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of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
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Wednesday 25 April 2012

Mercredi 25 avril 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Wednesday 25 April 2012

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mercredi 25 avril 2012

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ACCEPTING SCHOOLS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 POUR
DES ÉCOLES TOLÉRANTES

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 24, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

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

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm pleased to resume debate on this important topic. As I said yesterday, many parents and students have contacted my office on this important issue, and I'm glad to leave my voice in this debate again today.

In fact, people outside the partisan fray really expect us to work together. Recently the Waterloo Region Record said that "government would be wise to look at Bill 14 with the thought of incorporating some of her suggestions"—"her" being the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, Elizabeth Witmer. "That's because Bill 14 offers a much clearer, much more comprehensive approach to deal with bullying."

I'd like to highlight some of the key provisions that address bullying in our bill, Bill 14. Bill 14 has an extensive component dealing with cyberbullying, something that obviously, with the Internet today, is becoming more prevalent, and we obviously need to address the cyberbullying aspect. Our bill would require the ministry to issue a yearly report on the number and severity of bullying incidents that occurred in the previous year and what steps the ministry has taken at further prevention. Our bill includes age-appropriate anti-bullying education in the provincial curriculum beginning in kindergarten, in fact, and continuing through elementary and secondary schools.

The PC bill, Bill 14, puts student safety first by mandating the Ministry of Education to establish a model bullying prevention plan that serves as the basis for school board prevention plans across our province. Bill

14 clearly stipulates that school boards are required to ensure that bullying is addressed effectively. The PC alternative requires bullying plans to be publicized and available to students in their agenda, online and throughout the school. It also requires take-home materials for parents and the posting of the plan on the school and board websites.

Our bill mandates that school boards provide remedial programs offered by social workers and psychologists for bullies. Our bill would require school boards to provide training and professional development opportunities for teachers on the issue of bullying. Our bill requires boards to offer voluntary programming for victims of bullying. Our PC Bill 14 formalizes a process for investigations to finally provide the accountability parents and students have demanded recently through the court system.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to bullying, all members of this House agree that strong action is long overdue. Unfortunately, the Minister of Education seems to be stuck in a time warp, a pre-election Liberal utopia where this government can ignore members of the opposition and steamroll over all of us on this side of the House. Thankfully, Ontarians, those days are over. This minority Parliament means that we need to work together to put forward the best possible legislation to protect our children. It means that when the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario supports major elements of our Bill 14, the bill introduced by the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, the Liberals and the government need to take notice on that side. Still, the Liberals refuse to compromise, and actually moved forward unilaterally to end weeks of discussions on merging Bills 13 and 14.

Unlike the McGuinty government, we believe in tackling bullying head-on. That's why our bill, Bill 14, addresses four critical areas: reporting and investigating of bullying; accountability of school officials and boards to the ministry; education/public awareness to prevent bullying; and remedial education for bullies to teach them that bullying is unacceptable.

While preparing to speak on this bill, I had the opportunity to read the words of a bullied student from York region, which I'd like to share with you today:

"For three long years, I waited for an adult to step up to the plate. You know, the people my parents taught me would help. No help came, and I was victimized for three long years. I almost became a statistic. I wanted to take my life. No one cared about my life and what I was experiencing, so why should I? It's time to hold those accountable for the well-being of our youth. I no longer trust adults. Why should I?"

Today we have the opportunity to step up to the plate. We have the opportunity to put aside partisan politics, to put Ontario children and youth first. I encourage the Minister of Education, who's here today, to return to the table and work with the opposition. We have the majority in this Legislature to create and pass a strong bill that is supported by parents and stakeholders and, most importantly, Speaker, for our youth today who, like the young gentleman in York, have experienced such dramatic bullying in their schools. I thank you for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Davenport.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'll just take a couple of minutes here to restate our absolute commitment to passing this bill and sending it to committee, and the fact that this Legislature has to get together and take both the Conservative bill and Liberal bill, take the best parts of them. Let's get it done. This is the most ridiculous thing I've seen here, in terms of partisanship. Let's move this forward. The only thing—and I've said it before as I've stood and spoken on this debate—is that we need to put resources to the anti-bullying curriculum as well. So just speaking about anti-bullying is one thing; putting real dollars behind it, putting resources in place for teachers to support both the victims of bullying and the folks who are involved in bullying, is the most important thing of all. But let's put this aside. Let's move forward. The government has my support on this and the support of our party to move this forward to committee. I hope that the opposition party will also move forward with this. I will sit down. Thank you, sir.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Mississauga-Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I say to my colleagues in the PC Party, if they really want to move forward on this, let's let debate collapse. Let's get it into committee. Let's get it into committee today.

Seven times, representing 12 hours and 55 minutes of delay, the PC Party has just rung the bells needlessly on this bill. There's no cause for it at all. The Minister of Education met with the member for Kitchener-Waterloo on February 23. They were able to agree that many elements could be included in both Bills 13 and 14. The Minister of Education provided the member for Kitchener-Waterloo with a list of elements of her bill to be included in the Accepting Schools Act as far back as February 27. Why are we standing here talking about this? Let debate collapse; let's get it into committee.

0910

The minister wrote to the MPP for Kitchener-Waterloo on March 28. The staff met on March 20. The Minister of Education again wrote to the MPP for Kitchener-Waterloo on April 11, informing her that more than half of her bill could simply be included in the Accepting Schools Act. And on April 18, the minister gave the member for Kitchener-Waterloo the proposed amendments that included more than half of her bill in legislative language.

There's no more need to stand here and ring bells. There's no more need to stand here and posture. What's

needed now is to let this debate collapse and get this bill into committee where both of them can be combined so that both bills can be enacted in time to be in force for the next school year.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the opportunity to rise and to congratulate my colleague from Kitchener-Conestoga for taking a stand in this House today to talk about something that has been on everyone's mind, and that is anti-bullying legislation in the province of Ontario.

I congratulate all members of the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus who have done, unlike what most other members here have done which is actually take a stand and bring stories from their communities to share in this chamber. When we do that, the most disrespectful part of this is that they want to shut down debate. We have 37 members of our caucus. That's 16 more members than what we had at this time last year. We know in our caucus that people feel that they would like to add their position on this legislation. It is their right to bring their views to this assembly on a matter of such great importance. What I find is shocking is something that this Liberal government has done for the six years that I have been here and the three mandates that I've been here, which is shut down public debate on issues of great importance. Yet they haven't put forward a time allocation motion, which I suspect will be forthcoming.

That said, I will say this. Yesterday I did attend a social policy meeting. The gavel never did hit the table to start that meeting because the government used a procedural power play to block Bill 14, the only anti-bullying legislation that has passed second reading, from being discussed at committee. We know, having spoken with parents from across Ontario, that they support wholeheartedly the measures in Bill 14. If the Liberal Party was so focused on getting to work, they'd get to work at committee, support Bill 14 and put their amendments through at that stage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I thank our critic and the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, who I believe spoke compassionately and I believe effectively with respect to Bill 13.

Now, I really think that our critic, Ms. MacLeod, just now said the procedures on both sides of the House aren't being helpful. We felt we had an agreement initially that Mrs. Witmer's Bill 14 would go to committee along with Bill 13 and that there was a consensus that the two bills would be brought together and we could work together to make sure that, in respect to students and protecting their safety—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Speaker has noticed about five sidebars. I'm trying to listen and I can't hear and I'm right here, so we'll keep it down. If you have any disturbing discussions you want to attain, go outside. Thank you.

Go ahead.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you for that kind interruption, Speaker. If you could put more time back on the clock, I could make my point more convincingly.

I think really the issue here is that, of the two bills, 13 and 14, Bill 14 is a more comprehensive bill. It has clear rules and definitions that are missing in 13 and we believe quite strongly that, working together, we can have a better piece of legislation that protects children from bullying. All of us have agreed at the start here that we are opposed to any form of bullying. Let's not confuse this with other positions that have been stated here.

I think that the member from Kitchener–Conestoga made a very good reference about the young child being bullied for three long years. It's about time we showed some respect for students and got this to committee, worked together so we have a bill ready for September.

Work with us. Our leader, Tim Hudak, has shown more compassion on this, I put to you, than the government side. You've tried to bully us into submission. That's what's happening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener–Conestoga has two minutes.

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank those that provided comments on my first opportunity to speak to this important bill: the member from Davenport; the member from Mississauga–Streetsville; obviously our critic, the member from Nepean–Carleton; as well as the member from Durham.

In fact, the member from Durham just raised an important aspect of my comments, and that was from the young boy from York who was bullied for three years. As you are probably well aware, I recently had a new son, Murphy, who was born about nine weeks ago. And do you know what? When I look at him and read that story, I hope that stories like that don't affect young Murphy when he gets older.

You know, last night after I made my initial remarks, I took them home and had a bit of a glance again at them. A couple of things that really stood out that I find shocking: in fact, bullying occurs every seven minutes in the playground in our schools throughout Ontario, every 25 minutes actually in the classroom; half of all Canadian adults, when asked, said that as a teenager they were bullied; 71% of students have identified bullying as an on-going program.

I'd like to read an article by a father, Allan Hubley, who has been mentioned many times in this House, who was quoted recently as saying, "Every MPP needs to rise to the challenge to protect all of the children and get this bill passed. It's important that each measure that they add into this bill helps the children, helps the kids. It's just as important that people stay engaged in this discussion." So I'll echo the comments that the member from Durham just recently made and offer the government the opportunity to make this motion, in fact, to get this bill—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay, this is my last comment on this. If the member from Nepean–Carleton—sorry; if the members want to discuss this

across the floor, while your person is speaking, I would suggest you cut it down. Otherwise you might want to go outside and you can make all the noise you want. That's the last warning, folks. You're finished? Thank you.

Mr. Michael Harris: I still have 15 seconds.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, I didn't stop the clock. Your people were interrupting you, so you might want to blame them.

Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I just wanted to start off by saying that the debate and discussion around this issue has been an exceptionally moving experience. It has really underscored the fact that underneath all of the armour and arguments we are flesh and blood, and it reminded me that those of us who are privileged to come together and work in this space are most persuasive when they speak from the heart and the personal experience. Remarks from the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities were very touching and enlightening, for example. The comments from the member from Scarborough–Agincourt also brought this issue home, from a different but no less touching perspective.

And of course, from our own caucus, I have been bowled over by the passion and perception of my Conservative colleagues. Two in particular stand out: the member from Nepean–Carleton, who spoke eloquently about the issue of bullying and the wrenching ways it has impacted the youth and families of her riding; and especially the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, whose dedication to this very important cause is inspiring in its depths of commitment. As a former teacher and education critic and a former Minister of Education, she brings a remarkable scope of experience to this very important issue.

This issue is something that has unfortunately become a timely and tragic concern for families and communities across this great province. As a mother of five children, bullying resonates with me on a core level. I feel it in my bones and in my heart, because I have gone through a number of episodes with my son. Bullying has driven me to pull him out of the school because things were just getting too far out of hand. It had gone beyond the ability of school administrators to intervene. My youngest, a teenager who is becoming more and more grown up every day, has in the past been persecuted for a vision problem he was born with. The problem was becoming out of hand. He had been beaten up so many times that we pulled him out of the unsafe environment. But even as I did that, I took him aside and said to him, "Son, I'm going to take you out and take you to another school. But ultimately you're going to have to learn the tools to deal with people who treat you the way they do." I didn't want others to define who he is. I did not want him to cement his identity as a victim, but as someone who had control over his own destiny.

0920

One evening when we were all home sitting together after dinner as a family and talking about this and that, eventually we got around to shoptalk, and we started

talking about some of the debates we've had here in this space and some of the legislation before us. Sooner or later, we got talking about Bill 13 and Bill 14, and what it came around to was an idea that has been expressed here on more than one occasion, and certainly an idea my son has voiced, which is that we are all different—uniquely gifted, uniquely flawed—and that discrimination doesn't play favourites.

It seems contradictory to want to advance the cause of any one group as being more. We are all God's children. When my son sits there and says to me, "Mom, why are you just talking about one thing when we're all discriminated against? That's discrimination, when all of us feel the way we feel."

Watching my son getting up every morning and going to school, I honestly can't fathom how he could do that under a cloud of anxiety and fear. I think about tragic cases that made headlines last year, like that of Mitchell Wilson, who took his own life rather than return to the school where he was bullied relentlessly.

Our communities need to be accepting of everyone, places where all children and youth can grow and learn in an inclusive environment. This is something we are all responsible for. It falls to each of us—teachers, parents, peers, the whole community—to move forward together in a way that allows all students to feel safe, included and welcome in this province's communities, not just in their schools. To varying degrees, we can all own the tragic failures of the system as it stands, and we must all do our part to create a safe environment for children, particularly in school.

Encouraging students to recognize and report bullying will reduce bullying and similar bad behaviour in their school.

Adults in the student's life, whether at home or at school, must become fully aware of the extent of the bullying and victimization problems in the school. Empathy and intervention on the part of adults can lead to the kind of positive outcome that children and young people, especially those suffering bullying, feel powerless to make.

Parents also need to take responsibility for their own actions. The way parents behave around their children can sculpt their values and behaviours for years to come. It can also have a profound impact on the moral intelligence of those children. Kids see things very clearly, and they can carry the lessons of childhood for a lifetime. It is important that we raise them well.

If we truly want to make a difference, we must hold ourselves to a higher level. At the end of the day, I clearly want everybody to be accepted. I want all children and youth to be free to succeed in a safe, secure and positive environment. I want everybody to feel that they're okay, and not be in a situation where they can't get out of bed.

They feel that they need to be respected, loved and cared for. Every last one of us deserves that, Speaker. It comes down to tolerance, which is something at the heart of a civil society. That's how we like to think of ourselves as a society and as a country.

It is unrealistic to expect kids to sort out or alter the dynamics of bullying by themselves. It is equally unrealistic to saddle schools with the bulk of the burden for promoting anti-bullying messaging and measures. Even so, schools are an important beachhead in the battle against bullying.

On this front, although we are considering two like-minded bills that were introduced back to back, I would suggest that Bill 14 is the stronger of the two. It addresses four critical areas in current provincial laws and policies as they pertain to school safety. Those are reporting and investigating, accountability, awareness, and remedial programs.

This, to me, is the crucial difference between Bill 13 and Bill 14. Bill 13 asks every school board to use anonymous surveys to collect information on bullying from its students at least once every two years—full stop. Bill 14, meanwhile, is very clear about its expectations when it comes to reporting, transparency and accountability. It spells out the responsibilities of principals to report on bullying incidents at least once a year, or more frequently if the school board requires. These reports must include the number of reports on acts of bullying received during the school year; the number of those cases in which the principal, after investigation, believes that bullying has occurred; and the number of those cases in which law enforcement officials were brought into the picture. That information goes up a chain of command to the minister, and from there into an annual report on the minister's progress on anti-bullying.

Moreover, Bill 14 also requires that the board establish disciplinary action for persons who have falsely accused others of bullying. Bill 13 describes no such mechanism. Bill 14 advances the cause of anti-bullying in this province closer to ensuring that our schools and communities are given much-needed tools to eliminate bullying.

When we think of bullying, we tend to think first of the schoolyard, of incidents between children and youth, of suggested and explicit threats. But we have also recognized that bullying takes place across the entire spectrum of our lives on the most basic level. As Bill 13 notes, bullying behaviour occurs in cases "where there is a real or perceived power imbalance."

But while Bill 13 does mention cyberbullying, it fails to do so with the level of detail that Bill 14 does. This issue is one that a lot of families have been dealing with in recent years, and it's one that hits home for me, since one of my daughters, a sweet and kind girl, was a target of vicious cyberbullying at her school. Cyberbullying leaves real scars. It is a growing concern. With youth being so wired into the Internet, it opens the floodgates to 24/7 bullying, something we've never had to contend with until recently. We need to lock horns with that issue.

On those critical counts, I feel that Bill 13 falls short of Bill 14. But however this process plays out, I am confident that we can take what we have learned along the way and put it into action, creating robust anti-bullying legislation for our children. Anti-bullying legislation can

make room for difference and usher in hope, but nobody can do this alone. We should join together in the interests of our children and work. Thank you so much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: You know, there's no denying that there are goods and bads in both of these bills—and I shouldn't say "bads"; that's using the wrong term. But there's goods in both of them, and we should be moving them forward.

I try and always look at the best in everybody in this room, and I choose—I choose—to believe that we all need to do the right thing and we all can do the right thing, and that's ultimately what we want to do with both of these bills. So let's get them to where we need to get them in order to address what we need.

I just wanted to give you a little introduction. I've introduced Candice in the past, but I want to introduce you to another fine young girl from Algoma-Manitoulin. Her name is Tamara Tait. I want to tell you a little bit of a story about her. This is a young girl who took an initiative upon herself to highlight her personal battle with youth depression and how her safe zone, which normally with kids is always in your home, wasn't, for her. Her safe zone was in the school, where there was a guidance counsellor who actually recognized some of the problems and the issues that she was having. Her safe zone was sitting down with her and having those discussions. Now, if that guidance counsellor did not pay attention or have the tools in order to recognize the problems that this little girl was going through, she may have been lost—and that would have been a very, very big loss.

So this young girl—I supported her when she went into the regional public speaking competition in Sault Ste. Marie. She asked me to go support her. I wholeheartedly went there and sat down and listened to her great speech and her personal battle with youth suicide. Now, she was lucky—we are lucky to have her still with us today, and I'm going to be working with this young girl. But the final question she asked me a couple of weeks ago—she wants to have my opinion in regard to a paper that she's doing, and this is her question, and I hope you guys all try and maybe look at it—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. I'm sorry; time's up. Questions and comments? The member from Ottawa Centre.

0930

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to respond to the member from Burlington.

This is a very important piece of legislation. This is a very important issue for this Legislature. I keep hearing all members agreeing with this. Most importantly, I'm hearing from students, from kids in my community in Ottawa, about this issue and the need to expedite the passage of Bill 13 as quickly as possible.

I want to read a couple of statements that I have received, and I have received hundreds, Speaker. Veronica wrote to me, "I want Bill 13 to happen because every-

one is born as the person they are. It is not a choice. People should be able to be themselves and love who they want. I am disgusted at people allowing people to get bullied to the point of suicide. This needs to stop now. I'm a straight girl who loves people for who they are." These are students, Speaker.

Ruth wrote, "I support Bill 13 because no one deserves to be pushed, beaten, spit on, called names, shunned, segregated or bullied for any reason. We can't be judged for race. We can't be judged for religion. Why should we be allowed to be judged based on sexuality? Please help change this."

Speaker, students out there in my community in Ottawa just don't get what the big fuss is here, why our bells are ringing. They ask me this question all the time. What is this delay? Why are we wasting 12 hours and 55 minutes of precious time in this Legislature? Why are we not just moving ahead with this bill now? Let's bring Bill 13 and Bill 14 together so that we can create strong anti-bullying legislation in the province of Ontario and be a leader in the country.

This is a great opportunity for us to demonstrate to young people how noble this profession is, how public service is the epitome of helping our communities. By passing this bill, by making sure that we get Bill 13 to committee so that we can work on Bill 13 and Bill 14 together, we can help students like Ruth and Veronica in my community in Ottawa.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank my colleague from Burlington for her views on the debate before the Legislature today on Bill 13, and also her views on Bill 14.

Right now, Bill 14 has already passed second reading. It's before committee. The government that talks about obstruction, and how they are opposed to obstruction, is the very group of people obstructing the passage of Bill 14 and its work through committee right now. They talk out of both sides of their mouths when it comes to the issue of bullying.

I had the opportunity during the break week to visit St. Mary's Catholic school in Deep River for an anti-bullying day. I was pleased to meet with them, address them, participate in some of their program. Clearly, one of the things that I can see there is that they're not interested in the political games that the government is playing. They're interested in doing something to combat bullying.

When you look at the two bills, and you look at the meat and the teeth that are in Bill 14, that was introduced in this House by my colleague from Kitchener-Waterloo, Ms. Witmer, and has passed second reading, it is clear that that is the bill that will actually do something to combat bullying. It's not a politicized bill that is trying to divide people based on one issue. People are bullied for a variety of reasons, and no one reason for bullying has more gravity than any other.

The one thing that is absolutely certain, Speaker, is that bullying is wrong, regardless of who the bully is and

who is being bullied. If these people on the other side would get that, they would be working harder to pass Bill 14 and move ahead with Liz Witmer's bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Algoma-Manitoulin for the second time.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and with your indulgence, I'll be splitting my time with my friend from Trinity-Spadina—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sorry, I just—

Mr. Michael Mantha: I know this is out of order—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sorry. Member, please sit down. You're not allowed to do twice, I've just been informed.

The member from Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I just want to say that New Democrats support Bill 14, which is the Conservative bill, and New Democrats support Bill 13, which is the Liberal bill, and we think this conflict can be solved. What we clearly have here is not a failure to communicate. We have two bills that each bring something that makes anti-bullying a much better thing in this province, and I'm happy to say that we New Democrats are happy to mediate these differences between Liberals and Conservatives.

We are not far off. I mean, New Democrats support much of what is in Bill 13 and support much of what is in Bill 14. We just have to problem-solve here. I know it's difficult in politics, and when someone says, "There are no politics in what we're doing but there's politics in what you're doing," it's hard to trust, right? There are politics in everything we do and say, all of the time. And what New Democrats are trying to say is that there is something good in both bills. It's not that one has more meat than the other, and that's why we should support the one with the better red meat. I'm not sure that's the way we should approach these issues. I believe we can solve this and we can do this well.

Now, my friend asked me to read something. Do you want me to read the whole thing?

Mr. Michael Mantha: No, just the statement from—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Just the quotation?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Yes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: "Most people die, not the music still inside them," is the quote you wanted me to finish off with, and I think it's a good quote to finish off with. Merci.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Burlington has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you so much, Speaker. I'd just like to say this today: that it is a fundamental contradiction when we're saying we're all for everybody but we're more for somebody else.

I'm standing here today myself because, at the end of the day, when I listened to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, he echoed absolutely everything that I've heard from my son, and I was touched when he spoke. I actually spoke right after he had gotten up and spoken himself, because life is about—I'm with my son,

with my husband, and we're with him every day. The children who don't have the opportunity to have parents that love them and care for them—but what I'm trying to say is, when I walked even up to the school with my son and they're calling him "Bubbles" and they're tripping him, as a parent that's standing there, how does he get out of bed? I think to myself that I adore this child, but he has had this adversity his whole life with his vision, and yet he gets up every day. There are kids that can't get up, but every day he gets up, and he walks out. I said, "Mac, let me say something." And he says, "Mom, please don't. It makes it 10 times worse." And he comes home, and his shoulder is bruised, or he's called "Bubbles" every day of his life. I don't know how he gets out of bed. I honestly don't.

But at some point we have to stop and realize it's for everybody, and my problem with all of this is that it is a fundamental contradiction. My son or any other child being bullied feels exactly like anybody else does, and you can't say that one person feels more than the other person. You can't possibly say that, so you can't segregate separate people. It's discrimination. You're saying you're for everybody but you're more for somebody else, and there is absolutely no way that I'm going to stand and actually have anything to do with that, because everybody is God's children, and every child deserves to be not bullied.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a pleasure to stand before my colleagues in the House today to speak to Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act.

First I'd like to talk a little bit about what bullying is and why implementing legislation to keep our children safe in our schools is so important. The Red Cross defines bullying as a method of "misusing power to degrade, humiliate or hurt" somebody. "Bullying is cruel, hurtful behaviour that is not based on discrimination."

A related concept, harassment, is "discrimination that involves characteristics protected by Canada's Human Rights Act," so things like "ethnicity, religion, age, sex, family status, disability and sexual orientation."

0940

My colleague Mrs. Witmer has also introduced anti-bullying legislation, as we are all aware; more on that later. For now, I'll read a definition of bullying in the Education Act with the proposed amendments by Mrs. Witmer:

"bullying' means the severe or repeated use by one or more pupils of a written, verbal, electronic or other form of expression, a physical act or gesture or any combination of them if it is directed at another pupil and if it has the effect of or is reasonably intended to have the effect of,

"(a) causing physical or emotional harm to the other pupil or damage to the other pupil's property,

"(b) placing the pupil in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or damage to his or her property,

"(c) creating a hostile environment at school for the other pupil,

“(d) infringing on the legal rights of the other pupil at school, or

“(e) materially and substantially disrupting the education process or the orderly operation of a school;

“(‘intimidation’)”.

Ms. Witmer has proposed an amendment to update the definition by including cyberbullying. This can be:

“(a) creating a Web page or a blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person;

“(b) impersonating another person as the author of posted content or messages; and

“(c) communicating materials to more than one person or posting material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons.”

The fact that a child may be subject to any type of bullying or harassment is totally unacceptable. According to dosomething.org, 160,000 kids stay at home for the express purpose of avoiding bullying every single day. I can say that my own children have been subject to this, just by virtue of them being what are called “gingers”—my kids are both redheads—and there’s a day actually set aside to abuse kids with red hair. It’s kind of scary as a parent when you face that down, when you have two that have red hair.

For these reasons, what we do here today—to debate legislation that addresses bullying and protects our children for any and every reason they may be targeted—is of the utmost importance. School must be a place where they can feel safe, learn and ultimately become better people. The thought of them being in an environment where their peers are being broken due to bullying breaks my heart, and it breaks my heart that it happens in any school board for any reason. There’s still a lot of work to be done in our schools to ensure children can feel safe at their school, regardless of whatever legislation we pass. That’s a fact. You can’t legislate everything. It’s certainly a great start, though. For this reason, we need strong, thorough, well-researched anti-bullying legislation that protects every child—full stop—from degrading treatment of any kind at all.

We need to ensure that we create and foster inclusive anti-oppressive environments in our schools. Every child has the right to education and shouldn’t have to feel as though they must stay at home from school to avoid bullying or, worse, make the decision to take their life like young Mr. Hubley did.

Bullying is not a gender, size, sexual orientation or ethnicity issue, it’s an everyone issue. This means everyone. Bullying has a detrimental effect on the victim, on the bully, on their friends, on their family, on the school and on the greater community at large, and on our dignity as human beings and our dignity as active citizens in our own community. All kinds of kids, no matter what, need to be protected—full stop, period.

I’d like to take a minute to discuss what has been happening in this House with the two anti-bullying bills up for debate to stress that bullying legislation is not a political issue, it’s not a partisan issue, it’s not a campaign platform. It’s our job. Protecting our children is our

job. Protecting them from harassment, intolerance, intimidation and violence, that is our job. That is what we are hired to do by the constituents we represent here. Anything less and we are failing our children and we are failing our communities.

My colleague Ms. Witmer saw a need and she took action. She started two years ago to do her research in consulting with parents, students and educators to put together a comprehensive bill to better manage bullying and protect our children in our schools.

Bullying affects society in two detrimental ways: through the victim and through the perpetrator. To quote the bill itself, for the victim, “Bullying can leave a harmful and long-lasting mark on its victims,” including “painful emotional and mental scarring and a lifelong struggle with self-esteem. Bullying can therefore impair the ability of a victim to contribute meaningfully to society and to function normally in the victim’s family environment.

“Bullies suffer as well,” especially in the long term. Often, bullying may indicate “deeper psychological and emotional problems. Children who bully more frequently experience psychological problems later in life”—and often become the victims of bullying themselves because of the very bullying they exercised earlier in their life—“such as aggressive tendencies and occasional symptoms of depression” or even learning disabilities.

My colleague Ms. Witmer saw not only the short-term detriment to our children’s immediate safety in our schools but also the long-term effects on our society. Her bill reflects this deep level of understanding and comprehensively protects every child now and into our future.

I most highly appreciate that our colleagues on the other side saw our two years of work here and were inspired to develop their own ad hoc version of an anti-bullying legislation, Bill 13, which we debate today. It was the introduction of Bill 14 that spurred the pre-emptive action with the introduction of their own version of the anti-bullying legislation, Bill 13, which was quickly mocked up and put up for debate.

It’s disappointing to see the political process being used to play games of catch-up instead of collaborating to achieve a common goal, the protection of our children, and that is where I feel our children may be failed. This is why I’m going to ask our Liberal friends to take both bills to committee so their best aspects can be merged. I know that we have heard this from my colleagues previously. However, the response has been a shameful disappointment, with the government stonewalling and toeing their lines. Why, of all issues, should the government use our children for their political agenda, especially when so much time and care was taken to develop Bill 14? No party has a monopoly on compassion for kids. Many of us have our own kids. All of us were kids once, and we all get it: Bullying has no place in our school environment.

From my point of view, these two bills, Bill 13 and Bill 14, are not in competition; they are complementary. The legislation must include:

- strong accountability measures requiring bullying incidents to be reported and investigated and for those stats to be publicly reported;
- clear definitions of bullying;
- early intervention, with awareness training starting in kindergarten;
- a province-wide ministry model for prevention and school board prevention;
- counselling for victim and perpetrator;
- ongoing professional development;
- parent and community consultation;
- publicizing anti-bullying laws.

These are just some of the things that make up the core of Bill 14 and were derived from two years of research and consulting with many stakeholders. This is why merging the bills would create the most effective and comprehensive legislation. We have an opportunity to supplement that incompleteness with another legislation supported by two years of investment.

Now I would like to share a few commendable efforts in bullying awareness and prevention by my local constituents. One is the I Love Me Club. It's a pleasure to recognize a young constituent, Mackenzie Oliver. Mackenzie is 12 years old and attending elementary school in Barrie. She founded the I Love Me Club, which has taken off and has been receiving wide recognition by a number of groups. It was inspired a few years ago when a few young classmates talked about how fat they thought they were. Mackenzie and her mother realized this wasn't right and created the "I Love Me" T-shirts for distribution among her friends at her birthday party. Mackenzie says, "I think it matters, because people discriminate and tell other people that there's something wrong with them. It's important for people to know they matter in the world and what others say isn't important at all. If you believe them, you're going to end up like they say you are, never knowing if you look all right or if your hair looks all right. It really affects your self-esteem if you let other people tell you you're no good." Mackenzie started this off on her own, and it has spread to many other cities across the country and across the province. She has been recognized by the Lieutenant Governor for her efforts all on her own. She's 12 years old.

Another person is Sharron-Ann Reynolds, in my riding. As a councillor, I met her because her son had been cyberbullied, and that cyberbullying manifested itself into essentially one of the worst beatings I've seen on YouTube—in a parking lot a block away from my own house. When I saw that happening, I contacted Sharron-Ann and tried to work with her. She created her own organization, called I Am a Smart Kid, to fight cyberbullying—all on her own.

Without the efforts of people like this, and without proper legislation, we're not going to ever see cyberbullying ended. It doesn't end with legislation. It ends with awareness and people acting as active citizens—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: It seems to me that whenever I have House duty, this bill is being discussed endlessly.

The first thing that I would ask the people of Ontario to do is to go to the legislative website and read Bill 13 and Bill 14. I would ask them if they can actually see a difference in those two bills. There's very little difference. We're all talking about the same thing: bullying.

It's my understanding that Bill 14 is before the committee right now, the justice and policy committee, or whatever it's called. We want to get Bill 13 before that committee so that those members can discuss those two bills together and maybe take the best of both and come up with a final bill.

0950

Now, you know, everybody is accusing everybody else of playing games with this, and there have been a lot of games played here and probably on all sides of the House—and I'll be the first to admit that. But one of the games that the Tories have been playing with this bill—and that's why it's been debated here so often—is that whenever they talk about this bill, they make the bells ring for half an hour, wasting half an hour of everybody's time. That's why this bill is back here day after day, because every bill has to have so many hours of debate; I've forgotten exactly what it is but something like seven or eight hours of debate, etc.

So let's stop all the foolishness. You're accusing us of playing games; we're accusing you of playing games. I've looked at both bills; I've read both bills. They basically come down to exactly the same thing. Why are you making the bells ring all the time? Why is it that we played along with you guys in order to get Bill 14 before the committee? Play along with us and get Bill 13 there so we can finally come up with a bill that everybody can agree to. We all think it's a major problem in this province, and we can pass a law to stop bullying of whatever kind altogether. That's really what this is all about, and let's all stop playing games.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I want to thank very much our member from Barrie for eloquently demonstrating and sharing personal stories from victims who stand behind a bill, Bill 14, that stands up for the rights and the concerns of victims, because our Bill 14 is so comprehensive. It just doesn't ice over some of the popular issues in schools these days; Bill 14 gets right to the root.

I was taken earlier this morning when a bullied student from York region was referenced, and there's a quote from this particular student: "For three long years, I waited for an adult to step up to the plate." Well, ladies and gentlemen, in this historic House we have an opportunity to work together and demonstrate that we can step up to the plate and work together. We need to see some progressive steps taken in terms of amending Bill 13 so that it is a comprehensive approach to dealing with bullying. You know, there are other examples in our province where people are stepping up to the plate, and it's time we catch up and show that we're serious about this heart-wrenching issue.

I just read in our clippings a day or two ago about the principal of a particular school that actually mediates.

They pull the victim into a room together with the bully, together with at least one of their parents, and collectively as a group they talk through why the bullying happened, how the victim felt and how the bully feels after listening to the victim, and together they come up with a solution. We need to follow that example. There are leaders out in our communities—and again I come back to this quote from our poor student who was bullied in York region. It breaks my heart. We need to listen long and hard. We need to step up to the plate and demonstrate that we know how to work together.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Peterborough

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I listened intently this morning to the member from Barrie talk about Bill 13 and 14. You know, I can only echo some of the comments that have been made by the Attorney General on this particular thing. I know from first-hand experience—my wife, Karan, happens to be a principal in an elementary school in Peterborough, St. Patrick's school in Peterborough, and I've worked with Catholic trustees. I've read the Catholic trustees' guidelines and have a very close relationship with the Kawartha Pine Ridge board, many principals of that board and certainly trustees of that board. The kind of information I was getting back—when we had our week break and an opportunity to chat with all of them—was that we need to get this process going on. They all recognize that there are some very important and very innovative aspects of Bill 14, presented by the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, and indeed Bill 13, which we're discussing this morning, a bill that's been brought forward by the government.

But at the bottom line it's about children. We can continue with bells and whistles and everything else, but we've really forgotten that these two bills are targeted at children, to protect children from bullying—any type of bullying. That's the premise of the government bill, that's the premise of the private member's bill, Bill 14. So it's incumbent upon us all to get a reconciled bill passed by the province of Ontario in order to meet the new school year, which starts in September this year. I think it's the expectation of people across this province that we all come together as quickly as possible to make sure that a bill is put in place. We all have stories, Mr. Speaker. You have stories from your community about bullying from a wide variety of aspects. We really need to get this done. We could continue with bells and everything, but there's an expectation: Ontarians want us to get a solid anti-bullying bill in place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure to address the comments from my colleague from Barrie as well. I appreciate his insight into not only this bill but this issue. We hear comments from across the floor as well on a daily basis chastising this party for its insistence on continuing to debate the bill. What we have on the other side are two-minute snippets from time to time from members of the government giving comments on other people

speaking, but we haven't heard a member of the government debate this bill within the 10- or 20-minute time slots for a couple of weeks now, Speaker.

Our issue is that this is a very important subject. They have completely politicized the subject by, in their opinion, putting more weight on one type of bullying over another type of bullying, absolutely. What we need to do is ensure that there is a belief and a culture within our schools—and indeed, this doesn't end with schools. That's not the only thing that is going on in society.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Attorney General.

Mr. John Yakabuski: We need to ensure that bullying is as socially unacceptable as drinking and driving is today, Mr. Speaker. It starts right at day one, as we rear our children. It progresses into the school system. What children want to know is that everyone is raised with the understanding and the belief that anyone who bullies is wrong, and anyone who is being bullied is the victim of a wrongdoing. That's what needs to be the focus in this Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Barrie has two minutes.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to revisit a story from my initial remarks. There's a young boy from Barrie who was beaten quite badly not far from my house in a school parking lot as a result of cyberbullying. The result of this on this young man was that he was unable to go to school. He didn't feel safe in his own community, and the fact of the matter is that the school was ill-equipped to help him in his situation. Not that there was any lack of will there to do that, but certainly they lacked the knowledge, the training and any sort of legislative infrastructure or mandate to really be able to help this young man. For the past year and a half, he has not been going to school and has only been able to get any of his education in summer school.

The good news is that as a result of that, it spurred on lots of his friends and his family to actually help him out. His mother started a group, as I said: iamasmartkid.org. I'd love it if everyone would check it out and see what it's doing to help stop cyberbullying in every community across the country. It shows that we need more than just talk. We need people to be active citizens, to contribute to their own communities to get a part of this and not be afraid to speak out about bullying, in whatever form and shape it takes, to take the debate out of here and put it into our communities where it really matters, where people are really listening to what's going on and actually take action and get teachers and parents and principals and counsellors and people of all sorts who are talking to people to actually help these kids at a core level, where they are going to be able to understand the consequences of being a bully and how you can take care of yourself after having been bullied. That's what we really need to focus on here, Speaker, and I'd love to see that happen.

1000

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Three minutes ago I was asked to participate in this debate and I'm very pleased to have that opportunity to do so and to speak to second reading of Bill 13, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to bullying and other matters, which was introduced, as we know, by the Minister of Education on November 30.

Interestingly, this debate is also informed by another private member's bill that was brought forward the very same day, as a matter of fact, by my colleague the member for Kitchener–Waterloo. Her Bill 14 is entitled An Act to designate Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week in Schools and to provide for bullying prevention curricula, policies and administrative accountability in schools.

As has been pointed out during the course of this debate, Mr. Speaker, the bill that was brought forward by the minister—I should say the member for Kitchener–Waterloo; she should be the minister. She served for many years in a very distinguished way as the Minister of Health, the Minister of Education, the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Labour. This private member's bill that she brought forward was passed by this House on March 29. So we have a private member's bill that is now before a standing committee in the Legislature and we have a government bill that we are still debating at second reading.

I've been informed by the table, Mr. Speaker, that this debate has now gone on for about 15 hours. The government occasionally chastises the opposition in their impatience and in their arrogance, I would say, when they suggest that opposition parties shouldn't be able to meaningfully debate bills. They suggest at times that we have no right to bring forward the concerns that we hear in our communities, and that shows, unfortunately, a degree of arrogance has begun to characterize this McGuinty Liberal government in this House. We have to point that out.

We also have to point out the fact that, when it comes to bells that are being rung—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. I believe the Attorney General is carrying on his own debate here when the other member is speaking. I'd appreciate it if he would limit it to the odd comment. Thank you.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Thank you, Speaker. When it comes to ringing bells in this House, it's something that opposition parties tend to do when they have an issue with the government. Certainly in my time here in this place, when our party served in government, I recall the Liberal opposition constantly ringing bells when they were displeased with certain issues, of course, as well. So it's not unusual; it's provided for in the standing orders.

In terms of the debate time, the time that is spent when the bells ring, of course, is added to the debate time. So at any point in time the government could conclude the debate by moving a motion that the question now be put or, as they've done in the past in many instances, bring in a time allocation motion, if they really want to end the de-

bate. Of course, we in opposition believe that we should have the opportunity to debate these issues and we continue to assert that right. In fact, it's our constitutional responsibility to bring forward the views and concerns of the people who bring them to our attention, and it is our responsibility to point out the flaws and drawbacks of government legislation. I think it's important that people understand that when the government tries to mislead them about what the opposition parties are doing in response to the government's bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member knows we don't use that particular word. Withdraw that.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I withdraw, unequivocally.

Again, looking at Bill 13 here, we look at the preamble that the government wants us to consider. The preamble of the bill reads as follows:

"The people of Ontario and the Legislative Assembly:

"Believe that education plays a critical role in preparing young people to grow up as productive, contributing and constructive citizens in the diverse society of Ontario"—I don't think anyone would disagree with that;

"Believe that all students should feel safe at school and deserve a positive school climate that is inclusive and accepting, regardless of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status or disability;

"Believe that a healthy, safe and inclusive learning environment where all students feel accepted is a necessary condition for student success;

"Understand that students cannot be expected to reach their full potential in an environment where they feel insecure or intimidated;

"Believe that students need to be equipped with the knowledge, skills, attitude and values to engage the world and others critically, which means developing a critical consciousness that allows them to take action on making their schools and communities more equitable and inclusive for all people, including LGBTTIQ ... people;

"Recognize that a whole-school approach is required, and that everyone—government, educators, school staff, parents, students and the wider community—has a role to play in creating a positive school climate and preventing inappropriate behaviour, such as bullying, sexual assault, gender-based violence and incidents based on homophobia;

"Acknowledge that there is a need for stronger action to create a safe and inclusive environment in all schools, and to support all students, including both students who are impacted by and students who have engaged in inappropriate behaviour, to assist them in developing healthy relationships, making good choices, continuing their learning and achieving success."

We see this preamble. That's the intention of the government, I guess, in terms of wanting to set the stage for the consideration of the clauses. The various clauses are, of course, laid out in the bill. I would compare this to Bill 14. I think it is appropriate to bring Bill 14 into the context of this debate, because it is something that the Premier has publicly acknowledged. He indicated that

there are good points and relevant aspects to the bill that was brought forward by the member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Her preamble is different. It says the following:

“Bullying, particularly in schools, has become an increasing problem in Canada. Victims of bullying have suffered mental anguish, bodily injury and even death at the hands of their tormentors.

“Bullying can leave a harmful and long-lasting mark on its victims. It can leave children with painful emotional and mental scarring and a lifelong struggle with self-esteem. Bullying can therefore impair the ability of a victim to contribute meaningfully to society and to function normally in the victim’s family environment.

“Bullies suffer as well, since bullying may be indicative of deeper psychological and emotional problems. Children who bully more frequently experience psychological problems later in life, such as aggressive tendencies and occasional symptoms of depression. Childhood bullies often display the same types of behaviour as adults and are found to be more likely to harass co-workers or commit spousal, child or senior abuse. Studies have shown that bullies are far more likely to engage in delinquent behaviour. According to Public Safety Canada, students who engage in bullying are 37 per cent more likely than those who do not to commit offences as adults.

“Bullying also creates a poisoned atmosphere among persons who observe the bullying of others. For example, the occurrence of bullying can intimidate observers, lead observers to excuse, accommodate or even encourage the bully or, worst of all, lead them to try bullying themselves. The negative cost of bullying to society at large is therefore considerable.

“A safe and inclusive learning environment in schools is critical for students to achieve academic success. Parents and students must be confident in knowing that the school environment is free from harassment, violence, intolerance and intimidation, all of which are forms of bullying.

“In December 2009, the Occupational Health and Safety Act was amended to add part III.0.1 to provide protective measures against violence and harassment in the workplace. Such harassment can include bullying. It is appropriate to expand that approach to deal with bullying in schools. Bullying in schools is particularly odious since its victims are children who are often less able to defend themselves than adults are.

“It is appropriate to designate a week to express our collective opposition to bullying and to take measures to raise awareness and to prevent bullying in all of its many forms in the school environment.”

Again, I have expressed support for Bill 14 in this Legislature. I did so on the 29th of March. Again I would remind you, Mr. Speaker, that Bill 14 is now before the standing committee and could be considered for further discussion. I gather and I understand that the government would like to see passage of its Bill 13, but again I would say to you that we have an obligation in opposition to

debate these issues and bring forward our concerns. But I think at the appropriate time there will be a conclusion to this debate, and I would expect and anticipate that the government members will dutifully come in and vote for their bill. I’m not sure what the New Democrats will do. They may come in and vote; they may come in and not vote. We’ll see what process will unfold. In all likelihood there will be a resolution, and in all likelihood, I would anticipate that there will be further discussion on this issue.

Again, I would commend the members to consider the fact that Bill 14 is a comprehensive approach to this bill that was undertaken by a distinguished member of this Legislature, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, who served with distinction in cabinet in a number of important, significant responsibilities and has a great deal of expertise in education as a former school board trustee, a former chair of the Waterloo county school board, a member of the Legislature for so many years, a former Minister of Education and former Deputy Premier, and who indeed thoroughly studied this issue for a number of months and brought forward, I think, an excellent bill that, quite frankly, could be passed into law within a few days.

We could turn the argument back on the government and ask them why they’re delaying consideration of Bill 14 in committee. Why is it that they’re not calling Bill 14 to come back into this House to allow for passage today?

We could say that, Mr. Speaker. That would be a similar argument to what the government is saying about us. But I think in the final analysis, I expect that there will be an effort on the part of all sides of the House to ensure that an appropriate approach is taken to this issue to ensure that we take a strong stand against bullying in our schools.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1010 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: It’s my pleasure today to welcome to the Legislature for Sarnia–Lambton Day, from the chamber of commerce and from industry, Mary Prendiville, Marlene Wood, Judy Morris from Lambton College, Spencer Dickson from Lambton College and Cindy Buchanan from Lambton College. We also have here with us today Terry Doyle and Daniel Ricottone from Cogeco TV.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It’s my pleasure to introduce two friends of page Georgia Koumantaros, Lola Bule and Arlo Kempf. Welcome to the chamber.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I’m delighted to introduce members of the Electricity Distributors Association. They are celebrating their 100th anniversary this year. They’re joining us in the House, in the legislative dining

room at 4:30. Let me introduce three members—Jim Keech, Rene Gatien and Teresa Sarkesian—among the many who will be here to welcome us all.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm happy to have my constituency staff down for the day. I'd like to introduce John Fraser, Jena Sasko and Eileen McCoy, who are down for training today. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I would like to introduce Anne Pyke, who is the mother of page Katarina Jakobsh. I'd like to welcome her here today in the Legislature.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to introduce two wonderful guests today, Andrew Sobolewski, who lives in my riding and is a teacher, and Adriana Cupsa, who also lives in my riding and is a lovely community worker and volunteer.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Today I'd like to welcome and introduce to the House Anna MacNeil-Allcock, Dawne Deeley, Yvette Van Veen, Clive Wilkinson, Cathy Prothro, Emily Ugarenko, Lori Gray and Selma Mulvey, who were all here at the Legislature this morning for Bill 16 hearings.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to introduce some young people from my Oakville provincial youth advisory committee: from Abbey Park, Alex McKeen and Shakeeb Ahmed; from Blakelock high school, Rialda Zvrko; from Oakville Trafalgar, Harrison Pope and former page Simon Cook; from Loyola high school, Conor Lewis; from St. Mildred's-Lightbourn school, Keely Mayhard and Georgina Evison; and former page Natalie LaMarche from Iroquois Ridge. Please welcome them to Queen's Park.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted to welcome Ronnie Gavsie, the CEO of the Trillium Gift of Life Network, who's joining us in the gallery today, Speaker.

I do believe we have unanimous consent to wear the Trillium Gift of Life beadonor.ca pin in recognition of national organ tissue donation week.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Unanimous consent has been asked to wear the organ donors' button. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm very pleased to welcome in the members' gallery two leaders of the cycling community in Ontario: firstly, Eleanor McMahan, founder of the Share the Road Cycling Coalition. Eleanor is a long-time advocate for bicycling in Ontario as part of a healthy lifestyle and for the safety of cyclists on Ontario roads; also, Diane Freeman, councillor of the city of Waterloo, who is also one of Ontario's great cycling leaders.

Mr. Frank Klees: Noah Alcantara-Aquino is the page captain today. Let's give him a good round of applause. His family is in the members' gallery: Reynaldo Aquino, his father; Agnes Alcantara-Aquino, his mother; Ava Alcantara-Aquino, his sister; and his grandparents, Joe Aquino and Josie Aquino. Welcome.

M. Taras Natyshak: Ça me donne un grand plaisir d'accueillir les élèves de l'école Sainte-Jeanne-d'Arc de Brampton aujourd'hui ici. Ils ne sont pas ici en ce moment; ils sont dans le trafic, mais on les accueille ici

aujourd'hui et leur enseignante, Chantelle Pizzala, avec qui j'avais la chance d'aller à l'école primaire. Donc, on les accueille ici aujourd'hui.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to introduce a constituent of mine from Brooke Avenue, Howard Brown, who's done great work with the brain injury association of Ontario.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome a friend of mine from Prince Edward-Hastings riding, Jack Alexander, in the west gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery, all the way from Scotland, Dorothy and James Ramage, who are here visiting Carreen Paterson from Hansard services. Welcome to Ontario.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for Premier McGuinty. Ontario is facing a \$30-billion deficit, a \$400-billion debt, and almost 600,000 people are searching for work. This Premier's response to that crisis is a tax-and-spend deal with the NDP, one that will triple the debt and result in more unemployment. Instead of reining in his reckless spending, he reverts to his most natural fall-back position and starts taxing Ontarians.

Will this Premier please explain how his new \$500-million tax will help create private sector jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The official opposition has been absent without leadership again. This morning, we presented to the people of Ontario the impacts of the arrangements that were made with the New Democrats. First of all, I'm pleased to report that, as a result—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister.

Interjection: You're talking to yourself, as usual.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not helpful.

To start with, I'm hearing heckling when the question is getting answered from the opposition side, as I am with the government side, and when the answer is coming, I'm hearing heckling from the government side and from the other side. Let's stop it now.

Minister.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the deficit will come down lower—starting, in fact, last year, and every year through 2017-18. We will reduce the debt by a total of \$3.5 billion. Every nickel of new revenue is going directly to reducing the deficit.

I'm proud that we created 46,000 jobs last month. I'm proud that we've created 300-and-some-odd-thousand jobs since the downturn began in 2009.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Speaker, since it's obvious that the member opposite has no desire to actually answer my

question, I'd like to read a quote from the Premier spoken in this very House just two months ago: "I say again to my honourable colleague that we've also specifically said no to tax increases. We will not be taking money out of an economy we're trying to get going." That's a quote.

It sounds like that within two months the Premier's philosophy on economics did a complete about-face. He's now committed to increasing taxes.

Premier, with unprincipled flip-flops like these being the standard operating procedure for your government, how can you expect any willingness by us or anyone else to negotiate on any issue, now or in the future?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Well, had the member opposite and his leader been at the table, it might have been a very different outcome. They refused to do that.

Since we had an opportunity to dialogue yesterday, there have been some other interesting comments made in various media outlets and so on. Let me just quote this one:

"The downside of the budget exercise is the clear, non-cooperative position taken by Tim Hudak.... [T]hey spent several weeks on the outside, noses pressed to the glass....

"Hudak ... really must get past knee-jerk ideology and take a seat at the table, lest he be completely left behind."

You were left behind. You are absent without leadership. And you know what? Had you come to the table, the outcome might have been very different. I respect the NDP for having the courage to sit down and make this Legislature work.

1040

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: Your budget was fundamentally flawed, and it's small wonder that the PC caucus made the decision to reject it in the first place, outright. Sometimes, Minister, political leadership means saying no to those who just don't get it and to those who are never going to get it. Your government and your budget certainly fall into that category.

If you wanted our support, you should have given us even faint hope that you finally understood the mess that you'd gotten yourself into and that you created for Ontario. Instead, you showed us you still don't get it. How can you pretend to be surprised that we gave you a resounding no?

Premier and Minister, just as a heads-up so that you won't be surprised in the future, as long as you stay on this destructive path of reckless spending, you will always get a no from this party.

Interjections.

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

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, that may give them cold comfort as they are trying to explain their abandoning of their role. But let me tell you how others see it. "Hudak's budget strategy is the most difficult to figure out.... It's left Hudak on the outside looking in on this budget process...." That's the Barrie Examiner.

"The only one who has failed the voters in all of this is Conservative leader Tim Hudak.... He offered no solutions for solving Ontario's economic problems.... Perhaps he should step down." That's the Windsor Star—not exactly a leading voice of liberalism here.

And here are some other interesting comments coming out of the Toronto Star: "'Tim's position has left him out of being any relevant part of the news for weeks,' confided one PC insider." Even your own—

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

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, I asked the Premier to comment on the fact that Alfred Apps, former president of the Liberal Party, had arranged for a meeting with the Minister of Health and Dr. Christopher Mazza. In his briefing note to Dr. Mazza, he was very specific in advising him to downplay the fact that he had met with the Premier.

I asked the Premier, what discussion took place in that meeting? The Premier refused to answer and he deflected once again to the government House leader. This is a serious issue, and I believe the people of this province want to hear directly from the Premier what his involvement is in this scandal.

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm delighted to speak to the question today. I've had an opportunity to find out a bit more about what it is that my honourable colleague was referencing.

On Sunday, October 30, 2005, at a time shortly after we had declared an emergency circumstance in the community of Kashechewan, some of those residents had been evacuated to Sudbury, Ontario, under the leadership of then-emergency commissioner Julian Fantino. Situated at the airport was the emergency medical assistance team. I flew up there on a Sunday to meet with some of the residents. The person who guided me as part of a tour through the emergency medical assistance team tents was one Chris Mazza. That's my only connection with Chris Mazza.

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

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I'm going to ask the Premier to go back to his notes and to his calendar one more time, because that's not what Alfred Apps was referring to. He was referring, and he made specific reference in his notes to Dr. Mazza, that that meeting was at a reception.

I'm going to ask the Premier one more time: Why would he not remember that meeting with Dr. Mazza?

Perhaps his advisers told him to downplay that meeting with Dr. Mazza in the same way.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Durham, come to order.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I've said all that I can with respect to any meeting that I ever had with Chris Mazza. It may be that at some point in time, at some reception or other—I have had the good privilege, fortune, to serve as Premier for some nine years now and I have attended many, many functions. I have had the opportunity to meet with thousands and thousands of people during the course of those years. It has been my honour to do so. It may very well have been that I met with Mr. Mazza at such a reception, but as I move my way through receptions, I meet with thousands of people.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: One would have thought that the Premier would remember meeting someone as infamous as Dr. Mazza. He's not your ordinary citizen, Speaker. After all, this government signed over to Dr. Mazza, for \$1, the entire air ambulance system of the province of Ontario. Is the Premier actually expecting us to believe that he would not have recalled that chance meeting with Dr. Mazza? You see, Speaker, here's what's happening. This is the kind of lack of recollection that we're experiencing from chiefs of staff, from other ministers, every time they come before the committee. That's why we need a select committee of the Legislature.

I'm going to ask the Premier one more time: Will he agree to give us a select committee of the Legislature so that we can get to the—

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

Interjections.

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

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, we've referenced recently the fact that the official opposition has been missing in action, away without leadership, when it comes to lending shape to an ever-stronger budget. But it's worse than that. They're now actually sticking a stick into the spokes of the people's business.

We want to move ahead with a number of important bills that will protect the public interest. The Accepting Schools Act: They want to ring bells rather than stand up for our children in their schools. We want to protect millions of tenants; they want to ring bells rather than stand up for tenants in Ontario. The healthy homes renovation tax credit, which speaks to our shared responsibility to help our parents and grandparents lead healthy lives in their homes: They want to ring bells rather than stand up for the healthy homes renovation tax credit.

It's worth people lending shape to a better budget. They prefer to ring bells on—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. If we had a contest for shouting each other out, I think we'd be worldwide champions.

New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. I would like to know, Speaker: When did the Minister of Health first learn about Ornge plans to purchase their own helicopters?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I will go back and look at my notes. What I can tell you is that I became aware of the problems at Ornge, thanks to the good work of the Auditor General, on October 27 last year. I acted quickly. I acted decisively. We now have completely new leadership at Ornge. I know that some of that new leadership team is actually appearing before committee, so they can inform members of the committee about exactly the changes that are ongoing at Ornge.

I'm proud of the changes we've made at Ornge. I know we're on the right path. I know we've still got more work ahead of us, and I will continue to do that work.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was not the question I asked, but let me try again. The helicopter purchase was pretty central to Ornge's operating plans. Can the minister tell us whether the issue of helicopter purchases was raised with her during a briefing organized by Ornge in 2010, and, if she can remember anything about this, if she would share it with us?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I welcome the member opposite's interest in the operations at Ornge. We have a committee that is currently looking into those operations. The member opposite is at that committee and she is able to ask questions at that committee. I think it's important that members of this Legislature do have the ability to ask those questions, and I'm glad that this process is now under way, Speaker.

I can tell you that when I became aware of issues at Ornge, I acted quickly: new leadership, a new performance agreement, and I've introduced new legislation. That legislation is important when it comes to enhancing oversight and transparency, and I look forward to her support.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Last week, the Liberal Party president, Alfred Apps, testified in committee: "The government was thoroughly, painstakingly and, in all cases, truthfully briefed in advance of Ornge taking any of these actions." The minister seems to tell us that she was not aware of the purchase plan at Ornge that was going to acquire their own air ambulance and completely transform the way medical transportation was going to be done in this province. Was Mr. Apps misleading us last week?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as I say, the committee is doing its work. I was very pleased to attend the committee. In fact, I was asked to attend for, I think, an hour, and I stayed for two and a half—lots of opportunity to ask questions there.

I think we have really taken appropriate steps when it comes to Ornge, and Ornge did take the time to brief ministry officials. They also took the time to brief members of the opposition. Members of both parties opposite were briefed at the same time we were about the plans to develop a new business model at Ornge. In fact, my understanding is that they paid, very handsomely, one Kelly Mitchell to do that work for members of the opposition, Speaker.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is also to the Minister of Health. Not only did Mr. Apps testify with respect to the helicopter purchase; Mr. Apps testified with respect to the corporate structure that was surrounding Ornge. In sworn testimony before the public accounts committee, Alfred Apps said that the “government was ... in all cases, truthfully briefed” in respect of Ornge. How can the minister indicate that she did not know what was going on?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, what I can tell you is that there was a briefing—I did not attend it, but members of my staff and members from the ministry did—where they were informed of the changes to the corporate structure. This is not new, Speaker. We have circulated broadly the letter that accompanied that briefing. We also know members of the opposition were briefed at the very same time.

What I can tell you, Speaker, is that I’m glad the committee is doing its work. My focus is on transforming our health care system. There are people in this province who need to get more home care. I’m making the changes necessary to get more home care. We’re working with our doctors, because we know that doctors want to support better care for the people of this province. A lot of changes are happening in health care that I think are pretty important.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, today the chief of staff of the Ministry of Finance also testified with respect to Ornge. He indicated that he took a 30-minute meeting with Alfred Apps in respect to Ornge. He explained that he had had that 30-minute meeting. How can the government credibly claim that they didn’t know what was going on at Ornge, that they didn’t know about the public and the private structure of the corporations? How can they claim that they didn’t know?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the opposition is trying to confuse two issues. One is changes to the corporate structure. We were all informed of that. The other issues were the issues that were raised by the Auditor General through his audit of Ornge. It was the results of the audit that were extremely troubling—extremely trou-

ling. The Auditor General revealed practices that were entirely irresponsible, which is why we have completely changed the leadership at Ornge.

The work that the people at Ornge do is vitally important. They save lives every day. It’s important that the leadership at Ornge understand that they ought to be there for the people, the patients they serve, not for their own benefit.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: This afternoon, we’re going to hear more testimony from more Ornge insiders, and it’s clear we’re going to hear more of the same. The minister simply doesn’t have a leg to stand on.

This afternoon, the former chair of Ornge, Rainer Beltzner, will be testifying before public accounts. Will the minister claim that she was never told anything, or is she finally prepared to admit that she didn’t do her job properly?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: The member is correct in saying that there will be an opportunity this afternoon for the committee to hear from more witnesses. This committee is a standing committee of the Legislature. The idea of looking into Ornge was set up with support from all sides of the House. There’s a robust list of witnesses who have come forward, including the Minister of Health, who talked about the good work that she has done as minister to address these concerns.

If the honourable member wants to hold committee hearings here on the floor of the House, again, we have many, many questions on this side of the House about briefings and meetings that were held by opposition members, about Mr. Kelly Mitchell, a paid Tory lobbyist, \$400,000—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Another reminder: When we talk, when we give answers, it’s about government policy, and we stay focused on that and the question as well.

New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. Last week, Alfred Apps, the former president of the Liberal Party, stated under oath in public accounts that he never lobbied your government on behalf of Ornge in any way.

This is the same Alfred Apps who retained your former chief of staff and campaign manager, Don Guy, to advise him and to lobby on behalf of Ornge, and it’s the same Alfred Apps who met with the finance minister’s chief of staff to ask that this government, this Liberal government, tout the successes of Ornge.

Our question is very simple: Has your government redefined lobbying?

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

Hon. John Milloy: I think the member opposite will be pleased to know that when these issues about potential lobbying were first raised, the Minister of Health's office directly contacted the Integrity Commissioner and offered to support her review of this matter.

I can also report that the Integrity Commissioner has confirmed for us that the recipients of the email that was in question—the two recipients, Ms. Lowe and Mr. Steeve—did absolutely nothing wrong.

I'd also like to point out that it is my understanding, having watched on television the proceedings, that Mr. Apps has suggested that he would like to return to the committee and be asked further questions. This is where these sorts of questions should be dealt with: at the committee—a chance for people to get into the type of detail that the member raises.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Well, it's going to be interesting. I guess Mr. Apps wants to correct the record. He testified that he hired Don Guy, your former chief of staff and election guru, to advise him on the Ornge file. Something doesn't pass the sniff test, Premier. I suppose when we ask Don Guy to come to committee, he'll also deny that he was engaged in lobbying as well. It's going to be interesting to see what the Integrity Commissioner has to say about that.

Premier, what advice did Don Guy provide Alfred Apps when advising and lobbying the Liberals? And, Premier, more importantly, just how far does this corruption extend into your government?

Hon. John Milloy: This is starting to become—starting to become? Mr. Speaker, this is outrageous. We are talking about citizens of Ontario who have agreed to go—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Order. Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, we're talking about private citizens who have agreed to appear in front of the public accounts committee, and that member is standing up and saying they are guilty until proven innocent. The fact of the matter is, these individuals have agreed to come forward. They will have a chance to answer questions related to Ornge. And the type of drive-by smear that she is undertaking is beneath her.

1100

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance spent the last two weeks wrongly saying that the proposals put forward by New Democrats would add \$1 billion to the deficit. But like magic, the government found money for child care and other priorities. Today, that same minister said that the fiscal projections are much improved. When will this minister stop playing these games?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I thought we were friends.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Premier says, "I thought we were friends."

Mr. Speaker, I will say this: We did build in contingency in the budget, anticipating that there would be a negotiation, a number of possibilities. This budget did build into the budget of the Ministry of Education additional funding for child care, and we're proud to have put that out. We did build in funding for ODSP. Remember what we said at the time. We wanted to wait for the report that's being handed to the Minister of Community and Social Services. We were pleased to be able to announce that. We also built in money for OW, and I'll remind the member opposite that your caucus didn't ask for that increase. In fact, we were pleased to be able to reach the understanding that we were with the third party; again, unlike the Conservatives—

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

One moment. The Attorney General is not being helpful by engaging in comments while the answer is being given; neither is the response to the Attorney General helpful.

Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This minister changes his numbers more often than most people change their socks. The fact is that this minister's credibility is fading fast. Several economists have suggested that revenue forecasts over the next few years have been intentionally lowballed by this government to justify their reckless cuts. In the months ahead, will we be hearing more surprise good news about these deficit projections from this minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, we will stick to the plan we've outlined, the plan that has been modified as a result of the constructive criticisms and issues put forward by the third party. We also have a number of legislative and statutory requirements on reporting, which we continue to make. I will be presenting additional information on a timely basis. I think the most significant one coming up would be public accounts, likely sometime in August, which—once we have all final information in from last year—will give us a final response with respect to what the deficit was. We do quarterly reports. Because the previous government had left a hidden deficit, we've made a number of changes also to ensure that that kind of hanky-panky with the books can't continue to be played. We should note that accountable, transparent process. We welcome your—

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

It really is difficult to try to get people's attention, first of all, when the noise volume is that high, and second of all, when I stand and somebody keeps talking, it's not appropriate.

New question.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, in November you introduced Bill

13, the Accepting Schools Act; and as we know, the MPP for Kitchener–Waterloo also introduced a private member's bill, Bill 14, on bullying.

Minister, I voted to pass Bill 14 at second reading because I believe that, as an MPP, I have a duty to work across party lines to help kids in our communities. I believe that putting kids first is more important than politics, and that's why I have been very active in my community with young people, and with other members of this House on this important issue, Speaker. The official opposition has said that they believe in working together, too. Given that, will the minister tell this House and young kids in my community why she hasn't passed anti-bullying legislation yet?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Thank you to the member for Ottawa Centre. Let me recognize and commend the member for being such a strong advocate for anti-bullying initiatives in his community. I know that the member from Ottawa Centre never hesitates to work with people of all political parties for the sake of kids.

There have been many times where this Legislature has come together to help kids. Unfortunately, Bill 13 isn't one of those times. I have said publicly and repeatedly that I want to incorporate over half of the PC anti-bullying bill, Bill 14, into the Accepting Schools Act to make it the strongest possible piece of anti-bullying legislation to protect our kids. That's why the Ontario Liberal Party did not play games with the member from Kitchener–Waterloo's bill. We supported it, because we believe in putting aside partisan politics for the sake of the kids. The PC Party has deliberately and continually stalled Bill 13. That's why I'm calling on the opposition again to support Bill 13.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I appreciate the response of the minister. I agree with the minister that politics should not be a factor when the health and well-being of Ontario kids are at stake. I know the minister believes that, too. That's why she has worked so hard with the MPP—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now that's—I seriously cannot hear.

Ask your question.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Speaker. I know the minister believes that, too. That's why she's worked so hard with the MPP from Kitchener–Waterloo. Unfortunately, the official opposition does not agree. The PC Party has repeatedly said that they want to work with us, but those words do not match their actions, because yesterday they again rang the bells for an hour while we could have been working to help kids. The opposition has chosen—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): First of all, that's not appropriate and it will stop. Second of all, I've asked the member to refrain from heckling.

You will direct your question to government policy, please.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Speaker. I just want to highlight the fact that children in my community are concerned that this important bill is not getting passed. I want to ask the minister the steps that she's taking, the efforts she's making to move this legislation forward.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased to speak directly to Bill 13 and the fact that I have provided the opposition with amendments to the Accepting Schools Act, drafted in legislative language, which would include more than one half of the provisions of PC Bill 14.

I did this because I believe that we can only fight bullying in Ontario schools if this House stands together. That's why I'm so disappointed in the choices of the Progressive Conservative Party. The opposition has stalled and delayed and rung the bells each and every day we have debated Bill 13 in this House. The Leader of the Opposition has been absent without leadership. He hasn't even stood in this House and debated—

Interjections.

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

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Minister of Health. Last week, Trevor Harness, former member of the Ministry of Health's air ambulance medical air transport centre, expressly stated, "Attempts were made to warn the minister of this growing crisis," but "they were all ignored by the Ministry of Health...." Since 2008, Mr. Harness made several attempts to reach out to the Ministry of Health regarding management and patient safety at Ornge.

Minister, Ontarians were shocked and appalled to learn about the Liberal connections to the corruption at Ornge. What is more disturbing is the blatant lack of oversight by your government that put patients at risk. A former employee reached out to your office, informed you of patient safety issues and was ignored. Why on earth did you fail in the oversight, which put patients at risk?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: As I said again in previous answers, the committee right now is seized with this issue. They are hearing from a robust list of witnesses. There are other witnesses, I know, who are coming forward and who are going to be looking at the whole Ornge situation. The Minister of Health has had a chance to go in front of the committee and explain the actions that she's taken.

But also, just as importantly, the minister has put forward the Ambulance Amendment Act, Bill 50, which responds to many of the concerns that were raised by the Auditor General and other people in front of Ornge.

1110

My question back to the honourable member is: Will he commit here and now, when it receives the leadoff debate on second reading and goes forward—will he confirm here and now that they will not ring bells and waste time and will allow this important piece of legislation,

which addresses the concerns that he's raising, to proceed to committee?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: As soon as they get a select committee, but this question goes back to the Minister of Health.

You've already admitted to prioritizing your election campaign over your ministerial responsibilities. Ontarians want to know why you decided to ignore red flags for up to three years. Was it because you did not want your Liberal goons to get caught, or did you just not want this issue to come to the surface before the election?

Minister, under your watch, patients' lives were put at risk. Corruption spread rampantly throughout Ornge. Why will you not take this opportunity to do the honourable thing and resign?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, we've just heard it. I hope everyone heard it. The Auditor General has come forward with recommendations which are to address many of the concerns raised by the member, and he has stood here in the House and said that his party will be blocking the implementations of the Auditor General, implementations that will allow the type of oversight and the type of framework which will allow Ornge to operate effectively as it moves forward. I am disgusted that the honourable member would stand here and admit the fact that his party and the opposition will be blocking an important piece of legislation which is about the health care system in this province.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Jonah Schein: This question is for the Premier. Premier, in the budget bill your government has proposed sweeping changes to the Endangered Species Act and to six other environmental protection laws. In doing so, you're evading the public participation provisions that are normally required under the Environmental Bill of Rights. Why is the government preventing full and open debate on these far-reaching changes to this important environmental law?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm very pleased to respond to the question. Of course, the Endangered Species Act continues to be a North American leader in protecting native species. Our government remains very committed to the protection and recovery of species at risk and the sustainable use of our resources—certainly also bringing into consideration our socio-economic means.

Indeed, we are proposing some changes to the Endangered Species Act. This is really to respond to the needs of our stakeholders, the people of Ontario, and, may I say, to the species at risk as well. These proposed changes, on which we are now entering an opportunity to have a consultation with all of our stakeholders, will maintain protection for species. They will provide cer-

tainty for industry, which is certainly something that we've heard a great deal about. They could, indeed, also make government services more efficient. We are very, very keen to move forward with this discussion as we maintain our absolute priority in terms of protecting species at risk.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jonah Schein: No environmental stakeholder would have asked for these changes to be made. The budget bill includes far-reaching changes, such as exemptions for industrial activities from requirements to protect wildlife and natural resources, the delegation of government oversight to unspecified bodies, and the extension or elimination of deadlines for species and parks protection.

Ontario's Environmental Commissioner himself has said that using omnibus legislation like Bill 55 to amend environmental laws obstructs the public's right to participate in environmental decision-making. Why won't the government listen to the commissioner and stop hindering public debate by burying this controversial environmental law within the budget bill?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: May I say, this is the furthest thing from burying it. We are very much looking forward to having significant consultation on this process. May I also say that this is about also achieving a balance. We do speak about that a lot, and I think that's an incredibly important part of that.

We certainly acknowledge that we are proposing to spend some more time preparing our recovery strategies, our government response statements and our habitat relations, regulating species at risk and protection/recovery. We believe those extended guidelines will give us the opportunity to consider which species face the greatest risk, the greatest threat, so that we can respond accordingly.

Again, this is truly about us having an opportunity—now that we've got ourselves past the budget motion yesterday—to enter into significant discussions with all our stakeholders, which includes obviously the Environmental Commissioner, whom we're working with very closely, who in fact also said that he thought our process was one that could work.

WAR OF 1812 BICENTENNIAL

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. As we all know, the War of 1812 bicentennial is fast approaching, and Ontario will have a unique opportunity to showcase its rich heritage while promoting tourism. This historic event will attract not only visitors from this province, but across Canada and the United States. Of course, we're going to want to showcase the best that Ontario has to offer, and this government will need to take steps to welcome local, national and foreign guests and give them the tools needed to experience our unique culture and heritage.

Speaker, through you to the minister, what is this government doing to make it easier to navigate Ontario's many cultural destinations?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I turn to the minister, there's far too much conversation going on, even when it's not heckling. It's very difficult. Would you please pay attention to the questions and answers?

Minister.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you, Speaker, for the question. I want to thank the honourable member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for asking these very, very meaningful questions.

Speaker, the War of 1812 was a big part of our history. It was said it was a war that gave Canada its identity. I recently visited Hamilton's historic Dundurn Castle for the launching of Attractions Ontario's new culture and heritage passport, focusing on the War of 1812 bicentennial, a program which is supported by our government. Speaker, this publication features everything from museums and wineries to coupons that will cut down costs during visits to signature destinations, including the Royal Botanical Gardens and the Stratford Festival.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: It's great to hear that Ontarians, Canadians and foreign visitors will be well-received as a result of this government's initiative. However, the War of 1812 bicentennial is also an occasion to pay tribute to Canadian heroes, requiring the province to work with regional heritage and tourism partners and provide adequate support for ongoing events and initiatives. Speaker, government investment will help Ontarians and visitors commemorate the past, celebrate the present and enjoy a lasting heritage legacy well into the future.

Speaker, through you, can the minister indicate what this government is doing to ensure that the bicentennial receives proper funding and support so that it may be executed successfully?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you, Speaker, again for the question. I want to reassure the member that we are investing over \$32 million in improving and enhancing the War of 1812—Speaker, we have also provided over \$1.7 million to seven regional groups who are planning and developing activities across Ontario. For cultural and heritage projects, we are contributing more than \$1.6 million.

For the Celebrate Ontario 2012-13 program, we are providing over \$400,000 for bicentennial festivals and events throughout the province. We are also supporting initiatives such as multimedia exhibits and educational tools and resources for children in Ontario. Our government looks forward to our very successful War of 1812 bicentennial.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is for the Minister of Health. For several months now, the Minister of Health has pleaded ignorance on the corruption at Ornge. She has provided this House and the public with a long series of excuses and highly suspect explanations on what she knew, when she knew it and how she responded. But,

Speaker, every single one of these lame and pathetic excuses has been refuted.

Alfred Apps, and I quote, said, "The government was thoroughly, painstakingly and, in all cases, truthfully briefed in advance of Ornge taking any of these actions. If the government had" raised even one objection "to anything, I am confident that Ornge would not have proceeded" and perhaps would not become the boondoggle it is.

So I ask the minister, given that you have no credibility and that your excuses have been refuted and that you're responsible for the mess at Ornge, will you do the right thing and resign your position?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, there is a committee of the Legislature which is seized with this matter. The minister has had an opportunity to appear in front of the committee. She was asked for an hour; she went for two and a half hours. She talked about the very strong action that she has taken in terms of new leadership at Ornge, the work that she did in terms of forensic auditing, even calling in the police because there was a serious matter there.

1120

But what's concerning me the most is that the final piece of the puzzle is a very important piece of legislation, Bill 50, which the government is bringing forward. In fact, we've informed the opposition that we want to have second reading leadoff in the next couple of days. This is a bill which encapsulates the very good advice from the Auditor General of Ontario, and the opposition party today has said that they will stand in this House and block that legislation. Mr. Speaker, that is irresponsible—

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

Mr. Bill Walker: Again to the Minister of Health: For several months now, the minister has been engaged in a deliberate campaign to confuse the facts and muddy the waters.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask the member to withdraw that. That's not appropriate.

Mr. Bill Walker: Withdraw. Her misinformation has discredited herself and the Premier.

To recap: The minister claimed red flags were raised before; then she claimed they weren't. She claimed to have fired the board, before she explained that she hadn't. She claims to have acted swiftly, before she said she was too busy campaigning. She claims to have been misled but can't name who misled her. She claims to have been uninformed, but clearly wasn't.

The minister continues to make a mockery of this House and her office. So I ask her again, will you take the responsibility for the corruption and compromised patient safety at Ornge and resign?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Again, if the honourable member wants to hold hearings on the floor of the House, we have all sorts of questions to ask about letters, about briefings, about the role of Mr. Kelly Mitchell, a well-known Progressive Conservative operative who was paid \$400,000—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. John Milloy: But Mr. Speaker, there is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am now going to start identifying individuals, and if I get to the point where I give you a warning, the next one is a naming.

Hon. John Milloy: There is a much more important issue before this House; that is, this afternoon, we are going to have second reading leadoff on Bill 50, a bill which encapsulates the good advice of the Auditor General of Ontario. We have learned this morning that the official opposition is going to block that bill through their childish bell-ringing and other tricks.

Mr. Speaker, this is the final piece of the puzzle in putting Ornge on its feet, and I am disgusted that they will not stand and support us in that bill.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, and it's going to be kind of a repeat from yesterday's question. His answer yesterday to my question about jobs in North Bay was that it's all about divestment, not foreclosure.

Well, let's make it simple. There's a capable workforce in North Bay with a capable shop, and there's a \$109-million contract up for grabs right now that needs MNDM support—not financial, but they need the ability to be able to bid on that contract, and it's unclear right now if actually the interim board and the minister who appointed the board are allowing the shops to bid on that contract.

The question is simple: Are you supporting jobs in Ontario? Will you allow them to bid on that contract, sir?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I think we said when we announced the divestment that it was business as usual. As we move through the divestment process, it's business as usual. Business as usual should infer to the member that the ONTC is still open for business. And so, as we move down that road, I am sure the board that is in place, the commission that is in place, will look at any type of proposal that is good for the taxpayers of the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Business as usual means actively pursuing contracts, not just looking around. That's business as usual. I run a business. The ONTC is a business. It should run as a business, especially the shops. The shops can be and are a profitable business.

Are you going to allow the board and the shops to actively pursue new business, not just look around?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I don't know how many times we have to say this: Divestment is not foreclosure. There is business as usual. The buses are running. The trains are running. The freight is being hauled. Ontario is in operation.

The reality is, there is a new commission in place. The chief administrative officer is still in place. The chair of the board is still in place. It is business as usual.

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Last Friday I attended the launch of the York Region Gift of Life Association. This group was formed because many individuals and families have very serious concerns about the availability of organs and tissue for transplantation here in Ontario. Their loved ones were requiring an organ transplant to save their lives, or they may have received the gift of life themselves. They want care for their loved ones close to where they live and when they need it.

Last June you launched an online organ donor registry in Ontario that gives residents the opportunity to simply go online, with their health card number in hand, to either give their consent or confirm their consent as an organ donor. My constituents would like to know: What kind of impact has the online donor registry had on the number of consenting organ donors there are in the province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I want to thank the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for this very important question. The remarkable story of Ottawa's Helene Campbell has inspired us all, I think, and has demonstrated how important it is that people are registered as organ donors. She alone has brought thousands of new registrations to beadonor.ca.

Over 80% of Ontarians believe that giving consent to donate organs is an important thing to do, but only 21% of us have in fact registered our consent. We know we can do better. We need to do everything we can to increase the number of people who have registered their consent.

Ontarians can now register online through beadonor.ca. It makes it easier for people to register, it takes only three minutes, and it's absolutely the right thing that all Ontarians should be doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: The York Region Gift of Life Association knows that when an individual registers to be an organ donor, they can make a difference. I was pleased to learn that the number of yearly organ transplants in Ontario has increased by 53% since 2003. However, there's more to do in order to maximize organ and tissue donations to increase life-saving transplants. The demand for organ transplantation is increasing due to technological and pharmacological advances, the aging population and the increasing incidence of end-stage organ disease.

Recently, I've taken up a challenge that you issued to see which community can register the most organ donors. I currently have a registration page on Trillium Gift of

Life's website, and I have issued a press release to my community. I look forward to continuing this advocacy.

To the minister: What other initiative does your ministry have to help the work of groups like the York Region Gift of Life Association?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The sad reality is that every three days in Ontario, someone dies waiting for an organ transplant, so we need to do better. The math is simple. Every donation can save up to eight lives, so we need more people to register, to improve the odds for the people who are waiting for that precious organ transplant.

The Gift of 8 Movement is one more way to get the word out and to encourage our friends and our families to register their consent. I've joined the Gift of 8 Movement. I know that many of my colleagues, including the Premier, have joined the Gift of 8 Movement as well. We have a donor registration page. I've set a personal goal of getting 1,000 more people registering, visiting that website.

By working together, by members from all sides of this House joining together, I know we can get more people registered as organ donors.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Premier. It has been revealed that the former president of the Liberal Party, Alfred Apps, lobbied the government on behalf of Ornge to set up meetings to brief the Ministry of Health and others. This was confirmed by the Integrity Commissioner in letters to Mr. Apps. The purpose of these briefings was to inform your government of Ornge's plan to establish new, for-profit business ventures beyond their core mandate. Apps was proposing a resolution on behalf of Ornge to get permission from the government to make final decisions without the government's approval.

Premier, in the real world, when you fail to do your job, you lose your job. Your minister has failed to do her job. Will you finally call a select committee on Ornge and fire the minister?

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

1130

Hon. John Milloy: I've had an opportunity already to address the issue of Mr. Apps and lobbying and put it on the record. At the same time, I think the member has to be aware that there is a committee of the Legislature which is looking into the Ornge situation, that the Minister of Health went in front of and spoke about the changes that she's taken due to what is, quite frankly, unacceptable action there at Ornge. We have a new, stronger performance agreement, which gives the government new powers to oversee financial affairs. She's replaced the board and senior leadership. She, in fact, unfortunately, had to call in the OPP, which is undertaking an investigation.

The final piece of the puzzle, though, is Bill 50, which will be before the Legislature this afternoon for second

reading leadoff. It is a bill which reflects the advice of the Auditor General. I ask the member: Will he stand in his place and support it or ring bells?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the Premier: The fact that the subject matter—it should have raised flags, what they were requesting to do. You were being told that Ornge was expanding beyond its main mandate, and either you blatantly accepted the information being provided or you failed to do your job and ask appropriate questions. You seemed to be only too happy to hear what you wanted to hear.

Premier, why was the reassurance from the former Liberal Party president all that was necessary for your government to forfeit oversight on Ornge?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, if the honourable member wants to hold a hearing, some sort of kangaroo court, here on the floor of the House, we have plenty of questionings over here. Mr. Speaker, we have information about briefings they received, long meetings that were arranged. This individual, Kelly Mitchell, was paid \$400,000 to lobby them.

But I think the more important issue is that we took the advice of the Auditor General seriously, Mr. Speaker. This is a very serious matter and we have encapsulated that in legislation, which will be before this Legislature, and what we have heard from the opposition this afternoon is that they are going to continue to block that legislation. They are going to ring bells and they are going to make sure that the Auditor General's advice is not passed through legislation. That is disrespectful to the Auditor General and to this Legislature.

FERRY SERVICE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, for weeks, both ferries in Pelee Island have been in dry dock undergoing maintenance work at the same time. Now islanders are being told that it could be another three weeks before service is restored. With an early spring and good prices, a potential \$3.3-million soybean crop could be lost because farmers can't get their seed to the island. Interim transportation measures were outlined by islanders and by my office in a letter to your ministry, yet we've seen no government action as business continued to lose money daily. Will your ministry do its duty and intervene today to find an immediate solution for transportation to and from Pelee Island?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for the question. We're very familiar with the issue, and we're on the file. I share the concern that the ferry service will be out for two and a half weeks, but we have a responsibility to the people who use that service to ensure that it is as safe as absolutely possible. We have been in touch with the mayor, and we've heard of what his potential solutions are, and we will remain in contact with him. But we will not compromise when it comes to safety. If the ferry has

to be dry-docked for two and a half weeks to ensure that safety, then that is what will be done.

In the meantime, the island will be served by aircraft, as it is in the winter months. I understand this is an inconvenience for some, but I want to reiterate that this is a temporary measure. We're on the file. We're doing everything possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you for the response, Minister. We can all appreciate the need for safety in our transportation system, yet the only two ferries to the island are not only undergoing scheduled maintenance at the same time, but they're undergoing work in the busiest season. In the early spring, with good weather, the delay can cost businesses up to half a million dollars in just a few days. The two vessels are old and your ministry knew that the five-year inspection was coming up. Can the ministry assure us that a review of the scheduled maintenance process will be undertaken to ensure that repairs are made in the winter, when it makes sense, and that it mitigates the impact to businesses on the island?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for the question. I'm sure he understands that safety is our first priority. It's an unfortunate circumstance that the ferry will be out of service for the next two and a half weeks for repairs. The island will not be cut off for that period of time. As I mentioned, aircraft will provide service for all people and critical freight. Crews are working to make the necessary repairs to the ferry so it can be back into service as quickly as possible while ensuring the service is as safe as possible. My staff has been in touch with the mayor of Pelee Island, as I said, to keep him apprised of the situation. I agree the situation is not an ideal one, but it is a temporary one which people are working very hard to resolve. We're happy to provide updates to the member as they arise.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Consumer Services. Only the Ontario Liberal Party has a plan to balance the budget by 2017-18 while protecting services for families. The government has a plan to balance the budget by 2017-18 while protecting the services families rely on. The government is looking at various ways to meet this goal.

One of the ways that we can ensure that the targets are met is to find savings from government operations. It is estimated that savings of \$4.9 billion can be realized from eliminating overlap and duplication, implementing more efficient delivery models and focusing on core business. The government's ServiceOntario initiative has yielded excellent results since 2003.

In order to see increased savings, the budget has proposed expanding the use of the delegated administrative authority model across government to make public services more efficient and more accountable. As the minister who provides oversight to eight DAAs, can you

please provide more information on what they are and how they function?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I would like to thank the member from Ottawa-Orléans for the question and also for his diligent work on behalf of his constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly pleased to speak about the delegated administrative authority model. This is an effective and efficient model for delivery which has been working in a very efficient manner in meeting the MCS's mandate of protecting consumers and ensuring public safety. Delegated administrative authorities are self-financing, not-for-profit corporations which operate at arm's length from government. They are entirely self-funded. The government retains overall accountability for DAAs and maintains oversight through various accountability mechanisms. Some examples of the delegated administrative authorities under my ministry include OMVIC, the Real Estate Council of Ontario and the Travel Industry Council of Ontario.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member from Newmarket-Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: Thank you, Speaker. My point of order relates to comments that were made earlier today about a witness who appeared before the public accounts committee. My colleague put a specific question regarding one of those witnesses and quoted him. One of the members of that committee, the member for Willowdale, specifically—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do not see a point of order here, and if you have a point to make, make it quickly because what you've done right now is not told me there's a point of order here.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, my point is simply this: that the member from Willowdale on three different occasions referred to that witness as being "crazy." That is demeaning—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is not a point of order. Thank you.

The member from Sarnia-Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to, on a point of order, invite all the members in the House down to the Sarnia-Lambton reception today, rooms 228 and 230. Everyone's welcome. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That too is not a point of order, but we do invite everyone to join the hospitality of the member from Sarnia-Lambton.

Point of order from the member from Simcoe-Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, in response to a question about Ornge and public accounts, the government House leader referred to this place, the Parliament of Ontario, as a "kangaroo court." Perhaps he would like to correct the record and apologize to this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That, again, is not a point of order. All members have the opportunity to correct their own answer.

This House stands recessed until 3 pm this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PROVINCIAL DEBT

Mr. Ted Arnott: Yesterday afternoon, I listened to Premier McGuinty being interviewed on CFRB. He said that the NDP had forced him to agree to the new surtax on high-income earners. He also said that the new surtax would reduce the deficit, and he stated it would be eliminated after the budget is balanced. A fair-minded person would conclude from this that the Premier has a long-term fiscal plan—at least, in his mind—that includes what should be done after the budget is balanced.

Last Thursday, Liberal MPPs voted against my motion, which was a modest proposal speaking to a larger principle: my belief that after the budget is balanced, the government should start making a serious effort to pay down the accumulated provincial debt.

Since the Premier appears to be making plans for what needs to be done when the budget is finally balanced, how can the Liberal members suggest that talk of a debt repayment plan is premature, as they asserted last Thursday? Or is it just that any talk of paying down the debt repels the Liberals and makes them run the other way? Is it that they've added so much to the provincial debt that they are oblivious and couldn't get their heads out of the sand if they wanted to? Or is it that they know that their record of uncontrolled spending will eventually defeat them?

Maybe my motion struck a raw nerve, but as long as I'm in this House, I want to speak for the future generations of Ontarians who should not have to pay for Premier McGuinty's profligacy.

ST. JOHN THE COMPASSIONATE
MISSION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: St. John the Compassionate Mission, a charitable organization in my riding, provides a free meal program and supports a wide range of programs for marginalized and vulnerable individuals in a community setting. They operate a wholesale bakery and thrift shop, to provide dignity, work experience and training for men and women, many of whom are homeless or on social assistance.

They are asking that the Ontario Works program that allows recipients an additional \$100 month if they volunteer, with the intention to assist in preparation for the workforce, be extended permanently to recipients who, for a variety of reasons, will never be able to return to the workforce.

It's our responsibility to ensure that vulnerable individuals on Ontario Works, who may not be able to participate in the workforce, have access to additional income and supports. By these means, we allow them to participate in their communities in a volunteer capacity. This often gives great meaning to their lives.

Speaker, we should support the initiative of St. John the Compassionate Mission and ensure that meaning is

not taken away from the lives of those who are far less fortunate than those of us in this chamber.

THUNDER BAY
REGIONAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thunder Bay's economy, currently with a very low unemployment rate of 5.2%, continues to grow and diversify, creating jobs that were never before seen in our community, as our knowledge-based economy expands.

Last week, we announced \$1 million from our Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities for Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, for a hyperpolarized gas MRI, a technology that overcomes the limitations of a conventional MRI.

With this funding, we have successfully recruited Dr. Mitch Albert, a research chair and professor of chemistry and a world-class scientist, to our community. Dr. Albert co-invented the hyperpolarized MRI that will improve imaging and treatment for asthma, COPD, cystic fibrosis, pulmonary embolism, lung cancer, strokes, atherosclerosis and diseases of the brain.

I'm very excited about the growth of Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute, a research institute our government helped establish with a \$15-million grant several years ago.

Investments like last week's in world-class research in Thunder Bay will lead to better health outcomes for many, add to the over 100 new, knowledge-based jobs at Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute, as they move forward with their goal of 200 jobs, and continue the growth of the new knowledge-based economy in Thunder Bay.

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Every three days, one person in Ontario dies while waiting for an organ transplant because there aren't enough registered donors. That's according to the Ontario Trillium Gift of Life Network. I'm told that 229 Canadians died while waiting for an organ in 2010. In that same year, 135 people needed a new heart, and 22 people died waiting for one.

My uncle Arnold Duncan was one of the lucky ones. His heart transplant extended his life by 10 years. His organ donor was a 15-year-old girl who, tragically, was killed in a bicycle accident. Our family will be forever grateful for her donation.

I also want to mention Perth county resident Henry Stevens. Mr. Stevens recently underwent a double lung transplant. His inspiring story is highlighted this week in our local media.

However, it seems that for every success story, there is another story about someone who didn't receive the organs they so desperately needed.

We know that everyone is a potential organ donor and tissue donor, no matter their age or health. We know that

most religions support organ and tissue donation. And we know that a decision to donate can provide immediate comfort and consolation for those mourning the death of a loved one.

This is National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week. I want to express my support for organ donation, and that of all my constituents who care about this issue. I also want to congratulate my colleague the member from Northumberland–Quinte West for introducing a bill that would have a major impact on organ donation rates.

JOB CREATION

Miss Monique Taylor: Today I rise to speak of the job losses that have once again been felt by US Steel in Hamilton. The company, after locking out 622 workers for 11 months, has now laid off 50 workers as of April 28.

The decision to not restart the blast furnace will mean that US Steel, once a giant in the industry and the largest employer in the Hamilton region, can only process steel that is made elsewhere.

This is disturbing, Mr. Speaker. The city of Hamilton and the people of Hamilton Mountain cannot afford to lose any more jobs. The food bank in my riding is facing a 30% increase over this time last year. Everyday people are finding it harder and harder to get by.

The NDP campaigned with a job creation platform, and we convinced the government to task the jobs and prosperity fund to examine our job creator tax credit. I urge the government to pay serious attention to this proposal, and when they do, to make sure they include firm job guarantees with penalties and clawback provisions if those guarantees are not met.

Workers across Ontario, including those at US Steel, are well aware of what happens when money is handed over to profitable corporations without commitments and consequences for breaking those commitments.

JEFF CREWE

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am honoured to rise in the House today to commend a teacher at Weston Collegiate Institute in York–South Weston who saved a student's life last Friday morning.

During his physical education class, teacher Jeff Crewe was alerted that a student had collapsed. Eighteen-year-old Ajethan Ramachandranathan had no history of a heart or lung condition. A student teacher, Jessica Sung, rushed over to fetch the defibrillator. By the time Mr. Crewe rolled Ajethan into the recovery position, he had stopped breathing. Mr. Crewe reacted quickly and used the defibrillator. The paramedics arrived soon after, and Ajethan is now recovering.

This story highlights the importance of defibrillator training in our schools, and it also highlights the importance of having defibrillators in public settings. Only last June, the Premier jointly announced with the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario the government's commitment of \$10 million to place automated external

defibrillators in public access settings such as hockey arenas, recreation centres and high-activity schools.

But, Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, Ajethan's story highlights the actions of Jeff Crewe. I know our teachers play many roles in our communities, and I would like to thank Mr. Crewe for being both an educator and a hero.

1510

KINETIC KNIGHTS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today to recognize the Kincardine District Secondary School Kinetic Knights Team 781. They're off to the world championship robotics competition in St. Louis, Missouri, this coming weekend.

Team 781 is a high school team that won gold at the Queen City Regional in Cincinnati, qualifying for the world championships. Last year, the Kinetic Knights came in second at the worlds.

The main part of a robotics team is to build a robot and compete with it. However, they promote themselves as a team that anyone with any skill set can be part of. The team is split into two sections: administration, marketing; and building. Within each section there are different branches, each led by a particular student nominated by the team.

In January, the team gathers to watch a live stream which marks the first day of build season, as they learn what the challenge is for that year. After that, they spend six weeks designing, building and programming the robot. After six weeks, they send it in for review, and they're no longer allowed to touch that robot until the first regional competition.

This year, they had to build a robotic structure that could shoot basketball hoops. And they are also judged on how well they work with other teams; for example, assisting with repairs.

I have had the opportunity to attend the Kinetic Knights open house this past year, and I join many people from the community who are proud of this team: community mentors, coaches, teachers and family members. I wish them the best of luck as the world championships starts tomorrow.

MARIA TOORPAKAI WAZIR

Mr. Randy Hillier: It was only a few weeks ago that I heard about Maria Toorpakai Wazir. Maria is a native of Pakistan's South Waziristan, which is near the Afghan border and also one of Pakistan's most tribal and repressive areas. South Waziristan is known for its severe, oppressive attitude towards women. Girls rarely go to school and women are often confined to the four walls of their home.

Maria was a talented squash player and athlete, but due to the sexism in her native country, she was not allowed to engage in sports. Her father disguised her as a boy in order to train; however, she was soon discovered and her father began receiving death threats from the Taliban.

Maria eventually fled to Canada and is now set to become the number one female squash player in the world. She wants to prove that women can do anything. Her passion is to end the sexist mindset of people in her country and across the Middle East. She has been training under Canada's former number-one-ranked squash player, Jonathan Power.

On May 2, a fundraiser is taking place to help Maria raise funds for her foundation; 100% of the ticket proceeds will go directly to Maria's foundation, which will work to build training centres across the Middle East where women can play sports and have access to education.

For more information, I ask all members to contact my office. I hope to see a great representation from members of this Legislature at that fundraiser. Thank you.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. David Oraziotti: I'm pleased today to highlight the tremendous progress we've made in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie with respect to access to primary care.

Since 2003, we've made significant investments, including a 64% increase in health care funding; a 38% increase in medical school training spaces; we've opened the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, the first medical school to be opened in Canada in over 30 years; we've developed a new northern and rural recruitment and retention initiative; and we've increased nurse practitioner training spaces by 135%.

Clearly, the results in our ridings speak for themselves. Since opening in 2011, the NP clinic in the Soo has registered nearly 1,000 patients and is continually increasing their patient roster. Since opening in 2011, the Superior Family Health Team in Sault Ste. Marie has added two new doctors to its team and taken on over 5,000 patients, with 2,000 being added in the year ahead. It's estimated that we're now within two years of every resident having access to a doctor or nurse practitioner.

Through innovative programs such as Health Care Connect and new service delivery models like NP clinics and family health teams, we're helping more people find and connect with primary care providers.

As a government, we'll continue to develop health care strategies that ensure people have access to care when and where they need it. That's why, in our budget, we've committed to increase funding for home care and community health services by an additional \$526 million a year.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROPERTY OWNERS' PROTECTION ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA PROTECTION DES PROPRIÉTAIRES FONCIERS

Mr. Marchese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 72, An Act to amend the Condominium Act, 1998 and other Acts to increase protection for property owners / *Projet de loi 72, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur les condominiums et d'autres lois pour accroître la protection des propriétaires fonciers.*

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you very much, Speaker. I beg your indulgence and the indulgence of everyone here, but I will be reading from the explanatory note, and it's a bit long.

The bill amends the Condominium Act, 1998, the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act and the Building Code Act, 1992.

The amendments to the Condominium Act, 1998, include the following:

(1) Every declaration registered under the act is required to contain the materials, information, consents and standard provisions set out in the regulations.

(2) The qualifications and grounds for disqualification of directors of a condominium corporation are expanded with respect to affiliations between directors and declarants.

(3) All voting by owners is on the basis of one vote per owner, rather than on the basis of one vote per unit.

(4) It is an offence to provide false or misleading statements in respect of an appointment of a proxy.

(5) Several new requirements are imposed in respect of the disclosure statement.

(6) A declarant is prohibited from transferring a residential unit unless the unit and specified common elements meet the prescribed standards.

(7) The declarant is accountable to the corporation for the budget statement that covers a three-year period rather than a one-year period.

(8) A person who acts as a property manager under an agreement for the management of a property owned by a corporation is required to have prescribed qualifications.

(9) A corporation is permitted to access its reserve fund for the additional purposes of installing renewable energy and other energy-efficient technologies and replacing common elements following reasonable wear and tear.

(10) If a corporation carries out work for the purpose of the installation of renewable energy technologies or other energy-efficient technologies, the work shall be deemed not to be an addition, alteration or improvement to the common elements or a change in the assets of the corporation.

(11) A review board is established. Various functions that are currently functions of the Superior Court of Justice are assigned to the review board instead.

(12) A duty of fair dealing is imposed on all declarants and condominium corporations in their dealings with owners and purchasers of condominium units.

The amendments to the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act include the following:

(1) The definition of “home” is amended to include units in conversion condominiums.

(2) Consumer protection is added to the objects of the corporation, and new requirements are added with respect to the composition of the board of the corporation.

(3) The registrar is required to publish information on the Internet regarding previous business names of builders of condominium dwelling units and associated builders. Requirements are also imposed in respect of the disclosure of this information.

(4) Warranties in respect of specified matters in condominiums are extended from one year to five years.

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(5) The corporation is required to complete its efforts to effect conciliation within the prescribed time.

The Building Code Act, 1992, is amended to require the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to ensure that a review is conducted and a report prepared in respect of noise protection standards for properties owned by condominium corporations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your indulgence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do want to take a moment to explain two things. Number one, it is the tradition that you read the explanatory note, which is usually very short, introducing a bill, and that’s where we get the idea of a short statement. This particular explanatory note was very lengthy, so I was telling the member that I would tolerate that—except to say, let’s not make that the practice. It was called a filibuster in the old days, but we won’t do that.

Having said, that, I wanted to bring clarity to make sure everyone understands that the normal practice is to read the explanatory note only, and the member did so.

ENDANGERED SPECIES
AMENDMENT ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES ESPÈCES
EN VOIE DE DISPARITION

Ms. Scott moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 73, An Act to amend the Endangered Species Act, 2007 / Projet de loi 73, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les espèces en voie de disparition.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: How short is short?

Over the past few months, we’ve been consulting with a wide range of stakeholders in agriculture, forestry, aggregate extraction, hunting, fishing and land development, as well as private citizens and consultants in the natural resources field. We’ve consistently heard that the

Endangered Species Act needs to broaden its scope of analysis to consider the impact which a decision or proposal may have on the lives and operations of individuals as well as businesses. This bill attempts to address some of the underlying causes of that concern.

I can say that this is a much shorter statement than the explanatory note, Mr. Speaker, so I’ll let you off the hook.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I accept that as a friendly comment.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL VICTIMS OF CRIME
AWARENESS WEEK

Hon. John Gerretsen: I rise in the House today to speak about a very significant event that’s taking place right now both here in Ontario and across Canada. That is National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. It’s an opportunity to raise awareness about victim issues and about the laws, programs and services in place to help victims of crimes and their families. The national theme for this week is “Moving Forward,” which recognizes that supports for victims that meet their needs in the aftermath of a violent crime are extremely valuable.

If any of you has ever known or listened to a victim of violent crime, you may have heard them describe the process of recovery as a journey. Every journey is unique. No two people will experience it the same way.

For people going through it, the thought of not knowing how long recovery will take or if they will be able to pick up where they left off can be frightening. Individual journeys vary from person to person. Recovery can take months, years or even a lifetime. Some people never fully recover.

Many suffer intense trauma that may take them down a road of mental health challenges and addiction issues. They may require hours of specialized therapy and much-needed medical, personal and financial support. Personal and family relationships can suffer, sometimes severely. The fact is that victimization can often be a life-altering experience.

Moving forward together has a special significance for Ontario because of the work that we do to help people during these pivotal times—and it wasn’t always like that. This work includes delivering innovative support services and making it easier for victims and families to seek the justice that they deserve.

Yesterday, I and a number of our colleagues from across the aisle as well as from this side of the House had the honour of presenting the Victim Services Awards of Distinction. Thirteen such awards were presented. These annual awards, which started four years ago, recognize the exemplary efforts of those who serve and support victims of crime on a daily basis. Some are themselves

victims who, through dedication and courage, have contributed to victim services as survivors, leaders and role models. We heard from a youngster, Speaker, just in high school, who is now helping other victims overcome the trauma.

Award winners have made great strides in tackling problems such as bullying, domestic violence and Internet child exploitation, and all of their stories are truly inspiring. Not only are we recognizing some outstanding individuals, but this event also helps raise the profile of the network of programs and services that are available in communities across this province.

The fact is that victim services provide valuable assistance—services like victim crisis assistance and referral services, or VCARS, as it's commonly known. Working closely with the local police, VCARS staff and volunteers help victims and provide much-needed support, whether it's immediate emotional support, calling a relative on their behalf, providing a reference to a local counselling service or simply giving them a safe ride home. It is small acts like these that can be enormously important to a victim during a time of personal crisis. Last year, VCARS helped over 71,000 of our neighbours, friends and loved ones in this province. I'm proud to say that Ontario has supported VCARS for many years—and will continue in our commitment to its vital work.

Being a victim or losing a loved one to violent crime is not anything that anyone plans for, and in the days immediately following a crime, many victims are unprepared to deal with the short-term expenses that can result, even things, at times, like funeral costs. Four years ago, this government began a pilot program to provide emergency funds to those who need it most. That was our Victim Quick Response Program, which continues to provide that vital support for victims and families today.

Of course, our work doesn't end there. Victims and families often find themselves in court, and it is here that a number of other services and supports are provided. Among these are the Victim/Witness Assistance Program, which for 23 years has worked to ensure that vulnerable victims have the support they need to participate in the criminal court process, and that's so often vital for them.

More recently, we launched the Family Court Support Worker Program, which helps victims of domestic violence who are involved in the Family Court process. These services are now being delivered province-wide and will help victims, often women in abusive relationships, better understand their role in the Family Court and how to keep themselves and their children safe during the court process.

In the immediate aftermath of crime, and at every step along the road to recovery, it is critically important that victims and their families have someone to walk the journey with them—somewhere to turn to in their time of greatest need. Together with our many numerous partners in communities across this province, we are committed to ensuring that the right programs and services are in place so that the most vulnerable people in our society are

cared for. And, as our communities are ever-changing, this network of supports will continually adapt to meet the specific needs of victims.

This week, I encourage all members to join me in thinking about the needs of victims in our communities and in recognizing the dedicated individuals and organizations who help victims every day, every step of the way, to help them heal, grow and truly move forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

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Mrs. Christine Elliott: It's a privilege to rise in the House today and speak about the importance of Victims of Crime Awareness Week on behalf of the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus. This year's awareness week focuses on moving forward and highlights three key issues surrounding victims of crime and the government's responsibility to those victims. The first is ensuring that victims are treated with compassion and respect as they move through their unique healing process. The second is making sure that victims have an effective voice in the criminal justice and correction system. Finally, number three, is recognizing and ensuring that victim services—those dedicated individuals who help victims of crime through their most difficult time—have the tools they need to help victims move through their experience and move forward to rebuild their lives.

Mr. Speaker, it's always been central to the Progressive Conservative Party to take crime seriously and to deal with it wherever it may be, swiftly and strongly. And we continue to be steadfast in our support of those who have suffered from injustice. We view this week as an opportunity to progress support for victims of crime and to do everything we can as legislators to facilitate a victim's emotional recovery as well as their physical healing.

It's also a time to be able to focus on some of the amazing services that provide support to victims in our communities. I was present at the ceremony that the Attorney General spoke about, which took place here at Queen's Park yesterday and presented the Victim Services Awards of Distinction.

I'd like to take just a moment to speak about two such organizations in the region of Durham, one of which won an award of distinction yesterday. Ms. Tammy Rankin from the Durham Elder Abuse Network won one of the provincial awards, and I was very happy to be there when Ms. Rankin was presented with it. The mission of the Elder Abuse Network is to be leaders in the development of an integrated and collaborative strategy to address the prevention of elder abuse in Durham region through networking, information sharing, raising awareness and advocacy. I can say that I've personally had the opportunity to call on Ms. Rankin's services in my community office on more than one occasion, and she's always been very quick to respond and provide support, and to investigate where needed. So it's a valuable service in our community, and I certainly commend that.

The other one I'd like to mention—although there are many in Durham region, I don't have time to mention all

of them—is called DRIVEN, Durham Region’s Intimate-relationship Violence Empowerment Network. It’s a group of organizations that have come together to provide support for victims of domestic abuse. They are providing service on a very small budget, but they are very effective in providing support to victims in our community.

So I salute all the people across Durham region, and indeed across the province, who provide support to victims. We should support them and provide them with acknowledgment and encouragement in the work they continue to do on our behalf. Thank you.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: On behalf of the New Democratic Party of Ontario, I also rise to recognize National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. It’s a very important initiative, and it gives us time to reflect on the concerns and the issues surrounding those who are victims of crime.

As noted by the member from Whitby–Oshawa, there is one theme, “Moving Forward,” and in that one theme there are three categories involving victims being treated with compassion, that they have an effective voice and that the victim services are provided with the tools that they require.

I also acknowledge the Attorney General’s acknowledgment of the various community services that do exist that are providing excellent service, including the victim crisis assistance and referral services, the Victim Quick Response Program as well as the Victim/Witness Assistance Program which exist in courthouses across Ontario and the Family Court support workers.

In addition, when we talk about the theme “Moving Forward,” we need to look at, or turn our minds to, some of the issues that victims face. One of the issues that is raised in the theme “Moving Forward,” and one of the ways we can move forward with greater rights or recognition of victim’s rights is that victims really need to have a voice. Victims are provided with an opportunity to have a victim impact statement when they are in court. But beyond that, there are other strategies which need to be implemented to provide victims with a greater voice.

There are strategies which exist in other jurisdictions, and I would like to share some of these ideas with the House. Some of these include round tables with the victim and the individual who perpetrated the crime or who was the guilty party. Round-table discussions and reconciliation and healing circles are also another strategy so the victim can be face to face with the perpetrator or the guilty party so they can truly heal and truly discover the root causes of these issues.

Counselling services are essential, so that victims are provided with effective means and effective strategies to address their issues that flow from being the victim of a crime.

In addition, victims of crime should have an active voice in the sentencing and in the repercussions of crime. I can give you an example of a client I once had, who was in an altercation with his brother. Police were called, and the brother did not want any charges laid against his

brother. They were two brothers. They had simply engaged in an argument, and it had gotten a little bit physical, but there were no injuries and there was no damage to property. There was simply some yelling and some aggressive pushing back and forth.

The police were called, and the brother made it very clear that he did not want his sibling charged. He did not want any police interference. However, what happened was that the brother, who again did not cause any injury and did not damage any property, was charged with assault and with possessing a dangerous weapon, and was put into custody, subjected to a bail hearing and later released to live with his brother.

The brother indicated that this was a complete upset of the family—they had a long-standing close relationship. This was an example where, as a victim, there was no voice. There was no input that was recognized.

There are many circumstances like this where victims aren’t given a strong voice in determining how the procedure should unfold. For example, there are a number of women I’ve had the opportunity of speaking with who would like interference from the state but don’t want the criminal justice system. They want an alternative system that addresses some of the issues that may occur in their home, which may involve not exactly violence but improper circumstances in the home where they need some sort of avenue. They want to contact a resource to assist them in the dispute that’s occurring in their homes, but they don’t want to have their loved one put in jail.

Alternatives need to be put in place so that victims truly have a voice so they can choose the avenue by which the state interferes, they can choose the avenue by which they are assisted, so that we can have true recognition of the rights of victims so they can have input in the way their lives unfold and the way that conflicts are resolved.

In addition, there are many silent victims who don’t have a voice, who aren’t recognized, who aren’t able to access the resources that are available, who don’t feel comfortable, whether it’s due to language barriers or whether it’s due to financial barriers, to access or communicate with people in power or the authorities to make sure their rights are protected. We need to ensure that those who are poor, women and children have these rights available to them.

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

PETITIONS

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act.

“Whereas Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, by identifying only four specific groups and using primarily

homosexual and gender issue bullying examples, provides a narrow focus to the bullying issue; and

“Whereas this should not be a legislation designed to appease a special interest group or address a narrow political agenda; and

“Whereas it has not been proven that the special-status clubs will lead to a more inclusive environment; and

“Whereas the legislation will result in curriculum that may be in conflict with the values of various faith families; and

“Whereas the legislation, as stated by the Minister of Education (Laurel Broten) during her speech at second reading, is intended to ‘change the attitudes of society’ rather than addressing the wrongful actions of the bully; and

“Whereas churches and traditional-principled schools renting publicly funded school facilities would be forced to abide by an undefined ‘provincial code of conduct’ which could be in opposition to their ‘constitutionally protected faith’; and

“Whereas the legislation will interfere with the right of Catholics to create an education environment that is consistent with their faith;

“We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend Bill 13 to address these issues:

“Broaden the legislation to uphold the worth of all children who may be bullied for all reasons;

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“Send the message that the bully’s actions are wrong for any reason, regardless of why they target the victim;

“Require tenants renting public school facilities to follow federal and provincial laws, rather than an undefined provincial code of conduct;

“Require school boards to respect the federally protected rights of all faith groups, as children from these groups are often bullied by their peers, the community and the governments;

“Remove references to the formation of specific clubs for certain groups (these clubs are not proven to lead to a more equitable environment) and place the emphasis on correcting the wrongful actions of the bullies;

“Include statements protecting the rights of all people, including the religious rights of individuals and groups—a segment of society that is often bullied because of its convictions;

“Ensure accommodation for any child whose parent identifies the curriculum to be in conflict with the values taught at home.”

I affix my signature to this and I present to page Katarina.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas currently the law takes the onus off of owners that raise violent dogs by making it appear that violence is a matter of genetics; and

“Whereas the Dog Owners’ Liability Act does not clearly define a pit bull, nor is it enforced equally across the province, as pit bulls are not an acknowledged breed;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly passes Bill 16, Public Safety Related to Dogs Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011, into law.”

I agree with this—and the thousands of others that are about to come—sign my name, and I’m going to give it to Safa to deliver to the table.

RADIATION SAFETY

Mr. Reza Moridi: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act authorizes podiatrists to take and prescribe radiographs; and

“Whereas we are aware of the extent to which the act and the regulations have fallen behind technology;

“I, as president and on behalf of the Ontario Podiatric Medical Association, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To express support for the motion filed on April 17, 2012, by the member from Richmond Hill that asks the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations and make recommendations on how to modernize this act, and bring it to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and the public and to include all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes.”

I fully agree with this petition. I will sign it and pass it on to page Ranbir.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

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

“Whereas it has been recommended in the Drummond report that all demonstration schools in Ontario be closed as part of the upcoming budget, we seek your opposition to this move.

“We, the undersigned Trillium, Sagonaska and Amethyst demonstration school parent councils, on behalf of our students, parents and interested parties, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“(a) to oppose this recommendation of demonstration school closures becoming part of the upcoming budget (a strictly cost-cutting measure which does not take into account the resulting high costs at school board level to provide same service types to severely learning-disabled students);

“(b) actively move to enable these valuable schools to remain in place to serve students who have exhausted all other available resources in order to access equal

education for themselves without added costs, to which they, like all students, are entitled by the law of the land, by opposing the closure of demonstration schools;

“(c) actively move to enable the continuation of the added role of demonstration schools as frontrunner providers of direction for technology use in schools, literacy development and curriculum delivery, by opposing the closure of demonstration schools.”

I agree with this, will affix my signature and send it down with Shanice.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Michael Mantha: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario taxpayers have been paying over millions in extra charges on their hydro bills to help retire the debt. The amount collected to date as per the Auditor General’s report is \$8.7 billion, but the amount owing was \$7.8 billion;

“Whereas Ontario taxpayers are asking, where is the money being invested?

“Whereas Ontario taxpayers are asking why this was not addressed at the time the debt was paid;

“Whereas electrical rates have increased with the new creation of green energy coming online to include solar and wind, refurbishment of nuclear plants and deregulation of Hydro One;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows to obtain answers to the following questions:

“How much of the debt remains?

“When will it be eliminated from Ontario taxpayers’ hydro bills?”

I agree with this petition, and I will be presenting it to page William.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition from Scarborough–Agincourt, addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which states:

“Whereas creating a safe and positive learning environment is an essential part of helping students succeed in school;

“Whereas bullying, homophobia and gender-based violence are unacceptable;

“Whereas we need to do more than just tell bullied kids it gets better—we need to work together to make it better now;

“Whereas the Accepting Schools Act would, if passed, help to end bullying in our schools;

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

“That the elected members of all parties help make our schools safer and more inclusive by supporting the Accepting Schools Act.”

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

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition signed by a great many of my constituents.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Tavistock’s Bonnie Brae Health Care Centre is an 80-bed, D-class nursing home that must be either rebuilt or closed by July 2014; and

“Whereas there is currently an application by a private operator to move the 80 licensed beds outside of Oxford county to the city of London, despite the recent opening of two other long-term-care homes in Middlesex county in 2010; and

“Whereas long-term-care wait times in Oxford county can be as much as 134 days longer than in Middlesex county; and

“Whereas Tavistock receives referrals from the nearby Waterloo Wellington CCAC, which has among the highest waits for long-term care in the province;

“We, the undersigned, request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario retain these beds in Tavistock and seek partners to fast-track replacement of the Bonnie Brae as part of Ontario’s 10-year plan to modernize 35,000 long-term-care beds.”

I affix my signature, as I agree with it, Mr. Speaker, and we thank you very much for the opportunity to present it.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas currently the law takes the onus off of owners that raise violent dogs by making it appear that violence is a matter of genetics; and

“Whereas the Dog Owners’ Liability Act does not clearly define a pit bull, nor is it enforced equally across the province, as pit bulls are not an acknowledged breed;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly passes Bill 16, Public Safety Related to Dogs Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011, into law.”

I’ll give it to Shanice—I of course agree—and she’ll deliver it to the table.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Phil McNeely: I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario from the people of Avalon school district in my riding.

“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 resolved;

“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 Georgia.

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Residential Tenancies Act protects tenants in dwellings, long-term-care homes and retirement homes from sudden and unfair increases to their rent; and

“Whereas additional costs such as the provision of meals and other services are not subject to the said act; and

“Whereas there have been episodes of repeated, large and unjustified increases to the stated costs of meal provisioning in Cornwall and area; and

“Whereas residents do not have a say in the procurement and administration of meals and other services provided by the facility, nor can they opt out of such services when notified of an increase in charges, being thus committed to a ‘take it or leave it’ choice;

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

“(1) To instruct the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to enact regulations ensuring fairness, protection and choice for residents of retirement homes and long-term-care facilities that provide any other necessary services such as, but not limited to, meals and personal assistance at an extra cost to their residents;

“(2) To instruct the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to undertake a comprehensive review of the administration of retirement homes and long-term-care facilities with respect to the provision of services other than lodging that involve an extra charge to residents.”

I agree with the petition and will be handing it to page Sabrina.

SERVICES DIAGNOSTIQUES

M. Michael Mantha: À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que l'Ontario fait de la tomographie par émission de positons (TEP) un service de santé assuré par le régime public pour les patients atteints du cancer et de maladies cardiaques, lorsque les données cliniques indiquent que cette technique est efficace dans leur cas; et

« Attendu que d'ici octobre 2009, des TEP assurées seront effectuées à Ottawa, à London, à Toronto, à Hamilton ainsi qu'à Thunder Bay; et

« Attendu que la ville du Grand Sudbury est une plaque tournante pour la santé dans le Nord-Est, qui compte l'Hôpital régional de Sudbury et son programme régional de cancer, de même que l'École de médecine du Nord de l'Ontario;

« Nous, soussignés, demandons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario d'offrir de la TEP par le biais de l'Hôpital régional de Sudbury, donnant ainsi un accès équitable aux résidents du Nord-Est de l'Ontario. »

Je suis complètement d'accord avec cette pétition, monsieur le Président, et je la présente à page Andrew.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I have a petition from residents of York South-Weston.

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with this petition, will sign it and send it over with page Shanice.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services; and

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

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

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

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

I agree with this petition, Mr. Speaker, and I affix my signature.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AMBULANCE AMENDMENT ACT (AIR AMBULANCES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES AMBULANCES (SERVICES D’AMBULANCE AÉRIENS)

Ms. Matthews moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services / Projet de loi 50, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ambulances en ce qui concerne les services d’ambulance aériens.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Ms. Matthews has moved second reading of Bill 50. Ms. Matthews.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am pleased to address the House today at the second reading of our proposed amendments to the Ambulance Act. I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the wonderful member from Guelph.

I am here today to speak to legislative amendments that will entrench greater oversight of Ontario’s air ambulance service, ensuring best value for taxpayer dollars and, above all, provide high-quality patient care.

I want to start by thanking the paramedics, the pilots, the communications staff, the engineers and indeed all of the staff at Ornge who work tirelessly every day to provide the best possible care to Ontarians. It is so vitally important that we recognize these front-line staff. I’ve had the opportunity to visit a number of Ornge bases in Sudbury and London and Toronto, and I can tell you that the paramedics, the pilots and staff working at Ornge are as committed as ever to providing safe and high-quality

care for the people of this province. I am tremendously proud of their work, their passion and their dedication.

I also want to thank the new leadership at Ornge, who have already made real progress on their core mission of providing life-saving care to Ontario patients. I am confident that the new board and the new interim CEO have begun a new era of accountability and transparency at Ornge. The proposed legislative changes will further entrench the progress we’ve made and ensure a brighter future at Ontario tomorrow.

I want to take a few minutes to highlight the timeline of events that demonstrate the action I took immediately upon learning about the problems at Ornge.

In October 2010, the Auditor General announced his value-for-money audit at Ornge, and that work did continue until the release of his final report in March 2012.

On January 24, 2011, Ornge’s former leadership and their legal team met with my ministry and members of my staff to discuss their new structure and business venture. Many changes had already taken place at the time of this meeting. Ornge’s then-leadership and legal counsel gave clear and unequivocal assurances that no public funds would be used for their private endeavours. They also assured us that there would be no impact to the services they provide to the province of Ontario; indeed, they submitted that up to \$200 million could flow back to Ontario’s air ambulance service to fill what they called service gaps in the public air ambulance service.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Excuse me. We’ve got—what?—one, two, three, four, five sidebars going on the opposition area. We will please take them outside. If you want to have group therapy, take it outside, please.

Continue, Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker.

In April 2011, three questions regarding Ornge were asked in question period by the member from Newmarket–Aurora. When these questions were raised, I knew that the Auditor General was doing his work and that we would be provided with objective recommendations in his report. All issues related to Ornge that were raised were forwarded on to the Auditor General.

On October 20, 2011, I was reappointed as Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. There were, as you can imagine, a number of issues that required my attention.

One week after being reappointed—on October 27, 2011—I did become aware of a number of issues being raised by the Auditor General with regard to his ongoing audit at Ornge. I instructed my ministry to do an analysis of all available options to address the initial concerns that had come to light. However, it became clear that the options were very limited. The original performance agreement with Ornge did not give us the tools we needed to address these concerns. Further, because Ornge was a federally incorporated organization, legislative options were not available.

On December 1, 2011, I met with the auditor to discuss other chapters in his annual report, specifically on physician payment models. At that time, he informed me that the Ornge audit would not be complete in time for his annual report.

On December 5, the member for Hamilton Centre asked a question in the Legislature about executive compensation at Ornge, specifically asking why it was not disclosed. I followed up with a briefing on that issue.

On December 8, a letter was sent to Ornge asking for detailed information on compensation, demanding that they disclose the executive salaries from the private side of their business.

Around the same time, I learned that the Auditor General was being stonewalled by Ornge, that they were being very uncooperative. I then spoke directly with the Auditor General and he confirmed that he was not getting the information he needed to complete his review.

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I also asked the Auditor General to confirm that salary disclosure was the subject of his audit, as concerns about Ornge's compliance with public sector salary disclosure were being raised.

On December 15, I met with senior executives at Ornge: then-COO Tom Lepine and then-board chair Rainer Beltzner. I demanded they disclose executive salaries and co-operate with and respond to requests from the Auditor General and the ministry.

On December 19, I sent a letter to Ornge clarifying the purpose and substance of our meeting, in response to a statement released by Ornge that, frankly, misrepresented the contents of our meeting. Two days later, Ornge disclosed the compensation of senior executives to my ministry and revealed particularly outrageous compensation to then-CEO Chris Mazza. That was when I knew something was seriously wrong, that I could not wait for the Auditor General's final report and that I did have to step in immediately.

The next day, December 22, I directed my ministry to inform Ornge that we were sending in the Ministry of Finance's forensic audit team to follow the public dollars. That team got to work immediately. In fact, they began the very next day, December 23.

It was at this time that I started to accelerate our plans to make changes at Ornge in a way that would not adversely impact patient safety or interrupt service. We had neither the Auditor General's final report nor the tools that could compel the Ornge board to comply with government directives. However, pressure on Ornge was growing, pressure from the Auditor General, from the ministry, from the media.

On January 11, 2012, the board of directors at Ornge signalled their intention to resign, and I recommended the appointment of an interim CEO, Ron McKerlie. A new blue-chip, volunteer board of directors was recommended for appointment on January 25, led by the board chair, Ian Delaney. The new leadership was directed to report back to me on issues of patient safety, the use of public dollars, and the development of a new performance

agreement. The new leadership team immediately began the process of winding down the for-profit entities at Ornge, as per my direction.

On February 16, I received a report from the forensic auditors revealing serious financial irregularities at Ornge. It was at this time that the matter was referred to the Ontario Provincial Police for investigation.

Ornge is now on the right path forward, but there were serious problems under the former leadership. I was tremendously disheartened to learn that the former leadership at Ornge put their interests ahead of the interests of patients. This was a small group of individuals who were trusted not only to provide excellent care but to manage the money they received in a way that Ontarians expect and deserve. As soon as I learned of the problems at Ornge, I took action, and as the Auditor General notes, we have already "taken substantive action to address many of the issues raised in this report."

As always, the Auditor General has completed a thorough and insightful review. He put forward a number of specific recommendations to improve oversight and accountability and, above all, patient safety at Ornge. Many of the recommendations have already been implemented, and I can assure all Ontarians that we will act on every single recommendation.

We now have an amended performance agreement with Ornge. This amended performance agreement will safeguard patient care and provide better value for taxpayer dollars. Under the terms of this new treatment, the minister's approval will be required for any changes to Ornge's corporate structure, including the sale of assets. This agreement will introduce a patient advocate and complaints process to ensure patient safety, similar to what we have in our hospitals.

The original performance agreement simply did not provide the accountability, oversight and transparency needed by the government. The new performance agreement will require detailed financial planning, monitoring, control and reporting obligations to increase accountability. It will also ensure compliance with the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act and the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act. It will increase audit and inspection powers by my ministry and introduce debt control provisions to prevent debt increases without ministry approval.

Finally, we'll introduce quality improvement provisions based on the Excellent Care for All Act. This includes linking executive compensation to performance improvement targets in annual quality improvement plans.

Allow me now to address the amendments to the Ambulance Act being proposed today. These amendments will further entrench stronger oversight and prevent abuses of power at Ontario's air ambulance service. It is vitally important that employees do not feel intimidated when raising concerns. That's why our proposed legislation will protect whistle-blowers at Ornge who disclose information to an inspector, an investigator or the government.

When problems came to our attention, it was far too difficult to make the necessary changes at Ornge to fix them. I could not, for example, appoint a supervisor as I could in a hospital, nor could I make changes to the performance agreement without the approval of Ornge's board of directors. To remedy this, these amendments will allow the government to take control of Ornge in extraordinary circumstances through the appointment of a supervisor, just like we can in our hospitals. It will allow us to appoint special investigators where it is in the public interest to do so.

The new legislation will also give the government the power to appoint members to the board of Ornge. In the past, if we needed to make changes to the government's performance agreement, we could only do so with Ornge's agreement. That was simply not feasible when immediate changes needed to be made. That's why the proposed legislation will allow the government to change the performance agreement with Ornge. If we had had these legislative powers, it would have gone a long way towards keeping those in charge at Ornge in check. I hope we won't need to use many of these powers in the future, but given our recent experience, I trust everyone in this Legislature will agree that they are necessary.

The actions we have taken are part of our overall commitment to raise the bar on accountability and transparency in Ontario. Since 2003, our government has taken a series of steps to improve oversight of Ontario's hard-earned tax dollars. When we were first elected, we were told by the previous government that there was no deficit in the province of Ontario. As it turned out, there was a significant deficit. That will never happen again because we've given the Auditor General the responsibility of signing off on the books prior to an election.

We have expanded freedom-of-information provisions to cover Ontario Power Generation, to cover Hydro One, to cover universities, Cancer Care Ontario. Local public utilities were brought back under freedom of information in 2004.

We introduced the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, which prohibits the practice of hiring external lobbyists with taxpayer dollars in hospitals, other large public sector organizations and publicly funded organizations that receive more than \$10 million in government funds. We've brought in stronger expense and procurement rules for broader public sector organizations, and we now require all hospitals and LHINs to report on their use of consultants and to post online the expense claim information for senior leadership. We also require all hospitals and LHINs to sign attestations that they are in compliance with the new procurement requirements, and we have made hospitals subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, effective January 1 of this year.

Thanks to this government's efforts to rebuild the foundations of our health care system, we have been able to refocus on the patient. By focusing on patients, we're making the overall experience for patients in the health care system that much better, and we're getting better value for money.

Through the Excellent Care for All Act, we've ensured that the quality of the patient experience is measured in a standardized way and reported publicly. We now hold executives accountable for the quality of care delivered.

We listen to patients and ensure the quality committees in each health care organization use the results of patient surveys to create benchmarks for improving the standards of care. And patients now have a formal mechanism to have their questions and concerns addressed through a patient advocate process. We have focused health care leadership on the task of changing the culture so that quality care for patients is the most important job that every single person in the organization does.

Hospitals now have quality improvement plans. They are publicly posted, and executive compensation is linked to the achievement of outcomes identified in those plans.

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Indeed, we've made tremendous progress in health care since 2003, and that's because we've worked together. Ontarians are waiting less time for key surgeries and diagnostic procedures, and they wait less time to be seen in hospital emergency rooms. They've got more access to family health care than ever before. More than 2.1 million Ontarians have found a doctor since 2003; and 11,000 more nurses and 3,400 more doctors are working in this province.

Health care is stronger than ever before, and we're turning our attention to improving the quality of care, putting the patient front and centre, providing evidence-based care to improve outcomes for patients through our action plan for health care. We've already moved forward on a number of initiatives in this plan, including the creation of two birth centres in Ontario. We've reformed the way we fund hospitals so the funding will follow the patient and, through our recent budget, committed to ensuring more home care and more community care services. It is a plan that has been embraced by the health care community.

I'm very proud of all these improvements in the health care system of this province, and I'm proud that they were achieved in the atmosphere of improved transparency and accountability.

At the end of the day, this action is all about respecting the hard-earned money of taxpayers of this province. Knowing that Ontarians expect government to manage their money prudently makes me determined to get the best value for our health care investments. It's why we're driving quality and value into every corner of the health care system; it's why we're bringing these legislative amendments today.

From patients to doctors, front-line paramedics to hospital administrators, personal support workers to nurses and those who work in LHINs, we all have a role to play in improving our health care system.

I'm confident that we've taken strong action to improve Ontario's air ambulance service so it's better for patients and better for taxpayers. We have new leadership in place, led by chair Ian Delaney and interim CEO Ron

McKerlie. They've already made great progress at Ornge. Together, they're improving the medical interiors of the helicopters; strengthening the online response process to improve launch times; ensuring appropriate staff coverage and coordination of resources across the province; evaluating the dispatch process; reviewing patient safety initiatives under the supervision of Sunnybrook CEO and Ornge board member Dr. Barry McLellan; and they're reviewing governance oversight and procurement practices.

We have more to do to ensure Ontario has the best possible air ambulance service, and I know that the new leadership, along with all the front-line paramedics, pilots and staff at Ornge, are eager to move forward on this transformation. I'm confident that the auditor's advice, combined with the actions we're taking, will contribute to a better air ambulance service and the highest standard of care for all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you, Minister.

The member from Guelph.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to rise and speak in support of Bill 50, which is An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services, and obviously is the umbrella legislation which controls what goes on with Ornge.

Our proposed legislative amendments were precipitated by the problems identified by the Auditor General during his recent audit of Ornge, Ontario's air and critical-care land ambulance service. Our government took decisive action to address the Auditor General's recommendations to establish a new standard of accountability at Ornge and to restore Ontarians' faith in the important services it provides.

We committed to implement each and every one of the recommendations made by the Auditor General, but we went even further. First, we negotiated and ratified an amended performance agreement with the new Ornge board, and next, we introduced this legislation to amend the Ambulance Act, to enhance the government's ability to provide the necessary oversight into Ornge's activities.

Today, I'll set the context for those steps, providing you with a brief history of Ontario's air ambulance service. Then I'll outline the recommendations of the Auditor General's recent report into Ornge, and our government's response. Following that, I'll move on to the amended performance agreement and the provisions of our proposed amendment to the Ambulance Act.

So where did this all start? Ontario's air ambulance program was actually established back in 1977 by the then Ministry of Health with a single aircraft based in Toronto.

By 2003, the service had three main elements: funding, dispatch and oversight, provided by the ministry; a base hospital system at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre which oversaw the practice of paramedicine; and finally, air ambulance services, both helicopter and fixed-wing, that were contracted out to private air operators.

There were a couple of other things that occurred in that time frame. The Auditor General has previously reviewed Ontario's air ambulance service and at the time was quite critical of the effectiveness of a dispatch system and some of the practices there at the time. In addition, there were a coroner's report and some other reviews which commented on the fragmented nature of the service: the fact that the base hospital medical services were at one place, dispatch was at the ministry, and then you had the private operation of the actual aircraft. So the actual need to do something was identified from various parties who looked at the existing ambulance service back around about 2003.

In June 2005, the government transferred and consolidated the air ambulance program to what was then known as the Ontario Air Ambulance Services Corp., known for short as OAA, which was a federally—and this becomes important—incorporated non-profit corporation.

In November 2005, our government finalized a long-term performance agreement with the OAA. The performance agreement had an indefinite term—so it was totally open-ended—and governed all aspects of air ambulance services. The performance agreement with Ornge established Ornge and the ministry's responsibilities and expectations in the services to be delivered by Ornge. For example, they now had control of all aspects: the base hospital; air contracting; organ recovery services, which often involve flights; other aeromedical services; and so on.

The original performance agreement also covered compliance with grant funding and government accounting requirements; data tracking, retention and reporting; quality assurance in the education and training of flight paramedics and flight dispatch staff; a complaints and incident reporting process; documentation standards; and ministry evaluation and monitoring. That was what was in the original performance agreement, which, at the time when people looked at it, they thought, "That covers a lot." As we've seen as things have unrolled, of course, we found out that it didn't include enough, even though it seemed to include a lot.

By January 2006, the OAA became responsible for all operational functions of the province's air ambulance program.

In September 2006, as the newly renamed Ornge, the corporation took over the management of air ambulance dispatch. So at this point it's got management of everything.

In 2007, Ornge then went on and signed an agreement for expanded critical-care fixed-wing air ambulance services.

In 2008, Ornge took over responsibility to provide critical-care land ambulance services. That same year, Ornge purchased new high-performance medically equipped helicopters and added new high-performance medically equipped aircraft to its fleet.

In 2009, Ornge air purchased four hangars, located in Ottawa, Moosonee, Kenora and London.

In 2010, Ornge opened Canada's first transport medicine centre of excellence and, by the end of that year, reached a significant milestone, transporting its 100,000th patient.

Since their creation, air ambulance services in Ontario have undergone a number of enhancements that extended services across the entire province.

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For additional background, I would like to turn briefly to the legislation and accountability mechanisms that govern ambulance service in Ontario. Both land and air ambulance services are governed by the Ambulance Act and regulations and standards made under the act. Of course, what Bill 50 is going to do is amend the Ambulance Act, which controls both air and land ambulance services.

The act, as currently constituted, sets out the responsibilities and expectations of the minister and other parties related to the delivery of land and air ambulance and related services. And of course, because it covers land ambulance service, a large part of that is really more related to thinking about the relationship between the municipalities, which for the most part supply land ambulance service rather than air ambulance service, whereas what we're tabling here is very explicitly related to the air ambulance service.

The government provides Ornge with funding, through a contractual agreement, to deliver air ambulance services as part of the minister's obligation under the Ambulance Act to fund and ensure the provision of air ambulance service. The province also supplies Ornge with funding to operate the critical-care land ambulance service.

So that's by way of history to where we are now.

Now I think we need to look at why we need to enhance the accountability provisions and transparency provisions that are currently in the act and in the old performance agreement. Of course, we're all aware that the Auditor General tabled a report earlier this year that was quite critical of some of the things that are going on at Ornge, and we also know that there's been a lot of public discussion in the last few months around things that have gone awry at Ornge.

But I'd like to begin by thanking the Auditor General for his thorough and very insightful review of Ornge. His advice has guided many of the actions our government is taking to fix the problems at Ornge, and we're confident that the concerns raised by the Auditor General will be addressed through the swift actions we've already taken, and through these proposed legislative amendments.

What did the auditor have to say? Well, the Auditor General recommends that the ministry renegotiate the performance agreement with Ornge and establish measurable performance indicators. That's interesting, because I happened to be on the committee the first time the auditor reviewed the air ambulance service. And it was interesting that when the deputy minister of the day spoke to us at public accounts at that point, they talked quite extensively about not just why they needed to set

up a new service, but they also talked about having measurable performance indicators. What I think we have found out is that while there were certainly some performance indicators in the original performance agreement, whether they were (a) extensive enough and (b) whether they were actually reasonably measurable has turned out not to be the case.

So the auditor said we need to go back and renegotiate; we need to have a better performance agreement. In essence, the auditor was recognizing that the performance agreement as constituted when Ornge was originally set up really didn't do it. It didn't let the government get the information and the oversight that it really needed.

So we have looked at that, and with the benefit of hindsight it's very clear that the previous agreement simply did not have the oversight we needed or the powers that were required to step in sooner when it became evident that things were going off the rails at Ornge.

Under the former agreement—so this is the old performance agreement, the first one—the past leadership was able to avoid accountability and withhold information from the government concerning its for-profit companies. We simply did not have the power to regulate, to regularly access financial information and monitor operations at Ornge. And both the auditor and some of the testimony that we've heard in the current hearings going on at public accounts—we've heard from the auditor, in particular, how frustrating even the auditor found it to try and get information about what was going on at Ornge, because some of the information was available, but anything that had been transferred over to the for-profit corporations was simply just being blocked. The legal opinion that Ornge had received was, "If we put it at the for-profit subsidiaries, we don't have to provide it to the government," and even the Auditor General found that the Auditor General couldn't get the information once the particular aspect of the operation had been transferred.

So it became very apparent that the limited operational and financial information that was provided to the ministry was insufficient and, in some cases, inaccurate. So it was more than insufficient. As we've gotten better access to the information, we've begun to realize that, in fact, the information was often inaccurate or misleading.

For example, the old performance agreement did not require ministry approval to create for-profit entities like Ornge Global, which is where many of the problems began. The government had no control over these for-profit entities, and we were falsely assured, as it turns out, that public dollars would not be used to fund the for-profit enterprises. Most of these for-profit entities are now gone, and the rest are in the process of being wound down.

In the past, Ornge also had no restrictions on assuming debt. The old performance agreement gave the government no say in major acquisitions. We know that the former leadership made a significant helicopter purchase

and that they purchased and leased back their corporate headquarters. Under the amended performance agreement, which was ratified by our government and the Ornge board on March 19, and now in effect, all those things have been fixed.

So just to make this perfectly clear, the new performance agreement which has been negotiated with the new management, the new board at Ornge, has now been signed, is now in effect. So with respect to the performance agreement, when I talk about the new performance agreement, it's done; it's there. When we talk about the legislation, of course, that's now what is before this House. That needs our approval to move forward. So I want to make that distinction.

Now, with respect to the amended performance agreement, then, which is now in effect, it raises the level of oversight far above that which is normally required of organizations receiving public funds. So not only does the new performance agreement bring us up to standard in terms of accountability and transparency, it actually goes beyond what is often the required standard for transfer agencies. So the performance agreement, the new performance agreement, is very rigorous in terms of its requirement.

Most importantly, we want to focus on patient care. We know that we need to safeguard patient care and make sure that patients in Ontario who have some critical illness where they require air ambulance or critical land ambulance transfer are getting the best care possible from Ornge. So we really need to focus on how we are treating—ultimately, that's what it's all about: making sure that we're taking care of those critical services for our patients.

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The enhanced provisions of the amended performance agreement can be grouped under two general headings: first of all, accountability and transparency; and secondly, safeguarding patient safety and care.

Let's look at what's new in accountability and transparency under the new performance agreement. As the auditor's report shows, Ornge was not providing the ministry with the appropriate operational and financial information we needed to assess the quality and value of its service. And it now appears that the information that was provided, as I say, was either often insufficient or inaccurate.

The amended performance agreement raises the level of oversight with the following measures and obligations: first of all, tougher funding conditions based on key performance indicators so that the funding is now much more directly tied to achieving the performance indicators; increased audit and inspection powers by the ministry; more detailed financial planning, monitoring, control and reporting obligations; a committee to advise the board on quality improvement initiatives.

At public accounts this morning, we all actually heard from Barry McLellan, who some people around here might remember as the former chief coroner of the province of Ontario. He is now the CEO of Sunnybrook

health services. He is now serving on the board, the new board, at Ornge, and he is leading the quality care committee at Ornge. So the person who is now leading the quality care function at Ornge has a wealth of experience in both emergency services and other aspects of medicine, and in hospital administration. So we've got an absolutely top-notch expert who is now leading the new focus on advising the board on quality improvement initiatives.

The new performance agreement also sets up a new patient advocate and complaints process to ensure patient safety, which is modeled on the one that is used in Ontario hospitals.

There's mandatory public reporting of expenses and restrictions on meals, travel and hospitality, much more like either is internally true of the public service or true of many of our transfer payments, with the new directives that we have put in for our transfer partners, so we're bringing Ornge into those requirements.

There are quality improvement provisions that link executive compensation to actual performance improvement targets in the annual quality plan, and there is mandatory approval by the minister for any changes to Ornge's corporate structure, which was obviously lacking in the previous case. Now, changes in corporate structure have to go to the minister, and the minister must also approve the sale of assets by Ornge, of any major assets.

The whole performance and accountability structure has been totally overhauled and is much more rigorous. There's much more access for the government to the information that we need to make sure that Ornge is operating properly.

Then, if we look at safeguarding patient care and safety, where the auditor again highlighted some concerns around dispatch and response times for air and critical-care land ambulance, again, our government is taking these concerns extremely seriously, Speaker.

In the past, Ornge was not obligated to report emergency dispatch information; that is, to report back to the ministry on the effectiveness of their emergency dispatch. Going forward, the amended performance agreement will place a greater emphasis on performance standards and require increased reporting of dispatch information, including cancelled and declined air and land ambulance calls. Mr. McLellan this morning told us that that was one of his top priorities, is this whole issue around effective dispatch service. That was certainly in this current report from the Auditor General. One of the things that he focused on was the need to improve the dispatching of the air ambulances, and the critical-care land ambulance as well.

The performance agreement is closely aligned with the Excellent Care for All Act, which guides the province's hospitals. Quality improvement and key performance indicators will now be linked to both Ornge's funding and executive compensation because, as we all know, executive compensation is one of the things that tipped us off in the first place to something being seriously wrong at Ornge. Those indicators are now much more carefully controlled, executive compensation in particular.

To ensure that patient safety remains paramount, a new patient advocate will be appointed, a complaints process will be developed, and it will be posted publicly, because one of the problems with the old Ornge agreement was that people didn't necessarily know how to complain. There might have been a complaints process, but if nobody in the public knows how to get to the complaints process, it's not a very effective process. So there will now be a requirement that the public can actually figure out how to complain, because that's the first step: that you need to be able to get feedback from the public.

The amended performance agreement also deals with enhancing the quality of Ornge's services, based on objective, evidence-based performance indicators. In addition, the performance agreement also provides for tougher funding conditions based on key performance indicators, and a committee to advise the board on quality improvement initiatives.

The second audit recommendation from the Auditor General is for the ministry to conduct a formal program evaluation of critical-care land ambulance transports in the province. In response, let me say that our government shares the auditor's concerns that the government's expenditures should provide the government and the people of Ontario with real value for money.

To address this concern and act upon it, the minister committed to a comprehensive program review that will evaluate the operational demand and Ornge's delivery model for both air ambulance service and critical-care land ambulance service. Although I think the public focus has often been on the air ambulance component of the services which Ornge provides, we're making sure that that critical-care land ambulance component is something that we're also looking at, because that's often equally important.

What about Bill 50, which is what is before us? If that's in the performance agreement, what is it that's actually in Bill 50? Because we've done what we could do in the performance agreement, some things have to come to legislation in order to update the requirements there, Speaker.

On March 21, the minister introduced the proposed amendments to the Ambulance Act that would, if passed, do a number of things with respect to an air ambulance service provider such as Ornge.

Let me just explain here. As I said before, the act covers both air and land ambulance, so I'm going to keep referring here to "air ambulance service provider." If I could just quote from the act, there's a new definition here:

"Designated air ambulance service provider' means a person,

"(a) that is designated in the regulations, and

"(b) at the time of designation holds a certificate under section 8 that refers to the provision of air ambulance services;"

These things are very specifically about air, and obviously the regulation that would go along with this

would say that Ornge is a designated air ambulance service provider. While the language in the act is very legalistic, every time I say "air ambulance service provider," think Ornge, okay?

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So, what does Bill 50 do? Firstly, it would give cabinet the power, upon the recommendation of the minister, to appoint one or more provincial representatives to the board of an air ambulance service provider. So if you think about what has happened in the last few months, yes, the minister did in essence ask for the resignation of the old board, and there was an appointment of a new board, but there actually was never really any legal authority for the minister to appoint people to the board of Ornge. The government will now have the authority to appoint some of the board members at Ornge, which means that the province, as in many of our other transfer partners, particularly in the health area—the government will actually have some ability to have some direct input into the decision-making at the board level and be tied into what's going on with the decision-maker. So that is a new provision.

Secondly, it gives the minister the power to issue directives to an air ambulance service provider. Before, it sort of set up a corporation but the minister really didn't have, beyond the performance agreement, the authority to issue directives. Now it is quite clear that when a new issue comes up—because one is never perfect in foresight in anticipating all future issues; none of us are that perfect—there is a provision within the act which enables the minister to issue directives when and if a new issue arises.

Thirdly, it gives the government the ability to include provisions in an agreement between Ontario and an air ambulance service provider. Including provisions in the agreement is a legalistic way of saying that the minister has the right to unilaterally, in essence, amend the performance agreement. Remember what was said by the minister in her comments, that people kept saying, "Oh, well, you should just amend the agreement." But she couldn't just amend the agreement because that required the approval of the board of Ornge, and the board of Ornge said, "We don't want to amend the agreement. We like it without you having a lot of control." So this actually gives the minister the power to amend the agreement.

That's a question which actually the third party has raised with some witnesses at the public accounts hearing, because there are various other health providers that they are familiar with, transfer payment agencies in the health sector, where the minister has the power to amend the performance agreement. The question was raised, "Well, why couldn't you just do that with Ornge unilaterally?" Well, the point is that for those other acts which control some of those other health sectors, their controlling act did give the minister the power to amend. This act, the Ambulance Act, didn't give the minister the power to amend.

So this puts the power given the minister to amend the performance agreement into the act with respect to air

ambulance service provision, which means that in some respects it's catching up with some of the other health service providers, but it also gives the minister the power to amend the agreement, which was not previously held.

Then there's a whole series of arrangements which are essentially in parallel with the Public Hospitals Act; firstly, providing cabinet with the power to appoint a special investigator to investigate and report on certain activities of an air ambulance service provider. Individuals would be prohibited from obstructing a special investigator or from withholding any information required by the special investigator. A special investigator would also be required to provide a report to the minister upon completion of their investigation. Then, depending on the outcome of that investigation, the amended act would also provide cabinet with the power, upon the recommendation of the minister, to appoint a supervisor to exercise the powers of the board, officers and members and other corporate powers of an air ambulance service provider. The supervisor would have the same rights as the board of an air ambulance service provider and the supervisor would report to the minister.

Now, some of you who have been involved with hospital supervisors—there are very similar provisions in the Education Act around appointment of supervisors. There's a number of acts which have the provisions that allow—first, the Public Hospitals Act, for example, where there is a power to appoint an investigator and then, depending on the outcome of the investigation, the power to appoint a supervisor and actually take over the operation if things are seriously astray.

We obviously hope that we will never ever have to use that power. But the air ambulance provisions, if this act is passed, will now be in line with many other health sector and public sector transfer agencies where, in fact, if things have gone wrong, the minister actually does have the power to step in and take over.

Finally, the act would prohibit retaliation against a person who has disclosed information that relates to an air ambulance service provider to an inspector, investigator or special investigator. Air ambulance service providers and other persons would also be prohibited from doing anything to discourage the making of such disclosures, which is the fancy legal language for how you describe whistle-blower provisions. So the Ambulance Act with respect to Ornge will now explicitly have whistle-blowing protection in it. If there ever is a need to have an investigator, that person can be assured that people will be protected if they talk to the investigator.

Then, finally, section 3 of Bill 50—if any of you wish to read Bill 50, the part that when you get there your eyes will glaze over—says that it allows the continuance of a provider of air ambulance services that is “incorporated under the laws of any jurisdiction other than Ontario ... as a corporation under the Corporations Act.”

This is where one really needs a corporate lawyer to help understand the actual details of the language. But if you think back to what the minister said, she pointed out that Ornge was a federally incorporated not-for-profit

and, as the new management at Ornge is winding down the subsidiaries, which, again, I think are, for the most part, federally incorporated for-profit subsidiaries, we are trying to bring those—well, we're winding down the subsidiaries, but Ornge itself needs to come back into the provincial legislative umbrella.

There are some legal impediments which—I don't pretend to be a corporate lawyer, so you're going to have to find yourself a corporate lawyer if you want the detailed explanation. But there are some impediments in the process of reforming Ornge from federal to provincial, but also winding down federal subsidiaries and putting them into the provincially incorporated Ornge.

So, the effect of section 3 is to let us get on with fixing Ornge. We need this legislation to conclude the process of winding down the subsidiaries and getting Ornge, the original Ornge that just does public air ambulance service, under the umbrella of provincial legislation. As I say, I don't pretend to be a corporate lawyer, but what I do understand is, I think every member in this House has an interest in making sure that that work at Ornge which the new board and the new management is carrying out in getting rid of those for-profit subsidiaries and the charity that had ski boats or whatever they were doing—getting rid of all these things and finishing up that process. And we need this legislation.

1650

What we do not need is people wasting debate time and ringing the bell for 30 minutes here and 30 minutes there, when this is a critical piece of legislation that we need to get on with restructuring Ornge for the benefit of the taxpayers of Ontario and the people who are having critical emergency health situations. We need to deliver the service to people. We do not need to be wasting our time listening to ringing bells. We need to get to work and deal with this act.

So, in conclusion, this proposed legislation, along with the amended performance agreement, builds on steps already taken to improve oversight at Ornge, including the launching of a forensic audit, the appointment of an interim president and CEO, as well as a new board of directors and the winding down of for-profit entities. We have taken these measures in response to the auditor's recommendations and have taken action to restore confidence in Ontario's air and critical land ambulance services.

The new leadership at Ornge has established a new era of transparency and accountability at the organization. Thanks to their commitment and dedication, there has already been terrific progress on improvements at Ornge. The leadership team has been working to address concerns regarding the medical interiors of the helicopters, and they're now working to strengthen the online response process, to improve launch times, ensure appropriate staff coverage and the coordination of resources across the province, to evaluate the dispatch process, review the patient safety initiatives under the supervision of Sunnybrook CEO and Ornge board member Dr. Barry McLellan, and review the government oversight and procurement practices.

There is no question that the new leadership and the front-line staff are doing their utmost to deliver safe, reliable air ambulance services to the people of Ontario. They are putting their full efforts towards their core mission of providing life-saving care to Ontario patients. I want to thank the dedicated paramedics, pilots and front-line staff at Ornge who work so hard every day to save lives. I'm confident that the auditor's advice, combined with the actions that we are taking, will contribute to a better air ambulance service and the highest standards of care for all Ontarians.

But now it's in our court. This is the piece of the work that is our responsibility as members of this Legislature from every party. This is our part of the job. So I urge every member to support our proposed amendments and expedite the passage of Bill 50, the amendments to the Ambulance Act which will allow us to complete the work at Ornge.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I know this is a very long hour that we've listened to the goings-on on Bill 50, but the really important discussion today—I want to start by recognizing the member from Guelph wearing the team jacket for Ornge. They really are onside with that organization with Chris Mazza as the former CEO. I think they've really scored a goal here with that organization; in fact, you can take that to the bank.

But the real point I'm making here is that I think this is like a clear admission of guilt. It's like closing the barn door after the horses have all run away, and in fact, you're doing a lot after the fact and very little before the fact, when you actually knew—if everything I've heard is true, there were a lot of connections. And I want to thank our members, especially Frank Klees, the member from Newmarket–Aurora, for his leadership and his, I would say, professionalism. He's never really gotten into the personal stuff so much as trying to frame who knew what, when.

I'm not sure Bill 50 is going to do that. It's certainly setting up a governance model to protect the Minister of Health from any further exposure on this file, but I still feel very uncomfortable when health dollars have been wasted.

I think back over the last number of years—the eHealth part. In some of the rollout of Aging at Home, for instance, there was a lot of money spent on vehicles but not too much on service.

Here's one more case where there have been hundreds of millions of dollars spent. On transition, I'm sure there are problems, but I am not convinced, from any action I've seen or response by the minister or in fact the Premier, that I can trust them to get this right.

We need a full, clear, select committee on this to get to the root cause before this new organization is given even more powers and we find out from the next auditor's report that it's still out of control. I still remain concerned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's rather interesting to listen to the Minister of Health and her PA about this. We just spent the entire day at public accounts, where we found out that the existing performance agreement had many levers in it that were never—they never even tried to use them.

We also find out that numerous briefings were offered to a number of ministry people. The chair of Ornge came to the Ministry of Health, went into the minister's boardroom, explained exactly the structure that they were about to put in place, explained the for-profit companies that were about to be created, laid it all out, and assured himself that he was clear, concise and understood and that the people there understood what he had just explained. Then the government did nothing.

We can put all the bills in the world that we want; we can make them bulletproof if we want; but if you see no evil, hear no evil, then the three little monkeys are pretty useless, aren't they?

Interjections.

M^{me} France Gélinas: My colleagues are joking there, and I have a hard time staying serious.

At the end of the day, what we are presented with here is too little, too late. This is not going to be helpful. There is so much spotlight on Ornge now that they're not going to breathe out of time or move one baby finger out of sync.

They needed to act before. It's becoming clear that they knew a long time ago and refused to act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: The bill in front of us, Bill 50, the Ambulance Amendment Act, amends the Ambulance Act, so I think it's important to realize that we're amending an important act, and also to realize that—I understand the concerns about Ornge. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care: Almost half our budget is spent on that ministry. It's one of the largest ministries we have, and there are so many things that happen within that ministry. It's almost impossible, in my view, for a minister to be totally up to date on all the different matters that occur there. But the bureaucrats, the people that work under the ministry, are given the job to do that.

Without pointing my finger at any bureaucrat, I think it's important to note that this bill, Bill 50, appoints a supervisor or a special investigator when the air ambulance service is not being operated in the public interest, similar to a hospital. It also allows the minister to give directives to an air ambulance service provider, like a hospital. It allows the ministry to establish terms that are deemed to be included in the performance agreement between the ministry and the air ambulance service. It continues with other amendments, such as to appoint provincial representatives on the air ambulance provider's board, and to provide whistle-blower protection for those who disclose information to an inspector, investigator or a ministry. It also provides the means for the current air ambulance, Ornge, to become a provin-

cially incorporated organization, which will even further increase accountability of the organization.

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Very similar to my colleague from Nickel Belt, this is just too little, too late. Where was the accountability and the oversight in the first place? This boondoggle, this fiasco, has been going on through three ministers of health, beginning with George Smitherman, through David Caplan, and it continues with current Minister Matthews, who not only ignored questions regarding Ornge here in the Legislature in April of last year, but also turned a blind eye to a detailed written appeal for her intervention from the Ontario Air Transport Association.

Speaker, this is becoming a recurring theme. What we continue to hear in there is, “We need to do better. We will do better.” That’s not acceptable. This is the health care of the people of Ontario. We need to be doing things right the first time. Scandalous waste of resources, scarce resources, for our health care sector, the deals we’re hearing about, the schemes—this was not something that just all of a sudden appeared overnight. This was very well thought out. This was a scheme that people could not bring people into this Legislature to make sure we understood what’s going on. This was well thought out and deceitful, Speaker, and it’s unacceptable.

We need to ensure that when people on the front line bring ideas, concerns forward, they have the ability to speak clearly, with open conscience and no fear of reprisal. This Bill 50 is nothing more than the McGuinty government’s attempt to divert attention away from its failure to take action against Ornge, despite repeated warnings of financial irregularities, bloated executive salaries, operational deficiencies and, worst of all, compromising of patient health care.

Speaker, this is an Ornge bomb. It’s not a blossom; it’s a bomb. It’s terrible. As my colleague from Durham suggested, I can’t believe you would wear a team coat in here after all that’s gone on and the scandal of such an Ornge fiasco.

Speaker, it’s unacceptable. It’s a red herring. We will not be supporting it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Guelph has a two-minute response.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: When I get comments about how the witness said this and the witness said that, I really do need to push back. What Mr. Beltzner, the chair of the board, said—and he said that this is what he told people in such briefings as well:

“The use of all government funds was restricted to the benefit of Ontario’s air medical transport system.

“On the last point, I am compelled to reiterate my position and the instructions conveyed to management by the board. The board’s absolute, unequivocal directive to Ornge management was that no public funds were to be used for the operations of the for-profit side of the company.”

Well, it turns out that that’s hogwash. But that was what Mr. Beltzner put in writing to all the different ministries and told, verbally, to anyone who met with him. That was the information he conveyed. Now, as we know, that was not accurate. This is the same man who told the committee that it was okay if he got \$200,000 a year to be the chair of the board and he was okay with the fact that Dr. Mazza got \$1.4 million, because they’d had a compensation analyst tell them it was okay. But apparently, the opposition wants to take Mr. Beltzner’s word for it that he told the government everything there was to know. I’m a little bit more skeptical.

I reiterate what I said before: We need to get this done, every single one of us here, so the work on restructuring Ornge can be completed, and I ask for your support.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Durham might want to get back in his seat if he wants to talk. Thank you.

Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I have mixed feelings about speaking to this bill, and the reason for that is that it really should be named the red herring bill, because what we have here in Bill 50 is nothing more than the McGuinty government’s attempt to divert attention away from its failure to take action against Ornge, despite repeated warnings of financial irregularities, bloated executive salaries, operational deficiencies and, worst of all, compromising of patient care.

Before I go on, Speaker, I want to advise you that I’m sharing my time with my colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, who is the deputy critic for health, and I look forward to his comments as well.

We have now spent a great deal of time at the public accounts committee on this scandal. We have spent numerous hours during question period in the Legislature, bringing to the attention of the Legislature the shortcomings and the failure of the Minister of Health to step in and ensure that there is proper oversight of Ontario’s air ambulance service. We have pointed questions at the Minister of Finance for his failure to provide proper oversight. We have repeatedly attempted to get the Premier’s attention, because we know that the Premier was properly briefed on this issue and did nothing.

Repeatedly—repeatedly—we get nothing from the government other than a defensive posturing. Now here is my question: We cannot understand why, on an important issue like this, there should be any contention among any of us in this place about what the proper steps should be and about condemning those who failed to look after and protect something as important as our emergency air ambulance service.

We should all be on common ground on that issue. But for some reason, members of the government feel they must defend something. What they should be doing, and I say this with a great deal of sincerity—the Minister of Health, I believe, has done a great deal of discredit to her office by defending her role and by insisting that she had no authority and no leverage to step in. By doing

that, she has actually admitted that she has failed the people of this province, and we've repeatedly called on the Minister of Health to do the honourable thing: Step aside and allow someone else to move forward and provide leadership.

The Minister of Health has repeatedly defended the indefensible, and defended an organization that, quite frankly, has wasted precious, scarce health care dollars. Yet, when I raised those issues in April last year here, from this desk on three different occasions, the best the minister could do—and we can check Hansard—was to defend the organization. I can still hear her words: what a great organization it is, how proud she is of the work that Ornge is doing.

Why did she feel so compelled to defend an organization that she herself had had many warnings about up until that point? She had a letter. If she didn't want to believe a fellow colleague here in the Legislature, she had a letter sent to her by the Ontario Air Transport Association. This is addressed to the Honourable Deb Matthews, May 4, 2011. Here's what it said: "We want to advise you that Ornge has seriously misled the industry and all Ontarians about its true intentions. It compromised patient care and created serious personnel and cost issues for the hospitals."

This is a letter that is five pages long. The minister never even bothered to respond to these people. These are stakeholders, respected people in our province, and she ignored it. This ostrich syndrome bridged three ministers, unfortunately: Minister Smitherman, who actually signed the document, that original performance agreement. What did he do with that? He transferred all the assets of our air ambulance service to Dr. Chris Mazza and his organization for \$1. There was not one moment of transparency in that. There was no effort to take this to a public tendering process to determine whether there may be someone else in this great province of Ontario who may have had greater experience, more extensive experience, more capacity than Dr. Chris Mazza. No, it was handed over, behind closed doors, for \$1. We thank George Smitherman for that.

1710

Minister Caplan, a minister who inherited the agreement: We know that members of the Liberal Party wrote letters to Minister Caplan. Minister Gravelle wrote a letter to Minister Caplan, the member from Peterborough wrote a letter to Minister Caplan, raising concerns.

What did they do? Let me tell you what they did. Here is what Mr. Caplan, Minister Caplan at the time, did. He referred those people who were complaining back to Ornge. My, that's leadership. That's looking after things on behalf of the people of Ontario. That's showing true leadership. Every one of them failed, and then we come to the current minister, who not only ignored questions regarding Ornge here in the Legislature but turned a blind eye to many other concerns that were brought to her office.

Not until the scandalous goings-on at Ornge were brought to the attention of the public by the media did the

minister finally take notice. Why is that? Why is it that it takes a front-page story by the Toronto Star to finally get the Minister of Health to say, "Hey, maybe we've got a problem here." And thank goodness for the media. I say to you, Speaker, you know, in many ways, the media has become, in today's world, an official opposition to the government. Why? Because the government doesn't respect the members who were elected here, but they do care whether they're going to be embarrassed in the public through stories by the media. It's unfortunate, it's not the way this is supposed to work here, but that is exactly what's going on.

Now, among her first litany of excuses for not doing anything, what was the first excuse that we heard in this place from the minister? "The performance agreement didn't allow me to take action." That awful performance agreement, and she threw—the minister threw her former colleague under the bus a couple of times for that, and he did fight back, because I recall the articles in the media. In fact, he wrote a letter to the editor in which he said, "Oh, no, no. No, it's not the performance agreement; it's the minister who failed to act, and it's the people in her ministry who failed to act."

Well, here's what happened. Repeatedly, the minister stood in this place and represented to us here and to the public that she couldn't act because the performance agreement didn't let her. And to legitimize the minister's excuses, what do we have now? She announced with great fanfare that she's going to solve the problem by giving us a new, improved performance agreement that we heard about in debate today.

Speaker, we're debating Bill 50 here because the other blanket that the minister is now covering herself with to comfort herself is Bill 50: "Oh, we need new legislation so that this will never happen again." Well, it's interesting, because neither is necessary to protect the public. Neither a new performance agreement nor this bill is necessary to ensure that our air ambulance service complies with the direction of the government.

Under oath today—Lynne Golding, who is a partner of the law firm Fasken Martineau DuMoulin LLP, testified under oath. This was the firm that was advising Ornge. She spoke very clearly about the structure that was incorporated, the reason why it was incorporated. I want to read it into the record, because this was a turning point. Today was a turning point on this issue, and the reason is that the primary reasons that the Minister of Health has been telling us here in the House that she couldn't act were both unearthed as lame excuses because they were false. Those reasons were false.

The member for Guelph said that we should find ourselves a corporate lawyer to help us understand the complexities of this new legislation. Well, we had a corporate lawyer in our committee today who told us, under oath, that effectively this legislation is unnecessary, and she told us that the performance agreement is unnecessary as well.

Here's what she said. She told us that the performance agreement that was signed in 2005 was developed over a

period of years and included the advice of some of the most senior people in the government. She also told us—and I'd like you to listen to this, Speaker, please.

“From a legal perspective, we ... took as our model an example closer to home.” This was talking about the corporate structure for the original incorporation of Ornge as a not-for-profit. “At that time, there were approximately 150 health service providers operating in the province, offering their services to the public, receiving almost all of their operating funding from the province. Most, but not all, of them are provincially incorporated. They were non-share capital corporations”—just like Ornge—“registered as federal charities with boards elected by their members and without provincial government appointees. What were they? Ontario's public hospitals.”

Isn't that interesting, Speaker? She went on to tell us that five of those public hospitals were federally incorporated. What does that do to the excuse that the minister has been giving us that she couldn't intervene because Ornge was federally incorporated? We have five of our public hospitals that have precisely the same structure as Ornge had. Is the minister telling us that she can't intervene in those hospitals? Of course not. But what we were told by that corporate lawyer under oath today is that what the minister has been telling us is false. She should be held accountable for that, and we intend to do that.

The other excuse that the minister gave us is that the performance agreement would not allow her to intervene. Here is what the corporate lawyer who was acting for Ornge for many years told us, under oath, today:

“The agreement includes extensive reporting obligations and provides the ministry with three separate inspection rights. It gave the ministry access to records pertaining to the grant funds, whether held by Ornge or under Ornge's control.

“It gave the ministry the right to terminate the agreement for cause, including failing to comply with any of Ornge's 15 pages of covenants. If the ministry believed that Ornge was not complying with the agreement but did not want to terminate it—for fear that that would create further risks to patient safety—the ministry could have issued a notice of default or threatened to do so. That usually gets the attention of a grant recipient.”

Speaker, the minister had the authority under the performance agreement to act. She failed to do so. And to stand in her place here, day in and day out, and tell us and tell the public that her hands were tied because of a federal incorporation or because of a performance agreement—Speaker, I have a hard time finding any other word, and you won't let me use it, but I will say that it was not the truth.

Now, having said that, I'd like to move on, and I would like—

1720

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Klees, that was borderline, as you know. You've got enough

seniority in this place to know that I would ask you to withdraw that one.

Mr. Frank Klees: I will withdraw. It was borderline, Speaker; I realize that. I felt compelled, given the circumstances, to let the people know here what the facts are and—

Interjections.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I can't help my frustration when I listened, even a few minutes ago, to the member from Guelph talk about how this new performance agreement would give powers that were never there before. For example, it requires Ornge to keep records of calls that were made. Article 9 of the original agreement—I have it in my hand—the entire article 9 speaks to reporting and records and requires Ornge to keep those records. I don't know how the member can stand in her place with a good conscience and say that documents must now be kept and that was never the case before.

Article 6 of the old performance agreement talks about documentation and administration, and it talks about the requirement that Ornge had to comply.

Speaker, for those who don't know, it all sounds very good. But it's our responsibility here in the Legislature to ensure that the people of this province know what the facts are and know the truth, and we intend to ensure that the people of Ontario find out what that truth is.

One of the interesting things about what is going on here in this Legislature is the fact that we had a very historical vote, Speaker, you'll recall, not very long ago, on a motion that called on the government to form a select committee of the Legislature, an all-party committee of the Legislature, that would be focused exclusively on discovering the truth about this Ornge scandal. It is intended to be of a broad scope and allow the appropriate time for people to come forward—current employees, former employees, stakeholders, who can come forward under the protection of true whistle-blower protection so that there won't be reprisals against them as employees or as suppliers. The official opposition, the PC caucus, and the third party, the NDP caucus, voted in solidarity for that motion. Every member of the Liberal caucus voted against it. We still don't know why. What is it that they want to hide? Nevertheless, we won the vote.

So we have standing now a direction, a motion to the government, to say, “Strike the select committee.” This government is refusing. You heard the member from Guelph talk about how we shouldn't be ringing the bells, how we should just simply co-operate with this government, let them take us down a garden path, and I suppose she'd like us to join hands and sing Kumbaya while we're at it. Well, Speaker, it's not happening.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would ask the member from Durham to go back to his seat if he wants to speak. All right? Otherwise, you know the deal here. Thank you.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, we will not do that. We want the government to respect the will of the Legislature. There is an express direction to the government

House leader to strike an all-party committee so that we can get to the bottom of this.

The former president of the Liberal Party of Canada came and testified at the committee. He opened up his prepared remarks by saying that unfortunately, the 30 minutes that were allotted per witness were insufficient to deal with the matters before us.

Speaker, I didn't agree with very much that this witness brought to us that day, but I do agree with that, and that is precisely why we're calling for a select committee. We do not have the time, within a 30-minute time allocation per witness, one day a week—we now have five weeks left before this House breaks for the summer. That's five days that we have left to actually hear from witnesses under that restricted format that we have. It's a perfect play on the part of the government to say, "We want to suppress the information, as opposed to allowing that information to come forward." That's why people hear the ringing of the bells. It's the only tool that the opposition has to get the attention of the government and say, "Will you listen and will you respect the will of the Legislature and give us that select committee so that we can get on with doing our job?"

I want to point something out to the Minister of Health. Perhaps her staff have not advised her of this. One of the reasons that was given for the need for Bill 50 is so that the minister can send inspectors into Ornge if she feels that is necessary. I'm not sure where the minister has been or where her staff has been, but there's something on the books here in the province of Ontario called the Health Facilities Special Orders Act, RSO 1990—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Which doesn't apply to Ornge.

Mr. Frank Klees: —and it defines "ambulance service." The member from Guelph is carping here, Speaker, saying that it doesn't apply. Let me tell you: I have it on good authority that it does apply, and here is why it applies. I have it here. The member should look at it. It talks about ambulance service, and it says:

"'ambulance service' has the same meaning as in the Ambulance Act."

It goes on to say:

"'health facility' means,

"(a) an ambulance service under the Ambulance Act...." That qualifies Ornge, Mr. Speaker.

It goes on to say, and I'm going to read from the act:

"The purposes of this act are:

"1. To enable the minister to act expeditiously to prevent, eliminate or reduce harm to any person, an adverse effect on the health of any person or impairment of the safety of any person caused or likely to be caused by the physical state of a health facility or the manner of operation of a health facility.

"2. To enable the minister to act expeditiously where the conduct of a licensee or of an officer or director of a corporate licensee affords reasonable grounds for belief that the health facility is not being or is not likely to be operated with competence, honesty, integrity and concern for the health and safety of persons served by the health

facility." Sounds familiar, doesn't it, knowing what we know about Ornge?

It goes on to say that the minister may, number one, suspend Ornge's licence until satisfied that corrections have been made. Ornge comes under section 2.2 of that act. It qualifies.

She would also have been able to take control and operate Ornge for a period of six months and select—here it is. To the member from Guelph, should she choose to look at this act, it says "a person," a supervisor, to take control and manage the operations. That's under subsection 7(1.1) of the act.

Once again, why do I call this legislation a red herring? Because it is nothing more than a foil for the minister to say, "I didn't have the ability to step in." It's covering up her failure to do her job; that's what it is.

Speaker, I want to go to the issue of whistle-blower protection that supposedly is being afforded in this legislation. We've called for whistle-blower protection.

1730

I read the legislation. I'm not sure the member from Guelph has. Here's what it says:

"Whistle-blowing protection

"7.7(1) No person shall retaliate against another person, whether by action or omission, or threaten to do so because,

"(a) anything has been disclosed...."

But then it goes on to say "anything has been disclosed"—to whom? Listen, Speaker: "to an inspector, investigator or special investigator in connection with a designated air ambulance service...."

Speaker, those are the very people that employees and suppliers have been going to about Ornge for the last three years, and none of these people have listened to them. And so now we've got whistle-blower protection that is so narrow, that doesn't apply, and it certainly doesn't give any sense of confidence to the people who we need to hear from. And so, we have a piece of legislation. The minister can get up, the parliamentary assistant can get up and say, "Oh, we're going to give you whistle-blower protection." There won't be one whistle blown under this protection, or so-called protection, and that's why we will be submitting amendments to strengthen this.

True whistle-blower protection, if they wanted to be serious about this, would have provided for a formalized process that absolutely welcomes anyone into the process. It should be overseen by the Ombudsman so that whoever comes forward through that whistle-blower protection has the assurance that there won't be retaliation and has the assurance that they actually will be listened to. This is nothing more than a red herring, and for that reason, we can't support it in its current form. We will be presenting the minister with some recommendations.

Speaker, I want to leave some time for my colleague, but I do want to just close with these thoughts. I still don't understand why every minister in this government and every backbencher in this government is taking the

defensive posture that they are. I want them to consider their actions, and I'd like them to consider just these few points.

First, with regard to this scandal, there was an initial policy decision to sign over the entire air ambulance service, as I said, of the province to one Dr. Chris Mazza for the consideration of \$1. We don't know what the rationale was as to why there wasn't a more open process and why Minister Smitherman didn't invite a more transparent process that would have actually allowed us to move into the consolidation of our air ambulance service on a solid footing.

Second, the internal decision process of the government around this process was riddled with a great deal of confusion. We have been able to table at the committee the fact that senior bureaucrats had serious concerns about this process and about the way this agreement was being drafted.

Third, it's apparent that once the policy decision was made and the performance agreement was put in place, the government failed at all levels to enforce the very terms of the agreement that they drafted. They had the ability to do that; they failed to do it, notwithstanding the fact that \$112 million a year—and it actually built up over the last number of years to the point where it's now \$150 million a year—is being transferred from the Ministry of Health into this organization called Ornge, without any oversight, without any accountability.

Speaker, the minister said she had no control? All she had to do was turn the taps off. All she had to do was say, "No, we're putting a stop-payment on your cheque, Dr. Mazza." "Board of directors, you don't want to comply? You don't want to change the performance agreement? Guess what? No money tomorrow." That would have gotten their attention real fast.

But, you know, they were asleep at the switch; either that, or they were convinced, through some very strong and effective lobbying, to turn the other way and allow these people to do what they wanted to do. Allow them to collect their \$1.4 million in salaries, allow the board of directors to collect \$200,000 a year from a public entity—and by the way, do you care? Does the government care that that took place? I can tell you, Speaker, the taxpayers care a great deal, and the taxpayers want to know why the Minister of Health—if she felt that there was a problem with incorporation, if she felt there was a problem with the performance agreement, why didn't she just put a stop-payment on the cheque?

Speaker, even the Premier, the ministers, the deputy ministers and an entire platoon of political advisers who were called into briefings about the plans that Ornge had to spawn a group of for-profit companies and to siphon health care dollars into those for-profit companies—not a single one of them raised concerns about those plans.

I don't know about you; there isn't a person that I talk to in my constituency, whether they be a business person or whether they be a janitor or whether it's a housewife—when they see what has happened here, there isn't one of them who doesn't say, "Who allowed this to

happen? And why didn't someone say no? Or why didn't somebody at least say, 'Wait a minute. I think we may have a problem here. Let's have a discussion about it'?" But not even that.

Now, the more that we hear and the further that we get into our public hearings, the more evident it becomes that some very, very powerful people who are friends of the Liberal Party were involved in this process. I can tell you that it's interesting that the former chief of staff to the Premier was retained by a law firm to give them advice on how to best communicate their wants and their plans to the government. Maybe that was just coincidence.

Isn't it interesting that it was the president of the Liberal Party of Canada who ended up being not only a lawyer, an adviser, a spokesperson—

Interjection: A lobbyist.

Mr. Frank Klees: —and a lobbyist, although he denied that at our committee. I asked him four times, "Did you lobby?" "No, I didn't lobby. I didn't lobby anybody." You know, the Integrity Commissioner of our province and the registrar of lobbyists actually has a different opinion of that and advised him of that in writing. We'll have to deal with that, and we will deal with that, because that is a perfect example of someone, under oath, saying one thing, and it turns out not to be true. So we'll deal with that.

Finally, Speaker, I think that we have to deal with this in the best way that we know how. We are members of the opposition here, and what we were hoping was that on this issue, we would find common ground with the government and that we could work together, that we could call in those who are responsible, that we together would find out who knew what and when, and that there would be consequences for those people, not because we relish that there be consequences, but because it's our responsibility to ensure that there are consequences for those who break the public trust, and that is what happened here.

So we're here, debating legislation. I say again that this legislation is nothing less than a defence by the minister to cover the fact that she failed in her oversight responsibilities. We see through it; the public will see through it.

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The legislation before us is not necessary. There are some areas that we'll participate with amendments, to at least strengthen that. The performance agreement changes weren't necessary, but if they want a new and improved agreement, so be it.

Speaker, I want to close with these comments. I want to express sincere appreciation to those front-line people at Ornge who were there in the past. Some of those individuals left of their own accord because they could no longer stomach what they saw. They could no longer be part of the abuse of public dollars. There are others who were let go because they dared to say something about what they saw, and they were fired. And there are those who are still there and who are so wanting to come forward and tell us what they know, not in any vindictive

way but because they want to do their part to restore confidence in our air ambulance service.

I want to thank the paramedics. I want to thank the pilots. I want to thank the administrators. I want to thank the dispatchers and the engineers who are on the front lines of our air ambulance service. I want to say to them: We will stand with you and we will ensure that the truth gets known. We'll ensure that we restore the integrity of our air ambulance service and we'll do whatever it takes in this place on their behalf and on behalf of the Ontario public who rely on this important service.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Speaker.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no, he's splitting his time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Would the member for Durham like to help me out?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to share time with my colleague Mr. Klees from Newmarket–Aurora for his excellent leadership and due diligence on this matter on behalf of the taxpayers of Ontario. I'm pleased to rise today to speak on Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services. This bill is a result of the financial and operational irregularities at Ontario's air ambulance service, better known as the Ornge scandal, a scandal that involves bloated executive salaries, operational deficiencies and, most shameful of all, compromised patient care.

After reviewing the bill, I have to say that it's a red herring, albeit an orange red herring. Shamefully, it is nothing more than an attempt to divert attention from a scandal that could prove to be one of the biggest in our province's history, perhaps even more wasteful than the billion-dollar boondoggle—eHealth—that this Liberal government also has on their hands.

It also reads like a knee-jerk reaction to the years-long fiasco at Ornge: serious breaches of public trust that the Liberal side of this House—namely, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Finance and the Premier—have tried to dodge and hide. They blindly defend an organization that was siphoning scarce health care dollars into a web of for-profit companies. Not until the scandalous goings-on behind the Ornge walls were exposed to the media did the minister attempt to take any kind of action. Even then, she tried to sidestep by claiming she was powerless.

We don't have the whole truth yet. We can assume we're just at a tipping point of what's shaping up to be one of the province's biggest scandals and boondoggles. And what lies underneath this crisis is no doubt a colossal competency crisis of the minister in charge, a minister who claims ignorance, that she did not know, in spite of the fact that questions were first raised here in this Legislature one year ago, in April 2011; a minister with a dodgy excuse, the false claim that the nature of the advice she received assured her of no crisis at Ornge, in spite of the fact that she had a detailed written appeal for her intervention from the Ontario Air Transport Associa-

tion. But even more damning is the continuing failure of her and her government to fess up and admit what and when they knew.

My colleague from Chatham–Kent–Essex, Rick Nicholls, often says in this House, "When you mess up, fess up." Fess up; absolutely. Very simple. Bill 50 is proof of this deep cynicism and proof of a failed leadership at the Ministry of Health.

The bill's single biggest weakness is a so-called whistle-blower protection section, which fails to protect some of the very people who are in the best position to report fraud, waste and abuse, and health and safety violations.

Firstly, it fails by not providing across-the-board protection for whistle-blowers. Secondly, it fails by imposing limits on which individuals are protected and whom they can approach with information. So why should we believe, after the first fiasco, anything will change?

What is needed is a process that will not only safeguard the whistle-blower, but will also instill confidence that their concerns will be taken seriously. The Ombudsman should be engaged to assist in developing that process and should be integral to a formalized whistle-blower reporting process, if this is to have any meaningful effect.

I want to talk about some of the red flags—not orange; red flags—raised by our Ornge whistle-blowers; namely, the whistle-blower who warned the Ministry of Health about Ornge deceit in 2008. An Ornge accountant blew the whistle in 2008, telling the province that the publicly funded Ornge was handing out money like water. The whistle-blower put his issues in writing to provincial officials and was interviewed by investigators in November 2008. Then the health ministry told him the next month that the problems were solved; it's all okay.

Helicopters' tail rotors falling off—Mr. Speaker, an ambulance service should be helping and protecting health care, not creating business for themselves.

Ornge's Dr. Mazza paid \$144 million to an Italian helicopter company for 12 helicopters, the Augusta-Westland model 139 choppers, even though these helicopters were flagged for safety concerns. I should admit and share with the House as well, they were even designed so that the paramedics when, in need, couldn't get over top of the patient to perform that perhaps life-sensitive care. This deal personally enriched Dr. Mazza and others by about \$6.7 million.

This bill should be an opportunity for the Minister of Health to create a culture of ethics and integrity. However, the only way to do that is to protect the employees by fostering a workplace where they can report misconduct without the fear of reprisal.

So, before you ask employees to come forward with allegations of waste and fraud and violations, you have to guarantee that you will, firstly, value them; secondly, protect them; and, finally, if there's a problem, you will take appropriate and timely action. I question that this current Minister of Health has the will to do that.

Just earlier today, a member of her government, the member from Willowdale, referred to an Ornge witness as “crazy.” This is unparliamentary, disrespectful and does not help this serious debate. It’s apparent this government has no genuine will to get to the bottom of the Ornge scandal, to go beyond the findings of the Auditor General.

The Auditor General’s special report, a 42-page-long indictment of Ornge and this government, this Liberal government, among other things revealed shady real estate deals and a very complex, well-thought-out and tangled web of deception.

Rent payments 40% higher than the fair market rent is just one example. Another is the so-called “crystal palace” real estate deal, on which Auditor General Jim McCarter wrote:

“The building that houses Ornge’s corporate head office was purchased for \$15 million using funding borrowed through a bond issue. Ornge then entered into a complex arrangement with some of the other entities it created to sell the building and lease it back to itself. An independent real estate appraiser” was engaged and “estimated that, under its lease with a related Ornge company, Ornge’s rent payments”—as stated earlier—“are 40% higher than the fair-market rent. Over the first five years of the 25-year lease, this amounts to Ornge paying \$2 million more than it would pay if the building’s cost per square foot were comparable to that of similar buildings in the area. Ornge’s above-market rent enabled one of the entities involved in the arrangement, Ornge Global Real Estate, to obtain \$24 million in financing for the building that Ornge paid \$15 million for. We understand that the \$9 million ‘profit’ generated as a result was being flowed to a company called Ornge Global Holdings LP for Ornge’s future purchase of limited partnership (ownership) units of that company. At the time of our audit, Ornge Global Holdings LP was owned by members of Ornge’s senior management and the board.”

And \$700 million of taxpayers’ money has been spent on Ornge since 2005, and there is a yet-to-be-determined number on the millions of dollars that may have been used for personal gain.

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So, in light of the Auditor General’s scathing report on Ornge, in light of the scathing news stories peppered with more explosive evidence every day, I ask the members opposite, the Liberals, to consider how their conduct fares in the public’s eye and to consider what the court of public opinion says about the lack of response from the Premier, the minister, their cabinet, the backbenchers—their party. Certainly, they have no confidence, and neither do we—no confidence that this new layer of legislation will do anything to restore confidence in what is an essential emergency health care service. Only competent leadership can bring about that confidence.

It is becoming almost a daily mention from the Minister of Health in this House that we need to do better. This is simply unacceptable. The public needs to know that the government is bringing their A game when

it comes to their health care. “We will do better” just doesn’t cut it. They didn’t deliver the first time around; why would they this time?

Bringing forward this meaningless bill and boasting that this will bring about the changes necessary to restore that confidence only confirms to us that the minister does not grasp the depth of the issues that are the core of the problems at Ornge and that she and her government are more concerned about self-preservation than ensuring the integrity of one of our essential health care services.

If it wasn’t so, they would have moved ahead with the setting up of a select committee to investigate Ornge, as was the will of this House and as was agreed by the minister. We still await her to honour that commitment. A select committee will allow more Ornge witnesses to come forward with information and be allowed time to speak on their concerns; it will allow us to get to the truth. As long as the government House leader refuses to respect the will of this Legislature to strike a select committee into Ornge, we will not get to the bottom of this scandal.

This bill is nothing more than an attempt to divert attention away from the fact that the minister has had the power to appoint a supervisor and/or inspector from the very beginning of the Ornge saga. It’s deplorable that the minister didn’t step up to the plate and do it right from day one, when she had the ability. The minister had the power to intervene at Ornge under the original Ornge performance agreement as well as the Independent Health Facilities Act. Article 15 of the original performance agreement gave her powers of intervention. Why, Minister, did you not step up? Why are you now bringing more legislation to slow things down and dampen all of the thought process of those people who want to step up and do the right thing? It’s shameful.

It’s a shame that the Premier, the cabinet and the Liberal MPPs are not as committed as we are to get to the bottom of this scandal. Why don’t they want to find out what happened and to ensure that those responsible are held accountable? It’s a significant premise that we should all be working towards when we come to this House every day—and, most importantly, to determine what has to be done to restore confidence in our air ambulance service.

That’s our objective, and we intend to get there. We owe that to the Ontario public. We owe that to the front-line staff of our air ambulance service—the paramedics, the pilots, the engineers, the dispatchers, the maintenance crews and the administrative staff—who are dedicated to provide an essential health care service to the people of this province.

The Minister of Health, the Minister of Finance and the Premier blindly have defended an organization siphoning scarce health dollars from a much-needed service that all of us benefit from—or, in this case, when they’re wasting money, we honestly don’t benefit from, and that’s absolutely shameful. This was raised here in this Legislature in April of last year, and we still haven’t been able to get them to agree to get to the bottom of the truth and move on.

The Minister of Health and her ministry officials ignored warnings from employees and stakeholders about numerous things: financial irregularities, contraventions of prescribed procurement policies and operational problems. The staff noticed it. The staff picked up on it. They came. As we heard earlier in this court today, one of the corporate lawyers involved knew, and suggested that she would have known all of those facts and details. Yet, in this room, she denies that. She continues to turn a blind eye. We can't step aside. The Premier knows this and he, every day, doesn't even step aside; he just shunts it off to the House leader—unacceptable. Stand up and take your medicine.

Do you know what? It's shameful that until the media—I think Mr. Klees mentioned this as well. Frank and others in this House have brought it to the attention of the government, and they just shoved it aside, like most things. They pretend that they operate by another separate set of rules. Their arrogance suggests that they have a majority still. It's not true; we have a minority Parliament that needs to be respected.

She said she was powerless, that she couldn't do anything, and yet, right in the document that she approved, it says that she did have the power to step in. She just did not have the will and the competency to step up and do the honourable thing, sir.

Both documents, the first bill and now this one, are nothing more than a cynical attempt to divert attention from the government's failure to exercise its oversight responsibilities. At the end of the day, the people of Ontario expect all of us in this House to come to work and do the best of our job to protect their interests; to protect, most importantly, their health care and ensure that their hard-earned tax dollars aren't wasted on scandals like eHealth and gas plants that we don't build and then we do build and we don't build. It's unbelievable, the money we waste—not we; the Liberal government. I want to emphasize: the Liberal government and the waste that they have. The eHealth boondoggle—now this one. Where's this one going to go? I do think that this could become the biggest scandal this province has ever seen—absolutely deplorable, Speaker.

The Minister of Health had both the contractual and the legislative authority to intervene, but in failing to act on that authority, she failed the people of this province. She allowed our air ambulance service to be hijacked by a gang of self-serving, unethical, highly powered and well-connected political insiders.

We've been asking the minister to step aside, to accept responsibility for her lack of leadership, her lack of decisiveness in restoring confidence to the people of Ontario; to do the honourable thing and step down. Instead, she continues to make excuses, she lays blame on others and now attempts to hide under a blanket of legislation and yet another piece of paper. And that, according to the minister, should give all of us comfort that all will be well. Well, we're calling the bluff. It hasn't been well for a long time, it's not well today, and

we have no confidence that it's going to be better tomorrow because of this piece of legislation.

I submit, Speaker—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Have a glass of water.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Jeff. That's great. It's nice to see that you do care.

It's my auctioneer skills coming in, Speaker. You get on a roll, and you want to roll. I'm very passionate about this issue. This is something that is very detrimental to the people of Ontario. We need to get to the heart of this matter. We need to ensure that those helicopters are going to actually save people instead of bringing pain and suffering to them. No amount of legislation will prevent a recurrence of another Ornge scandal fiasco within the Ministry of Health or any other ministry. It's people: people who have responsibility and need to exercise that level of responsibility. They need to show their integrity by doing the right thing, Speaker.

Just as the Minister of Health failed to act on the contractual and legislative authority she had, she will fail to act on the authority of this new legislation. Just as several ministry departments and branches failed in their inspection and enforcement mandate under the existing legislation, they will fail under this new legislation. A piece of paper and a bunch of words are going to do nothing if the actual character and the actual concern that people put into their jobs do not change. At this point, we do not feel comfortable that there has been much change. They've left most of the people at the top of the pyramid who were involved the first time around still sitting in their plush chairs. What's going to change culturally if you don't get rid of those people? It's unbelievable that they won't step up and take accountability for this.

We don't need more legislation and regulations. Those Liberals have put in more regulations and legislation now than we can actually choke down. We're scaring businesses out of this province at a clip that we can't handle, and they want to add yet more regulations and legislation so that they can hide behind it. It's just indicative of a lack of leadership on the other side of the floor.

What we do need, however, is competence and responsible leadership; both have been found very wanting on the part of the Minister of Health, the Premier, the Minister of Finance—in fact, your whole caucus, for not stepping up. Not one of you has stepped up and asked the hard questions even of your own house. You need to be able to do that. If people are going to have trust and believe in you, you need to do the right thing—all of you.

The question we ask on behalf of Ontarians, Speaker, is: What has changed? What's really going to change other than another document to spin their tale a different way and to take time out of getting more people who really need to come forth with the proper answers?

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Lisa M. Thompson
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Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Reza Moridi, Jerry J. Ouellette
Liz Sandals, Jagmeet Singh
David Zimmer
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Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

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Vic Dhillon, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
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Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Ted Chudleigh, Dipika Damerla
Cheri DiNovo, Kevin Daniel Flynn
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