.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 8; the nays are 25.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday, April 23, at 10:30 a.m.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The House adjourned at 1809.

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

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Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

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| Arnott, Ted (PC) | Wellington–Halton Hills | First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée |
| Bailey, Robert (PC) | Sarnia–Lambton | |
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| Bisson, Gilles (NDP) | Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James | House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu |
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| Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB) | Etobicoke–Lakeshore | Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine |
| Campbell, Sarah (NDP) | Kenora–Rainy River | |
| Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB) | Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre | |
| Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB) | Markham–Unionville | Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre de Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport |
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| Clark, Steve (PC) | Leeds–Grenville | |
| Colle, Mike (LIB) | Eglinton–Lawrence | |
| Coteau, Michael (LIB) | Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est | |
| Crack, Grant (LIB) | Glengarry–Prescott–Russell | |
| Craitor, Kim (LIB) | Niagara Falls | |
| Damerla, Dipika (LIB) | Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville | |
| Delaney, Bob (LIB) | Mississauga–Streetsville | |
| Dhillon, Vic (LIB) | Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest | |
| Dickson, Joe (LIB) | Ajax–Pickering | |
| DiNovo, Cheri (NDP) | Parkdale–High Park | |
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| Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB) | Oakville | |
| Forster, Cindy (NDP) | Welland | Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu |
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| Jackson, Rod (PC) | Barrie | |
| Jaczek, Helena (LIB) | Oak Ridges–Markham | |
| Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB) | Brampton–Springdale | Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées |
| Jones, Sylvia (PC) | Dufferin–Caledon | Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle |
| Klees, Frank (PC) | Newmarket–Aurora | |
| Kwinter, Monte (LIB) | York Centre / York-Centre | |
| Leal, Jeff (LIB) | Peterborough | |
| Leone, Rob (PC) | Cambridge | |
| Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB) | Brant | Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative |
| MacCharles, Tracy (LIB) | Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est | |
| MacLaren, Jack (PC) | Carleton–Mississippi Mills | |
| MacLeod, Lisa (PC) | Nepean–Carleton | |
| Mangat, Amrit (LIB) | Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud | |
| Mantha, Michael (NDP) | Algoma–Manitoulin | |
| Marchese, Rosario (NDP) | Trinity–Spadina | |
| Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB) | London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord | Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée |
| Mauro, Bill (LIB) | Thunder Bay–Atikokan | |
| McDonnell, Jim (PC) | Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry | |
| McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB) | Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud | Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario |
| McKenna, Jane (PC) | Burlington | |
| McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB) | Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale | Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales |
| McNaughton, Monte (PC) | Lambton–Kent–Middlesex | |
| McNeely, Phil (LIB) | Ottawa–Orléans | |
| Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB) | Ottawa–Vanier | Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones |
| Miller, Norm (PC) | Parry Sound–Muskoka | |
| Miller, Paul (NDP) | Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek | Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--|---|--|
| Milligan, Rob E. (PC) Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB) | Northumberland–Quinte West Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre | Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement |
| Moridi, Reza (LIB) Munro, Julia (PC) | Richmond Hill York–Simcoe | Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB) | Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre | Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités |
| Naqvi, Yasir (LIB) | Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre | |
| Natyshak, Taras (NDP) | Essex | |
| Nicholls, Rick (PC) | Chatham–Kent–Essex | |
| O'Toole, John (PC) | Durham | |
| Oraziotti, David (LIB) | Sault Ste. Marie | |
| Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC) | Oshawa | |
| Pettapiece, Randy (PC) | Perth–Wellington | |
| Piruzza, Teresa (LIB) | Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest | |
| Prue, Michael (NDP) | Beaches–East York | |
| Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB) | Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord | |
| Sandals, Liz (LIB) | Guelph | |
| Schein, Jonah (NDP) | Davenport | |
| Scott, Laurie (PC) | Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock | |
| Sergio, Mario (LIB) | York West / York-Ouest | |
| Shurman, Peter (PC) | Thornhill | |
| Singh, Jagmeet (NDP) | Bramalea–Gore–Malton | |
| Smith, Todd (PC) | Prince Edward–Hastings | |
| Sorbara, Greg (LIB) | Vaughan | |
| Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB) | Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud | Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration |
| Tabuns, Peter (NDP) | Toronto–Danforth | |
| Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB) | Mississauga–Erindale | Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux |
| Taylor, Monique (NDP) | Hamilton Mountain | |
| Thompson, Lisa M. (PC) | Huron–Bruce | |
| Vanthof, John (NDP) | Timiskaming–Cochrane | |
| Walker, Bill (PC) | Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound | |
| Wilson, Jim (PC) | Simcoe–Grey | Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle |
| Witmer, Elizabeth (PC) | Kitchener–Waterloo | |
| Wong, Soo (LIB) | Scarborough–Agincourt | |
| Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB) | Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest | Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement |
| Yakabuski, John (PC) | Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke | |
| Yurek, Jeff (PC) | Elgin–Middlesex–London | |
| Zimmer, David (LIB) | Willowdale | |

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Grant Crack, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Michael Harris
Rob Leone, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Bob Delaney
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Teresa Piruzza
Bob Delaney, Victor Fedeli
Cindy Forster, Monte McNaughton
Yasir Naqvi, Teresa Piruzza
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: David Oraziotti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: David Zimmer
Sarah Campbell, Michael Coteau
Joe Dickson, Rosario Marchese
David Oraziotti, Laurie Scott
Todd Smith, Jeff Yurek
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: Bill Mauro
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Donna H. Cansfield, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Jim McDonell
Phil McNeely, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Shafiq Qaadri
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
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
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
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