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**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Tuesday 29 May 2012**

**Mardi 29 mai 2012**

Speaker  
Honourable Dave Levac

Président  
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk  
Deborah Deller

Greffière  
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

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*The House met at 0900.*

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

*Prayers.*

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

WIRELESS SERVICES  
AGREEMENTS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LES CONVENTIONS  
DE SERVICES SANS FIL

Ms. Best moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 82, An Act to strengthen consumer protection with respect to consumer agreements relating to wireless services accessed from a cellular phone, smart phone or any other similar mobile device / *Projet de loi 82, Loi visant à mieux protéger les consommateurs en ce qui concerne les conventions de consommation portant sur les services sans fil accessibles au moyen d'un téléphone cellulaire, d'un téléphone intelligent ou de tout autre appareil mobile semblable.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Ms. Best.

**Hon. Margaret R. Best:** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member from Sault Ste. Marie today.

It certainly is my privilege to rise today for second reading of the Wireless Services Agreements Act, 2012. This bill has been drafted to protect consumers who enter into wireless services agreements for cellphones, smart phones, tablet computers and other mobile communications devices. Our proposed legislation, if passed, will provide greater transparency and stronger protections for Ontario's consumers and their families when they sign contracts for cellphones and wireless services.

I would like to again thank my colleague Mr. Oraziotti, MPP for Sault Ste. Marie, for introducing Bills 133 and 5, which brought the Legislature's attention to consumer issues respecting wireless services agreements at first instance. Thanks to Mr. Oraziotti's groundwork, several of the concerns I will mention today are already in the minds of members of this House. We must work to ensure that Ontario's consumers are better protected when it comes to wireless services agreements.

Mr. Speaker, in recent years, there has been an explosion in the use of wireless communications devices. The degree of market saturation, at more than 70% of Ontario's population, has turned many people into mobile-

device dependants, using these devices to stay connected in a multitude of ways, instantly. These wireless plans are mostly post-paid, meaning consumers enter into an agreement before using the service and they get their monthly bill after they have used the service.

I'm talking about Ontario families, including parents and their children, grandparents and students in every city and town in this province—texting, talking, making plans, solving emergencies, sending emails. As a society, we have become dependent on our mobile and wireless devices and the benefits that they provide, through the speed of communication and the efficiency they bring to our lives and how we live our lives.

Perhaps it's our growing reliance on these devices, with so many people using them and finding they do not understand the services and plans they have on these devices, that has given rise to what we call cell shock. Cell shock, Madam Speaker, is what happens when consumers open their wireless services bills and receive exorbitant charges they were not expecting. Cell shock is what happens when consumers are not aware that they are using services that will add charges to their bills. Cell shock is what happens when consumers get billed for wireless services they did not receive. And, Madam Speaker, cell shock has resulted in many consumer complaints and concerns about their treatment by wireless services providers.

The Ministry of Consumer Services receives many questions and complaints about cellphones, and since we announced our intention to introduce this proposed legislation, we have heard more and more consumer stories and concerns through Twitter and on Facebook and websites. Last year's report by the federal Commissioner for Complaints for Telecommunications Services, the CCTS, documented more complaints about wireless services than it did for all the other types of telecommunication services combined. Although there has not been an official report yet released, CCTS has stated that in the first half of 2011-12, wireless services complaints continue to account for 60% of all complaints they receive.

Madam Speaker, it is time to act. We have a responsibility to Ontario's consumers and their families to ensure that the millions of cellphone agreements signed by Ontario individuals and families each year are clear, comprehensive and easy to understand. We want to help Ontarians make smarter and more informed choices about how they spend their hard-earned dollars.

It is time to act when Ontarians open their wireless services bills and realize they have been charged for services they did not initially agree to. It is time to act

when they have been charged for services they did not know would cost them extra. It is time to act when Ontario consumers open their bills to find they have exceeded their minutes without even knowing it. And, Madam Speaker, it is time to act when consumers find their contracts have been extended without their say-so.

Ontarians need clarity. They need to know what wireless services they are getting for their money. They need to be able to understand their agreement in plain language and what is included with the basic fee and what services would result in higher cost. They need to give their express consent before a fixed-term contract is amended, renewed or extended, and they need to know, when a company advertises its prices, that these prices are all-inclusive and include all costs.

This proposed bill is a big step forward in responding to consumer concerns to the issue of cell shock and to the billing practices of wireless services providers.

Madam Speaker, Ontario's Consumer Protection Act already protects Ontarians from unethical practices such as misrepresentation and billing for unsolicited services. However, more needs to be done in the area of wireless services, and that is precisely the reason we have introduced Bill 82, the Wireless Services Agreements Act, 2012. This proposed legislation complements the Consumer Protection Act and specifically addresses issues unique to wireless services contracts.

Our proposed legislation, if passed, will provide more transparency and stronger protections for Ontario's consumers and their families when they sign wireless and cellphone contracts. It is designed to empower consumers by ensuring they have the information they need to make informed decisions and that they take control of making these decisions. It will help Ontario families and individuals make informed choices about how they spend their hard-earned dollars.

Madam Speaker, this bill, if passed, will help stop cell shock and help strengthen confidence in the marketplace. It will give people more control over all aspects of wireless contracts, from choice of services to fees payable if they cancel—issues that over 70% of Ontarians deal with on a daily basis.

**0910**

Madam Speaker, wireless services is an \$18-billion industry that pervades all of our lives. The concerns that Ontario consumers have with wireless services contracts have kept pace with, if not surpassed, the growth of the industry to the point where we need to act.

Now I would like to specifically address the benefits of this proposed legislation. Madam Speaker, when we look at provisions in the proposed bill, the benefits to Ontario's consumers are crystal clear. If passed, this bill will allow customers to cancel their agreements at any time with modest cancellation fees. Four other provinces—Quebec, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia—have introduced similar provisions. With a consistent approach across provinces, we can facilitate greater industry compliance, ultimately benefiting the consumer.

Companies will be required to clearly disclose which services are included in the minimum cost of an agreement as well as the added costs that would be charged when additional services are used. The terms must be clear, comprehensive and prominent, and they must include specific information on roaming charges and cellphone locks.

The proposed bill also requires companies to have agreements that use clear language, with full disclosure, so consumers understand what they are agreeing to. This level of disclosure is essential for consumer protection. Customers must understand what they are getting into before and after they sign their agreements.

Companies will need to get a customer's express consent before renewing, extending or amending a fixed-term contract. Contracts will no longer be renewed automatically without the customer's consent. When we look at today's marketplace, we find that simply asking for a change to an agreement can result in the agreement being extended or renewed. This proposed bill states that agreeing to a change in service is not the same as agreeing to an automatic extension or renewal. The customer must be asked if they want to renew, and the customer must clearly indicate yes before this takes place.

Madam Speaker, we are aiming to reduce cell shock by enforcing all-inclusive price advertising, requiring providers to advertise the total of all costs and fees, disclosed most prominently, in any price advertising. If the all-in price is advertised, there can be no surprises when the bill arrives.

This legislation, if passed, will result in stronger and more enforceable remedies, making it an offence for wireless services providers to charge for payments they are not entitled to. If a service provider owes a refund to a customer, the customer has the right to sue the provider to recover the amount owed to them, and they have the right to claim three times the amount of a refund that is owed.

If this bill is passed, it will offer some of the strictest penalties of all the provinces in Canada. This proposed legislation also prohibits billing for services that a customer cannot use. If a wireless device is not working and is still under warranty, the provider cannot charge for services a customer cannot use because the device is being repaired, nor can they charge for a loaner if one is provided. Many consumers object to paying extra for services they did not know would cost them extra if used.

This proposed legislation requires wireless companies to have a system in place to notify customers when they are close to their usage limits so that the customer is aware that further use may result in additional costs. They must also disclose these cost details to the customer before any agreement is signed.

If this bill is passed, implementation of this legislation will include a strategic enforcement approach and a proactive communications plan to ensure that consumers are fully aware of the changes and know their rights.

Madam Speaker, if this bill becomes law, it will take effect a full six months after royal assent. The six-month

implementation period will give companies enough time to prepare their systems to comply with the new legislation.

When it comes into force, if it is passed, the new act will apply to all new agreements. It will also apply to all service contract transactions, like renewals, that may already be in progress. It will also apply to existing contracts that are changed after the date it comes into force, if passed.

We understand that telecommunications is a federal responsibility, while consumer protection is a matter for the provinces. For this reason, the bill focuses exclusively on the consumer aspect of the industry. It focuses on the needs of Ontarians who are considering or who have already signed agreements for wireless cellphone services. The bill, if passed, is designed to protect consumers through clear disclosure requirements and cancellation rights.

Madam Speaker, I can tell you that the government has consulted industry on the development of this bill, and the industry's message was clear: Any government action must be consistent with actions taken by other provinces. We have listened to the industry's message, and this bill has been aligned with similar initiatives in other provinces to avoid a patchwork of regulation across the country. We are taking steps, through this proposed legislation, to help consumers make more informed choices when spending their hard-earned dollars.

Madam Speaker, I will be supporting this bill—

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Really?

**Hon. Margaret R. Best:** Yes, really, and I am supporting it because I believe that it contains strong measures that will—

*Interjection.*

**Hon. Margaret R. Best:** I have to reaffirm, you know.

It contains strong measures that will protect consumers and their families. I am certain that all consumers across Ontario are supportive of this initiative, and I look forward to support from the MPP from Sault Ste. Marie as well, and the support of our government measures, as this proposed legislation is a very notable piece of legislation. We are certainly empowering consumers by ensuring that they get the information they need—wake up over there—to make important decisions. This information will help consumers better understand their mobile and wireless services contracts and get the contracts they want.

Madam Speaker, I ask all members of this Legislature to support this legislation to support Ontario's consumers. Certainly, I look forward to your support.

In concluding, the Ministry of Consumer Services' mandate is to help inform and protect Ontario's consumers, and this bill is designed do just that: help Ontario consumers and their families make smarter, more informed choices about the wireless services they have come to depend on. The Wireless Services Agreements Act, 2012, if passed, will build on our government's commitment to consumer protection, providing more dis-

closure, fairness and confidence in the marketplace. Empowering and protecting consumers in this area is a priority of the Ministry of Consumer Services as we continue to build on the foundation we have laid in protecting consumers across Ontario.

**0920**

Madam Speaker, taking this strong action is part of the McGuinty government's commitment to educating, protecting and serving Ontarians by ensuring a fair and safe marketplace.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** The member for Sault Ste. Marie.

**Mr. David Oraziotti:** I appreciate the opportunity to discuss this important legislation this morning. There are a couple of issues that I want to put on the record.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Are you supporting it too?

**Mr. David Oraziotti:** The member opposite wants to know if I'm supporting the legislation—absolutely. And I certainly hope the members opposite will support the legislation because it's very beneficial to consumers.

I want to commend the minister for her comments this morning. She has done an absolutely fantastic job in leading this legislation through to the point we're at today and demonstrating her very public support for this. We think this is great legislation for consumers, long overdue. As you're aware, there are a number of other provinces that are moving forward with this type of legislation.

I do want to go through some of the rationale for the bill, some of the support that has been provided and highlighted publicly, as well as the specific aspects of the legislation that will help to relieve some of the pocket-book pressure that consumers are facing with respect to their wireless service agreements.

Speaker, I think we all have heard from constituents the various horror stories that they have experienced from contracts that they have signed with various cellphone companies across this country. Part of the problem, as we all know, is the very limited competition that exists in this country. In other jurisdictions, competition is broader. Competition brings to bear contracts that are more fair and that offer better prices for consumers. I think part of the challenge here is, with respect to our jurisdictional responsibility, the ability to act on any contract signed in the province of Ontario. We need to take that step.

Clearly, there's a vacuum at the federal level when it comes to a willingness to step up and protect consumers from what are really arbitrary, one-sided contracts that are imposed on consumers. We have a very limited marketplace at the federal level—absolutely. And the wireless telecom industry, which is represented by the CWTA, has their lobbyists who advocate on behalf of the telecom sector and have successfully convinced the federal government, the CRTC, to maintain a fairly limited market space when it comes to the competition in the country. As a result, you have mainly three large telecom companies in this country who have divided up their licences into other various brands, and we're all familiar with those brands. It creates a bit of an illusion of competition

in the marketplace in this country, allowing consumers to believe that they really have this broad-ranging choice, when, in fact, they don't. They're calling the same call centre for their service; they're subject to the same contract.

On that point, Speaker, most consumers unfortunately don't understand the contract and don't know what's in their contract. Now, we can certainly place some responsibility on the consumer to understand what it is they're signing, but when such a large percentage of consumers are unaware of the contract obligations that they have and what is in the contract, it really calls into question what kind of contract they're signing and whether or not we can make those contracts clearer and written in plain language so that the average consumer has a very clear understanding of what their obligations are. Those constituents who come to us who are experiencing cell shock—who open their bill and say, “Wow, I'm paying \$120 this month. When I saw that price that was advertised, it said \$29.99,” or \$49.99. We want to make sure that the highest, most prominent price is the all-in price in any advertising.

Let's talk a little bit about some of the particular aspects of this legislation. First of all, one of the most important things that consumers want addressed is the aspect of cancellation charges and the limitations on those. The companies have contracts for 36 months to purchase a smart phone or an iPhone, whatever it might be. They have you locked in for a fairly lengthy time. The cancellation fees in most other sectors, for most other services, is 30 days' notice, or you cancel immediately and whatever the remaining balance is on the bill, you pay that and you're done. These punitive fees that go on and on and on, month after month—in some cases, we've heard stories of consumers saying, “I had to pay a \$600 cancellation fee,” or “a \$400 cancellation fee.” They are incredibly excessive, and this is the gouging of consumers that we're talking about.

In the legislation, Speaker, what we are clearly proposing is a \$50 cancellation fee. An individual can call up and cancel their contract; they would be subject to a \$50 cancellation fee or 10% of the remaining balance, whichever is less. So the maximum could be \$50. Now, we're obviously not saying that if an individual walks into a store, purchases a smart phone that's \$500 and gets that phone for \$99, that three months later they can cancel and walk away with that hardware or that equipment. That is not the intent of the bill. Obviously, the individual needs to make good for the balance of the cost of the hardware. But with respect to the contract, which is separate, as we say, in most other industry standards and practices, that cancellation fee should be limited or capped. We're proposing \$50 or a maximum 10% of the remaining balance. That addresses the incredible challenge of dealing with cancellation fees in these contracts that are really one-sided.

The second item I want to raise, Speaker, is with respect to automatic renewal and express consent of the consumer. What consumers have told us very clearly is that with respect to their contracts, if they make the

slightest change, if they make a minor change in their contract, they all of a sudden find themselves in another three-year agreement. They might be in their 32nd, 34th, 35th month of their contract, and it may be about to expire, and they change jobs and they need a conference calling feature on their phone or they decide to add one of their children to their plan. So the company will say, “That's great. No problem. We can make that change, and you are now renewed for another 36 months, subject to all of the cancellation fees that we now have put in place.”

Express consent is not really something that is available to consumers. This is an important change. Consumers obviously, as we've said, need to be aware of what's in their contract, but clearly a large percentage of consumers are not. We'll get at that issue as well. But with respect to these automatic renewal efforts that are made by the companies to continue to lock people into this perpetual monthly fee and payment process, we need to stand up for consumers when it comes to these types of contracts.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** Sounds like negative-option billing to me.

**Mr. David Oraziotti:** It certainly does. The member from Peterborough referred to negative-option billing, those types of approaches by companies that disadvantage consumers or that really push the limits of what is acceptable and fair in a contract arrangement.

We also, Speaker, want to see greater disclosure and clarity with respect to the contract, and that has to do with the specific language of the contract: the length of the contract, the complexity of the contract. This is a phone; it shouldn't be a mortgage. The contracts need to be much clearer, much more plain and much more understandable for the average consumer out there, and they simply are not. We want to ensure that the onus is on the service provider to take reasonable efforts to make sure that the customer knows what they are paying for and what they are getting in return.

We also want to make sure that all optional and all mandatory services included in the contractual arrangement are provided up front: mandatory services like 911 emergency access fees, sometimes called the “government fee”—Michael Janigan made an interesting comment about that—typically a charge of 50 to 75 cents a month, called the “government regulatory recovery fee”; the optional services, things like voicemail, call display, any of those optional services and the charges for those services; as well as any one-time fees, such as an initiation fee or activation fee or other set-up fees. Those all need to be clearly disclosed to the consumer so we get that all-in start-up price and avoid the sticker shock or the cell shock that consumers are presently facing. Agreements need to be in clear and plain language, and anything that costs extra needs to be identified. We've broken some of those down, as well as things like long distance rate plans and any of those additional charges.

**0930**

If a phone is provided for free, or at a discount, the agreement must also include the retail value of the phone

at the time of the purchase for consumers so that they understand very clearly, if they were to terminate that contract, what the additional cost would be to purchase the balance of the hardware, that actual phone. That needs to be provided up front so there are no surprises later on. The same would apply to any discounts or any promotional prices; they would be made clear—for example, free early-evening calling, but it's only free early-evening calling for six months and then after six months, guess what, there's a new price.

So these measures that are in these contracts and the fine print, this is getting at disclosing some of the strategies that are used by companies to drive up the cost of cellphones in the province of Ontario. We need to be clear that it is important to disclose those costs. Contracts need to be written and presented in such a way that the consumer understands what they're signing and certainly what their responsibilities are.

Let's talk a little bit about advertising for cellphone plans, because this is another important aspect that has been included in the bill. The idea here is certainly to ensure that the advertising and promotional material that is out there, that is being marketed to consumers, includes the total and complete prices. So the supplier needs to ensure that the advertisement also contains a prominent statement of the total cost to consumers, on a monthly or periodic basis, of all services to be provided in the agreement.

So if it's \$29.99, if it's \$49.99, what does that include? What's extra? What's additional? What are you going to get charged for later? What are the start-up fees? What fees are going to change after 90 days, when you're outside of that store and you're at home and you are on that phone, so when you get your bill you're aware that that's going to be the case? For example, a supplier could not exclusively advertise \$20 social networking if that product and price are only part of a service bundle. They would have to disclose that information, and they would be obliged to convey the true monthly cost of the plan included in that particular feature.

There are many ways of marketing, and those marketing experts that are alive and well in the telecom sector are doing their utmost to promote their product and also promote ways in which consumers will sign up for and purchase their phones long-term. It's important that we make sure there's full disclosure and, again, transparency to ensure consumers are aware of what they're getting.

Prohibiting providers from charging consumers for services while devices are under warranty and are being repaired: We think this is an important aspect with respect to this service. At present, a consumer may purchase a fairly expensive phone, or perhaps a not-so-expensive phone, but the reality is that, generally speaking, for the first year it's under warranty. So if there's a malfunction of that phone, not of the consumer's doing—you didn't leave it out in the rain on the picnic table—and you bring it back to the provider and it is in fact something that is technologically wrong with the phone from the provider, at present, the company can continue to send you a bill

every month although you might not have the use of your phone. Now, in some cases the store, the company, could decide to give you a loaner phone, a replacement of like or similar comparison for you to use in the meantime, and in that way you would still have access to your service and they could still send you your bill. I think most people would agree that that would be fair and reasonable.

However, the customer service agents who deal with consumers and are part of these companies are educated in when and when not to provide these particular products for consumers, and not in all cases will an individual receive the opportunity to have a phone and could still be billed. So we want to make it crystal clear in the legislation that if you surrender your phone to your provider and there is something wrong with the phone—it's not working properly—you cannot be billed by the company for that period of time for which you do not have use of that phone. We think that's an important aspect of the legislation.

We also want to ensure that suppliers are giving notice to consumers who are about to incur additional charges for various services that are part of their phones. We're talking about voice, data and texting plans, the components that make up the charges on your cellphone. There are ways for companies to do this and to ensure that this is taking place. Some companies have made efforts to ensure that individuals can go online and they can check their monthly usage; they're able to kind of monitor that. It's not the most convenient thing when you're out, but there are some efforts being made in that regard. That's positive. The efforts that companies can make to send a message to the consumer that they're about to exceed their limits is helpful, and it will get at that bill shock. It also would be good business practice, because it will reduce the level of consumer complaints, the level of concern expressed by consumers about the charges that are being incurred.

This issue was raised as well—the issue around roaming charges and dealing with roaming charges outside of the particular home jurisdiction. There are some concerns with respect to this because, for example, if you take your phone and you are in another jurisdiction—let's say you're in the US and you're on a US network. It's difficult to compel your provider here in Canada to inform you of the charges you're incurring because you're roaming. They might tell you that you're out of your jurisdiction, and after that you're on your own.

Everyone, I think, has heard stories about individuals who expressed concern about those very, very significant roaming charges. Those are costs borne by you as the consumer for using the communications towers and equipment of another provider. Obviously, we cannot provide somewhere in the legislation for that requirement to be made. However, within our jurisdiction we can certainly do that, and when you leave the jurisdiction you can certainly get notices that indicate that, "You're now roaming, and here is the charge and here are the fees." Some of that is happening. We want to make sure that all

companies are abiding by this. That's the reason for putting it in the legislation.

Just on that point, Speaker, I should highlight that some companies have indicated to us quite clearly that they are taking some of these steps and that this legislation is, in fact, unnecessary. What I would say to that, Speaker, is that if the companies are taking these steps, then they won't mind if this legislation is passed to support consumers, because they're already doing that. So let's be clear that not all companies are following what is in this proposed legislation. We need to make sure that they are. For those companies that are showing some leadership on this in working to protect consumers, that's great; they're going to be ahead of the curve and ready when changes come about.

As part of a remedy in the legislation, we've proposed the right to triple recovery. There are instances where individuals have the right to recover funds or fees that have been charged to them. Companies have not always been as co-operative and as understanding as they could be, and, frankly, as fair with consumers as they need to be. So if there's a breach in the act and there's overcharging of consumers, we're going to make it mandatory within the legislation that the consumer will have the right to recover damages three times what has been charged or what they're seeking. We think that's an effective tool for consumer protection. We think it gives consumers the ability to rightly recover fees that have been unfairly charged to them.

It also accounts for, quite frankly, their hassle, their inconvenience, their time of having to deal with this issue and this matter. You know what happens when you don't pay your cellphone bill on time. You know the way the companies treat you. You know what happens to your fees, your interest charges, the notices you get, and the like. We think it's fair and reasonable that consumers be offered in legislation some ability to have similar remedies at their disposal as well.

**0940**

I just want to highlight a couple of the relevant reasons and examples as to why the measures that are provided in the legislation are absolutely necessary. In a recent study, a 2010 study of the New America Foundation—

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** That's a good one.

**Mr. David Oraziotti:** To the member from Peterborough, it's great. The New America Foundation (2010) took a look at the three components of your cellphone bill, so voice, data, text, those components that make up your cellphone bill, and took a look at Canada, Denmark, Finland, Hong Kong, India, Japan, South Korea, Sweden, Taiwan, the US and the UK; a pretty good cross-section, comparison of communities, a pretty good—

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** A comprehensive study.

**Mr. David Oraziotti:**—a comprehensive study, pretty thoughtful, and a broad range of countries included in this. Out of the 11 countries surveyed in this study, take a guess which country had the highest charges for voice, data and text, out of 11 countries?

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** Canada.

**Mr. David Oraziotti:** Absolutely. The member from Peterborough says "Canada." That is absolutely right.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** Passed the test.

**Mr. David Oraziotti:** And not by a little bit; we're not just marginally above other jurisdictions when it comes to these costs. We are substantially higher than other jurisdictions. So we certainly feel that there are measures which are contained in the bill, Speaker, that we believe need to be passed immediately to help support consumers.

This is important research. It gives us a bit of a barometer in terms of what's taking place in other jurisdictions, and we think it's important to move forward on this.

I also want to reference a couple of organizations that have stepped forward. The Public Interest Advocacy Centre, in a report by Michael Janigan, highlights the practice of extra charges in the Canadian telecommunications industry whereby suppliers of consumer products and services segregate part of their cost as a separate charge and add them into the final price. He describes the system access fees levied by the wireless companies as "charges concocted by the wireless companies to appear as a government-mandated fee."

The Consumers Council of Canada in 2010 reported the most prevalent consumer complaints relating to wireless plans, including complaints about access fees, charges for incoming text messaging, the availability of call detail records, billing inaccuracies, expiry policies, prepaid wireless cards, hidden fees and contract termination rules. The examples, and the sector, are really calling for changes—certainly those individuals that are interested in acting on behalf of consumers.

In Europe in 2010, the wireless service providers were required to implement a mechanism to protect consumers from high roaming charges while travelling to other EU countries and travelling abroad. We think there are a number of other important measures that have been taken by other jurisdictions that would benefit consumers here.

In October 2010, the US Federal Communications Commission, the FCC, proposed that wireless carriers be required to notify users by text or voicemail if they're about to go over their allotted monthly voice minutes, data or texting. So, clearly, there are other jurisdictions that are leading on this, and there are companies, as I say, that are taking similar action, which is helpful.

Here's specifically what Michael Janigan said, the executive director and general counsel for the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, somebody who has built a career in consumer protection, someone who has stood up for consumers on a wide array of measures and legislation: "This bill will help remove barriers to real competition for ordinary consumers of wireless services." And he said, "It will help level the playing field for customers who currently feel trapped by ... one-sided conditions." That's important; I think it speaks volumes.

Mel Fruitman, who's the vice-president of the Consumers' Association of Canada—here's what he said: "For a long time consumers have been victims of the nefarious marketing practices of wireless telephone com-

panies. This protection for consumers is necessary and long overdue. We can see no reason why this act would not receive all-party support and be quickly passed.” That’s Mel Fruitman, Consumers’ Association of Canada.

Don Mercer, who is the president of the Consumers Council of Canada—here’s what Mr. Mercer said: “Contracts for cellular voice and data services and equipment rate as top-10 sources of consumer complaints in Ontario. Many consumers feel their rights are unfairly limited and find it hard to understand their responsibilities under these agreements. Quebec has exercised its authority for contracts in this area. Now this bill in Ontario proposes action as well. Provinces across Canada should take responsibility and prompt action, and ultimately work toward a nationally harmonized approach that recognizes today’s consumers are highly mobile.”

**Mr. Rob E. Milligan:** Strong action.

**Mr. David Oraziotti:** The member from Northumberland says, “Strong action.” I totally agree. He’s on the mark.

“The Consumers Council of Canada encourages members of the Ontario Legislature to seriously engage this bill as a practical measure.” That’s Don Mercer from the Consumers Council of Canada.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** Any relation to Rick Mercer?

**Mr. David Oraziotti:** I don’t believe so.

Ric Borski, president and CEO of the Better Business Bureau, midwestern Canada and central Ontario region—here’s what Mr. Borski said: “The Better Business Bureau ... has received more complaints about cellular phone services and supplies in Canada during 2010 than any other issue. The BBB supports in principle any provisions that enhance marketplace transparency and promote better business practices.”

Speaker, I think it’s quite clear from the steps that are proposed in the legislation that they seek to address what I have as part of the communication that I’m receiving from thousands of individuals across the province of Ontario, who have sent us correspondence with various remarks and complaints and suggestions on how to make the cellphone and telecom industry and the contracts that are signed in the province of Ontario better.

I want to also commend Tom Harrington, CBC Marketplace. He has done an absolutely fantastic job highlighting the issues in the cellphone industry. He had a special on this—this was some time ago—“Canada’s Worst Cellphone Bill.” In the program, he highlighted the specific contractual arrangements by the companies that are designed to drive revenue, keep people in their contracts—that are not clear enough, that are not balanced enough. There was such uptake in that program and such a positive response to hearing more about that that he followed it up with another program, and “Canada’s Worst Cellphone Bill, the Sequel,” aired as well on CBC. So Mr. Harrington has done a good job of raising awareness.

A number of other organizations, as I’ve highlighted, have raised the issue. Speaker, I think it speaks volumes

to the height of awareness in the sector on this issue. With roughly seven million cellphone consumers in the province of Ontario, our government is going to clearly stand on the side of those consumers and say, “We want change; we need change.”

I want to speak just briefly about the environment in which we find ourselves in this sector, because we all know what’s in the bill. We’ve read the bill. We’re clear with the provisions in the bill—and I should add, there’s one other item in here: that there’s regulatory power for unlocking. In some jurisdictions around the world, you can’t sell a cellphone if it’s locked. In Canada, the phones are sold locked, and you can’t take that phone to another provider even if they have the same technology where you could use that technology and that phone. As you know, there are different networks—GSM, CDMA—and the companies have these phones locked. So now they’re proposing that they’ll unlock the phone, but—guess what?—it’s going to cost you 50 bucks to unlock the phone. It’s just another way to gouge consumers, another way to find a mechanism to charge you. There is a provision in the legislation that would allow the regulatory power to deal with unlocking, and we certainly support that and are certainly pleased with it.

Getting back to the environment around which we find ourselves—because, again, we’re all clear with what’s in the legislation; we know what steps we’re taking or proposing to take to protect consumers. The point is—and I will hear from the opposition shortly on this, and they may say that this needs to be done at the federal level, because telecom is federal jurisdiction. Granted, and I would prefer not to see a patchwork of provincial legislation. However, that being said, I would suggest that we not sit back and not act in the absence of waiting for the federal government to impose regulations to address this matter. This is far too important to millions of people in the province of Ontario.

**0950**

Quite frankly, we start to hear now, “Oh, we’ll review our voluntary code of conduct.” That’s what we’ve got. We’ve got the Canadian Wireless Telecom Association, represented by Bernard Lord, who basically is lobbying the CRTC to keep the licensing spectrum narrow, to maintain this monopolistic-type environment, to not broaden the competition. The reality is that we’re being proactive on this issue, and some people would say, “Hey, it’s been way too long.” They’d say, “Hardly proactive.” They’d say, “What have you been doing? Look at what’s been going on in the sector.”

For some people to say, “Hang on, you don’t need to do this. This is something you don’t need to act on. We’ll get at it. We’ll up the standards on our voluntary code of conduct”—hogwash, right? Absolutely unlikely. They will not do anything unless we step up and legislate on this matter with respect to contracts.

Now, where are we going with this? Well, we may see other provinces—Quebec, as of 2010, has legislation, the first province in the country to put in place legislation to address some of the challenges, the contract renewal

issues, the cancellation fees. Their legislation in Quebec, to be clear, is similar in many ways, but it is not as comprehensive as what is being proposed here today. Manitoba is tracking toward implementing legislation, and we're hearing that Newfoundland is in the process as well.

So, clearly, Canadian jurisdictions, Canadian provinces, are seized with this issue, in part because of the tremendous feedback they're getting from consumers complaining about these issues and the contracts, that it is imperative, it is crucial, for the provinces to step up and, within their constitutional, jurisdictional authority to regulate contracts in the province, to say that, quite frankly, we're not going to take it anymore, and we need to make sure that these contracts are fair and balanced and we're standing up for the consumers.

I would encourage and I would welcome any effort made by the federal government to pass legislation that would help to protect consumers in this regard, and there are companies out there that I believe would enter the marketplace, that would help to create a fair playing field, fair prices for consumers, and deal with what we see in these studies comparing Canada to other jurisdictions being so out of whack on this. We need better and fairer pricing in this sector in this country.

We talk about the infrastructure that goes in to paying for this. Consumers are paying for it dearly—absolutely—and while we have massive geography and a relatively smaller population in comparison to some other jurisdictions, I would suggest that the population in this country is relatively focused in certain areas. They say roughly 80% of the people in this country live within 200 miles of the US border. We have major metropolitan areas in other provinces that make up large percentages of their provinces, so the argument that we need to charge higher rates, that the geography is so massive, and we have a smaller population—I don't buy that. I also don't buy the punitive measures that are in this legislation.

So while some of the opposition members may say that we need to go further—I'm certainly prepared to hear and entertain those comments and those concerns that are raised—I think the proposed legislation that's on the table here makes great strides. It's the most comprehensive in the country, I would suggest, and so if there are suggestions from members opposite in terms of how we can improve this legislation, by all means.

Concerns that have been raised by the sector: I want to just address this briefly. The concerns that have been raised by the sector, things like, "Well, this will add to the bureaucratic, contractual complexities of the contract in the sector. And as a result of you doing this and passing legislation, with the mind that passing legislation must mean more regulations"—when in fact we're talking about reducing costs, and we can give some examples about how those changes are completely legislatively and bureaucratically neutral when it comes to adding to the paperwork and the pressures that companies might want to hide behind. Because the companies will say, "The

province of Ontario wants to wade into this on a contractual issue. They want to pass additional legislation. That's going to create a regulatory burden, and we're going to have to find a way to gouge the consumers some more to pay for this kind of legislation." You know what? That is absolutely garbage.

So just to be clear, right now, if in the contract it says that your cancellation fee is going to equal \$400, and we change that contract to say that it's going to be 50 bucks as a maximum, can someone please tell me how that's going to add to the regulatory burden for consumers? That's the kind of argument that is being put forward by companies who suggest that we're going to somehow add to the regulatory burden and it's going to be too complex. We're talking about simplifying these contracts. We're talking about plain language. We're talking about contracts that are more fair and more balanced. We're not talking about additional regulatory burden that they want to hide behind to find a way to gouge consumers some more. That's just really not on. These are contracts that are—what we're proposing would be easy to comply to.

The reality is, the companies, frankly, don't like it because they want to be able to find ways to charge consumers more. When we compare to other jurisdictions, there's no reason why consumers need to be charged more. They're being charged more than their fair share right now. Companies will charge as much as the market will bear. Right now, with the protections offered to them with the federal arrangement, with the lack of interest by the federal government to open this up and to start issuing more licences to create a more competitive environment by which consumers can sign these contracts, consumers will continue to be gouged.

So our choice is clear. We can stand by; we can watch as consumers face these contracts and get these horrendous bills. We can sit on our hands. We can do nothing. We can say, "This is federal responsibility. Telecom is all in the jurisdiction of the federal government, and there is no aspect whatsoever of anything signed in the province of Ontario that consumers face that is in any way part of provincial jurisdiction. It's all federal. Let them deal with it. If they're going to just allow companies to continue to charge people these rates, so be it."

Well, on this side of the House, we don't think that's right. We don't think that's fair.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** We have a different view.

**Mr. David Oraziotti:** We have a different view. I don't want to say a different view, necessarily, from the opposition, because I do want to acknowledge that on two previous occasions, Bills 133 and Bill 5, two private member's bills I introduced to do this, support came from the opposition, so I want to recognize the support of both the NDP members that spoke in favour of the legislation and supported it on second reading debate and also members in the Conservative caucus who stood up in this Legislature, spoke in favour of it and supported this. As I think it's something that's common to all of us—I think basic protection for consumers, when it comes to matters like this, they cross party lines. They're an issue that we

can all get behind and we can all support, certainly when we see such glaringly obvious issues in the sector.

Again, we've got a choice. We've got an opportunity here where we can either sit back and—you know, not all provinces have decided to act. There's only one province in this country today that has stepped up and said, "We think we need to offer more protection for consumers because of the lack of competition at the federal level and the unwillingness to open up the marketplace to allow this competition to see fairer contracts, better prices, and prices that compare to many other jurisdictions around the world." That's really what we're looking for. So the solution to this, aside from legislation, is doing that. If the federal government chooses to do that, that's great, that's fantastic. We welcome that. We'd like to see more companies in the market.

**1000**

We heard the other day—we were at the Standing Committee on General Government. The NDP has an insurance review. We're looking at that; all parties are concerned about that as well. A fiscal representative, Phil Howell, came to the committee, and he said, "There are 100 insurance companies in the province of Ontario, and we want to make sure there's a robust sector so that it offers consumers better value and more competition."

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** Choice.

**Mr. David Oraziotti:** Choice is good in the marketplace. It's the polar opposite in the telecom sector, right? You've got these telecom giants that create these subsidiary brands that create this illusion of competition that really doesn't exist.

Back to the point: We've got a choice. We can either sit back, we can sit on our hands, we can ignore this issue; we can deny that this is happening to consumers who continue to walk into our offices. We all know that. Everybody here has had somebody talk to them about that, and the examples are horrendous. Or we can take some action. We can decide that we're going to be a leader in this country on this issue. We're going to step up. We're going to do the right thing and we are going to exercise within the Constitution our jurisdictional ability to protect consumers with respect to these unfair contracts. I implore all members of this Legislature to support what is a very progressive piece of legislation, a forward-thinking piece of legislation, legislation that offers support to consumers, much-needed relief, long-overdue relief for consumers, levelling the playing field, creating a more fair and balanced practice. We want to work with those companies, but we need some cooperation, and right now, it's all one-sided. For the companies that are moving forward and taking these steps, great. For those that aren't, we've got news for you.

We want to see this passed as soon as possible because things need to change in this sector. So I want to encourage all members in the Legislature today to support this legislation. We think it's responsible legislation. It's the right thing to do. We know that there are other jurisdictions that are watching Ontario, that are taking a look at what Ontario is doing on this, and I have every faith in

them that they will step up for consumers in their province as well. If that's what it takes to get some action, to bring the prices down to get fairness for consumers, that's what we want to see. I want all members to support the legislation.

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

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** We've been looking forward to this bill for some time. The cellular industry in Canada is an important industry and very popular. It has really taken off in the last number of years, but there needs to be some regulation. We were hoping that the federal government would do it because there's no question that the larger the extent that it's done, the better for the consumer. We want to make sure that we aren't putting regulations in that will actually drive up costs.

We are a different market. Here, as compared to Europe, our population in this country per square mile is a fraction of what it is in these larger jurisdictions, so one would expect costs to be up. But we're looking for the best deal we can get for consumers. I think that in the absence of what we are seeing on the federal side, there needs to be some intervention. There needs to be some review through the committee to compare it with some of our other provinces that have gone before us. Quebec and Manitoba in particular had two bills before us, so we can look at and review and look at the merits of what they've done and the results. As I say, the last thing we want to do is to put in restrictions that will only drive up costs or put conditions in place that, in the end, negatively affect the public.

As we know, the youth of this country are really absorbing the cell coverage and the cellphone options, and we only know that it's evolved so fast that it's hard to call it evolution. So now it's time to look at it and take a chance and make sure that we do this right and, as well, look to our federal government in Ottawa to make sure that they follow through, because overall, the best plan is a national plan.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd just like to stand and say that we're happy to support this bill. I also would like to commend the member from Sault Ste. Marie for bringing this forward. It's an important issue, and we're certainly very happy that people are going to be protected under the Consumer Protection Act, but this isn't the only category that government should be looking at. They should be looking at hydro. They should be looking at heat. There are all kinds of other areas where there are these hidden charges that people are really paying through the nose, so to speak. This is a good start, but there's lots more to do, because I think if we can get into these hidden charges in a lot of these categories, we're going to save the consumer and the public a lot of money.

I'm hoping, when it gets to second reading and it goes to committee, that the government will finally listen to some of the opposition members when they bring good points forth to committee, because in the last five years,

frankly, I haven't had any amendments—maybe half an amendment out of the hundreds we've put in—that have even been entertained by the government. So I'm hoping under this minority government that they realize that we have an important role to play when it comes to committee and they'll listen to what we actually say and actually do something and add amendments, because there are a lot of good suggestions that come from this side that go under the carpet because of political games. That's unfortunate because I certainly believe that we have a lot to add to this conversation, and I certainly have been exposed to these charges over the years, whether it's hydro, heat, insurance, you name it. There are a lot of charges that—people are, frankly, being milked in this province. We probably pay some of the highest situations in the whole country.

So I'm hoping that this bill does go forward, and I hope that we can certainly put some good recommendations in there, Madam Speaker, because I think it's a good way to go.

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

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** Today, I think we heard very informative and detailed speeches from the Minister of Consumer Services and, of course, the member for Sault Ste. Marie, who has long been an advocate for consumers right across this province—if you look at his history since he has been here, since 2003—bringing forward a number of bills that provide for consumer protection.

I know the member for Sault Ste. Marie always asks himself this key question every day: What have you done for the little guy lately? This piece of legislation does a lot for the little guy, because in these two speeches this morning—he certainly lifted the veil of secrecy that has surrounded the oligopoly that many of these cellphone providers and wireless operators have provided far too long in the province of Ontario.

You know, Madam Speaker, we've seen a tremendous shift over the last decade. Traditionally in Ontario, people relied upon land lines for one of their major means of communication with others. But we've had this evolution, some would say a revolution, over the last decade, where people are using iPods, cellphones and other sophisticated telecommunications devices.

This morning, the minister and the member for Sault Ste. Marie have certainly highlighted areas where the public really needs to be protected. This negative-option billing, these hidden charges and these roaming charges really is gouging.

This is a very important piece of legislation. It's part of the consumer protection initiative that we've had in several other areas. We dealt with people going door to door with natural gas contracts for home heating, people going door to door with electricity contracts. This is a great bill that should be passed right away.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to make a short comment on Bill 82 this morning.

I will give credit to the member for Sault Ste. Marie. This has been an issue that he has been very interested in. We were both elected in 2003. He has certainly been an advocate for doing something with respect to cellphone billings and clarifying and putting some clarity into the contracts. So I do support him on that.

I hope that, maybe if this bill passes, we'll be able to take a closer look at some of those cellphone bills down at that Ornge air ambulance service. If we get a select committee on Ornge, we'll be able to take a closer look at it, because I'm sure that those cellphone bills down there are about as out of whack as everything else was. I see the House leader here, and I would hope that he would give us that select committee on Ornge that they've been promising for so long.

But I digress, Speaker, and I do want to speak to the bill for a moment. The world has changed so dramatically. I mean, I can recall when the phone in our house was one that you had to crank to get the operator up in the old Bell house up where the library is in Barry's Bay now, and she'd come on the line and ask who you wanted to talk to. Our number was 126 at home, and you would have to then say who you wanted to talk to, but you didn't dial up. We never got dial telephones in Barry's Bay until 1967.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Were you born then?

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Yeah, I was born then. I was a veteran by then.

The world has changed. Everybody has got a cellphone today. For some people, that's the only phone they have. They don't even have a home phone anymore. So it's pretty ubiquitous. Everybody has got one, and I think it is time to maybe take a look at some of the rules and regulations surrounding them and clarifying the billing, because there are too many people—they think everything is going along hunky-dory, and at the end of the month, they get a bill and they say, "Oh, my word, where did this come from? This is unbelievable." It is time—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Thank you.

The member for Sault Ste. Marie has two minutes to respond.

**Mr. David Oraziotti:** Just to wrap up, I appreciate the comments from members opposite and take to heart those concerns around the committee process. I'm certainly looking forward to the committee process. I think it will be very enlightening to see some of the folks who will come forward, who we'll have the opportunity to ask questions of during presentations. Obviously, we'll consider suggestions that could be made by the opposition or amendments that could be proposed to this legislation, anything that could strengthen this that we have the jurisdictional ability—and I use that caveat because there are probably some other things that people want to see done, but that there are some jurisdictional issues with, in moving forward.

I certainly want to see this bill made as strong as we could possibly make it and ensure that there is a balance. We're not looking to negatively disadvantage those busi-

nesses in the sector, but quite frankly, the industry has got a problem and—the word was used, but yes—the industry needs an intervention, big time. This is a challenge.

When you take a look at the emails and the correspondence from citizens across this province and you look at the issues that they're raising, and you compare the rates and the services that are provided in a litany of other jurisdictions for those components that make up your cellphone bill—the voice, data and texting components—it's quite clear that we are being overcharged and consumers are being gouged in this province.

We can make these contracts better, we can make them clearer and we can make them more fair. There are other areas that I think we can look at as well when it comes to consumer protection measures, and I'm certainly supportive of doing that. But with respect to Bill 82, this is an important piece of legislation. It is legislation that is leading in the country, because there's only one jurisdiction that has this type of measure. I want to encourage all members to support it. Thank you.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

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

*The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.*

#### WEARING OF CARNATIONS

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member for Nickel Belt on a point of order.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe we have unanimous consent for every member of this House to wear a red carnation in honour of Multiple Sclerosis Day at Queen's Park.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member has asked for unanimous consent. Agreed? Agreed.

#### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** I'm pleased to welcome to the Legislature today the following members, who are at Queen's Park for Niagara Week: Gary Burroughs, regional chair of Niagara; Brian McMullan, mayor, city of St. Catharines; Brian Baty, regional councillor, Pelham; Tim Rigby, regional councillor, St. Catharines; Bruce Timms, regional councillor, St. Catharines; Dave Lepp, regional councillor, town of Niagara-on-the-Lake; Mike Trojan, CAO, Niagara region; Ken Brothers, commissioner, public works; Katherine Chislett, commissioner, community services; Patrick Robson, commissioner, planning; Matt Robinson, chief of staff, regional chair's office.

We welcome you to Queen's Park and invite everybody to go to the best reception that's held each time each year, and that is the Niagara reception, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., rooms 228 and 230.

**Mr. Rob E. Milligan:** I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today my daughter Linda Milligan's class

from Percy Centennial Public School, of Warkworth, Ontario.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** It is my pleasure to introduce representatives from the MS Society who have come to visit a number of us at Queen's Park. I have Mrs. Susan Latter, Mrs. Deanna Groetzing, and a good friend of mine, Laurel Ireland. In your gallery, Mr. Speaker, we also have Sharon Segal, who is lucky enough to be in your gallery. Thank you, and welcome to Queen's Park.

**Ms. Dipika Damerla:** I'd like to join my colleagues in welcoming a number of people from the MS Society, but in particular, Gaby Mammone, who's from my riding. Welcome, and thank you for coming.

**Mr. Michael Harris:** I'd like to welcome the grades 7 to 10 classes from Pathfinder Christian School in Wallenstein, who are visiting Queen's Park today and sitting in the gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** I want to introduce Sinead Anderson. Sinead originally comes from Napanee, attends the University of Ottawa and has worked in my community office for the last couple of years. Sinead, welcome to Queen's Park.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I want to recognize a special guest here from Beamsville today. I'm very proud that Anthonie Korstanje is one of the pages in this session of the Legislature. Anthonie is joined today by his father, Joe Korstanje, and his brother Josh in the members' gallery. Welcome here from Beamsville today.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I am absolutely delighted to welcome, in the Speaker's gallery, Mr. Joe Bush and his students from Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic school. This is an annual event, and we're delighted to have Mr. Bush and his students here with us again.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I'd like to welcome members of the MS Society from Durham: Mike Roche, Fanuel Ephraim and Gaby Mammone.

**Hon. Bob Chiarelli:** I'd like to introduce members of the board and executive leadership team from the Cement Association of Canada, here with us today in the east members' gallery: President Michael McSweeney, Erik Madsen, Bob Cartmel, Bill Galloway, Francesco Carantani, Adam Hayashi, Steve Morrissey and Gary Molchan.

Also, I'd like to invite all members to attend their Cement Mixer reception, beginning at 5 o'clock in the legislative dining room.

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** I'd like to welcome two of my constituents, Marilyn Wooldridge and her daughter Timber Wooldridge. They're here today to observe the proceedings in question period.

**Mr. Mario Sergio:** Firgrove Public School sits in the middle of my wonderful area of Jane and Finch, and I have the pleasure today of welcoming teachers, parents and grade 8s, and I wish them a wonderful stay at Queen's Park and a wonderful tour. I want to wish them a welcome to Queen's Park.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I'd like to also welcome members from the cement industry, from St Marys specifically: Martin Vroegh, and John Vanderpas, the senior vice-president. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I just wanted to introduce two interns who are working with me this summer: Jordan Lazarus, in my aboriginal affairs office, and Nick Wall, in my municipal affairs and housing office.

**Hon. Linda Jeffrey:** I just want to introduce Jevan Punia, who will be joining us in the Legislature shortly. She'll be serving as my intern and comes from the wonderful riding of Brampton–Springdale.

**Mr. Jeff Yurek:** I would like to introduce, from St. Thomas, Cathy Topping from the MS Society in St. Thomas. Welcome, Cathy.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** In the members' gallery, we have Coreen Chisholm, from the riding of Don Valley East, to see her daughter, page Dana, in action. We welcome you to Queen's Park.

In the Speaker's gallery, from the great riding of Brant, we have with us today Lisa Bishop, a Rotarian; Nancy Lasko, a Rotarian; and all the way from New Zealand, 17-year-old Rotary International exchange student Leigh Bathgate, who is here visiting us. Thank you for joining us.

*Applause.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** As you can see, it's full, so I've got a couple of more.

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery the parliamentary interns from the Quebec National Assembly. Please join me in warmly welcoming Marie-Joëlle Carboneau, Olivier Côté, François Gagnon, André-Yanne Parent and Ludovic Soucisse, here today to visit us and visit the interns here. Welcome.

We also have in the gallery today Her Holiness Amma Karunamayi, who has been recognized internationally for her commitment to providing welfare programs to underprivileged people living in India. Welcome.

#### LEGISLATIVE PAGES

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I would like at this time to ask our pages to assemble for their introduction. Our new pages are here.

From Mississauga–Erindale, Sherry Aslam; from Prince Edward–Hastings, Alexander Bossio; from Haldimand–Norfolk, Annaleise Carr; from Don Valley East, Dana Chisholm; from Parkdale–High Park, Kyra Colbert; from Richmond Hill, Angela Feng; from Timiskaming–Cochrane, Daxime Genier; from Don Valley West, Stavroula Georgiadis; from Scarborough–Rouge River, Tameem Hassan; from Kitchener–Conestoga, Andrew Hutton; from Kitchener Centre, Andrew Johnson; from Pickering–Scarborough East, Rumesa Khan; from Niagara West–Glanbrook, Anthonie Korstanje; from Oakville, Mateo Molinaro; from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Katie Mowat; from York South–Weston, Gopi Patel; from Scarborough Southwest, Tameem Quader; from London North Centre, Kendra Squire; from Kitchener–Waterloo, Sam Sun; from Sarnia–Lambton, Hannah Symington; from York–Simcoe, Louis Vattrt; and from Peterborough, Colin Walsh.

*Applause.*

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

##### ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** My question is to the Deputy Premier. Last week, I had the chance to visit British Columbia and Alberta, well-managed western provinces. What I heard, interestingly, was that they want to see Ontario succeed, but they know from their own experience that in order to do so, you need to get your own fiscal house in order. I repeatedly heard the view, from businesses and political leaders out west, that when Ontario succeeds, all of Canada does well, by leveraging off all of our strengths and weaknesses. But they want to see Ontario turn its economy around—the same theme I hear from families and business in Ontario, a theme that we share as Conservatives: to turn our province around and start by getting our fiscal house in order.

**1040**

Will the minister do what British Columbia did and bring in a mandatory across-the-board public sector wage freeze to get our fiscal house in order?

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** Actually, Mr. Speaker, British Columbia has now had to deal with court rulings with respect to their actions that bring into question their ability to implement.

We are in fact moving forward with a good plan. Although I've not had a chance to meet with the new Premier of Alberta or the new finance minister, I've had the opportunity in the past. I've met with the Premier of British Columbia and the finance minister there. Like governments around the world, they are having some success. They have challenges as well. We welcome their success because all of our provinces doing well makes a better country.

The economy of Ontario: They're absolutely right. It is the leading economy. It's about a strong country. It's got strong leadership on this side of the House. It's building a better future, and we'll have a chance to talk more about that in the supplementary.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I'm pleased to hear the minister say that they now want to see the west succeed because certainly Premier McGuinty had jumped on the bandwagon with the federal NDP leader, Thomas Mulcair, in running down the west.

We disagree, Speaker. We want to see a proud, confident, prosperous province of Ontario that is astride Confederation, creating jobs and investment. We don't want to engage in the politics of envy of the Ontario Liberal Party. We want to see a strong, confident Ontario that's leading Canada again.

The minister mentioned Finance Minister Kevin Falcon, whom I met with when I was in Vancouver. He said to me that BC wants to see a strong Ontario, but this means Ontario must get its fiscal house in order, and that means a credible plan to get its budget back into balance.

British Columbia did so: a public sector wage freeze for all; no exceptions, no special deals. That, in Ontario,

would save us \$2 billion per annum. My colleague from London–Middlesex, Mr. Yurek, has brought forward a private member's bill to do just that. I salute him. Will you support this initiative?

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** No. I wish, though, that the Leader of the Opposition, as he's singing the praises of British Columbia and Alberta, would stop slagging Ontario and the people in this province.

Let me just remind him that Ontario, in the last two months, is now leading Canada in employment growth. Since October 2003, 547,000 net new jobs. Just last week, the expansion of Highway 407 east: 900 direct jobs—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I don't expect any noises when I stand, and I would ask that I be able to hear the answer.

Minister?

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** Cliffs Natural Resources investment of more than \$3.3 billion and 1,100 jobs, Mr. Speaker—this province is a leader in Confederation. It has been, it continues to be and it will lead in the future under the strong leadership of Premier Dalton McGuinty and this government, as we move back to balance and protect the investments we've made in health and education to ensure a better future for all of our children.

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

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I think, Speaker, with respect to the finance minister, what he said is not in keeping with the facts. This much-promised Ring of Fire project hasn't happened, because the government keeps getting in the way.

We're proud of the province of Ontario. We believe that better days are ahead of us. Ontario PCs want to make us a leader again, not a laggard in Confederation.

So what happened? They took an historic strength of affordable energy and turned it on its head to the highest energy costs now for business in Canada and soon North America. They increased taxes, and they plan to do that again. They brought in the biggest deficits in the history of the province, heading towards tripling the debt in our province.

That is the wrong approach. We reject it. We want to see a pro-jobs, pro-growth agenda, to move beyond BC, to move beyond Alberta. We want Ontario to be the leader again in Confederation, and that starts with a mandatory public sector wage freeze. The bill is on Thursday. We're behind it. Won't you get behind it and save the taxpayers \$2 billion each and every year?

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** The Leader of the Opposition neglected to mention that we've now had 6.4% growth over the last 10 quarters since the recession, which is very strong, given our particular circumstances. One welcomes the success of our western provinces; they're oil-rich, natural gas-rich, potash rich, and it's good to see them succeeding, Mr. Speaker. It's good to have a country that's growing.

As we address the challenges in this economy, we think it's important to invest in post-secondary education to have the best workforce in the country. The census numbers today pointed to the fact that Ontario's economy again is growing, our population is growing. Even though we have challenges with aging, Mr. Speaker, this is still a magnet for people from all over the world, not just here in the GTA but right across Ontario. That's the strength of this economy, Mr. Speaker. That's the future, a future that's in good hands with Premier Dalton McGuinty and his government.

## ONTARIO ECONOMY

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Back to the finance minister and his Pollyanna view of the economy in Ontario. Sir, we've been behind in job creation and unemployment for 65 consecutive months. We've had a higher unemployment rate than the national rate. That has never happened in the history of Canada, never happened in the history of the Confederation. That's not the kind of Ontario we want to see. We want to see an Ontario that leads Canada again—the best place to find a job and to start a business.

It's very unfortunate when Premier McGuinty has quotes like the following: "I think we need to find a way to help western Canada move beyond an economy that is overwhelmingly based on pulling stuff out of the ground. That's causing harm to our collective future." The arrogance of that statement is breathtaking. It shows a Premier who is dramatically out of touch with real-world economics, and it's frightening how it echoes the far left and M. Mulcair from the federal NDP.

We see a different view. Instead of the politics of envy, we want to see the politics of confidence in Ontario; lower, more affordable energy and an understanding that oil sands jobs also create jobs in the province of Ontario. But first, make us open for investment. Make us strong and make us confident. Lower taxes in the province and get these books back into balance. Don't you agree, Minister?

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** All right, so let's talk about where Ontario leads, because the Leader of the Opposition, while he's out promoting Alberta and British Columbia, ought to be thinking about promoting Ontario and Ontario jobs. Mr. Speaker, for the eighth year in a row, the largest auto sector in North America, and this government helped keep it on its feet, right here in Ontario; the fastest clean energy sector in Canada; our financial services sector has gone from 13th-largest to 10th-largest in the world. We're proud of our investments. I'm proud to be on that panel. I'm proud the Premier led the effort to do that.

We are now ranked as the favourite destination for foreign investment in North America, second only to California. Our biotech, information, communications technology and film industries are in the top three in North America.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, KPMG ranks Ontario fourth in business costs among nine mature economy countries.

That's a record to be proud of. This is a province to be proud of—

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

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Be seated, please. Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

I'm going to offer all members a recommendation and advice again: When I say, "Thank you," that means you've used up your time to either answer or ask a question.

Supplementary: Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I'm certainly proud of the province of Ontario, but I'm not proud of what this government has done to it—higher taxes, unaffordable energy.

Let me drag the finance minister back to the real world here. Over the last five years, over 215,000 people have actually moved from Ontario to BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan—215,000 men and women who couldn't find jobs in the province of Ontario who had to move out west.

And the minister touts his Green Energy Act. One business leader in British Columbia said the following about the Green Energy Act. He said it was the most "bizarre, crazy, and possibly the worst piece of public policy in Canadian history." That has been a disaster.

Minister, it is time to take a different path, one of lower taxes, flexible labour markets and controlling government spending, beginning with a public sector wage freeze for all of us. Better days are yet to come in the province of Ontario, but if we get the fiscal policies right. Get our fundamentals right, like these good Conservative policies, to make Ontario a leader again.

*Interjections.*

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

Deputy Premier.

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** Well, I prefer the Premier of Ontario to the Premier of British Columbia any day, and I take his word, Mr. Speaker.

**1050**

And I'll tell the Leader of the Opposition, you are denigrating Ontario. You're running it down. You've been running it down in New York, in Alberta and British Columbia. Stand up and speak positively about the growth in our economy. Start speaking positively about our auto sector, our banks, our financial institutions. Start telling the complete story about net immigration to Ontario. We know you opposed certain tax credits in the last election. We'll be bringing—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I will now start identifying individuals. As I said yesterday, I thought we would be able to get a little further into this.

Deputy Premier?

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** You don't even welcome new immigration to Ontario. When we bring forward the tax credit that you spoke so passionately against, we'll see where you stand on that, because new Canadians, new immigration, are helping to build this economy, to grow

it. It's part of our vibrant future that's being well led by the Premier of Ontario with a strong plan to get us back to balance, and protect our schools and health care as we move forward.

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

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Back to the minister: The sad reality is that new Canadians are increasingly choosing BC and Alberta and Saskatchewan, and Ontario is falling behind. They're joining the 215,000 women and men who have left Ontario to find work somewhere else.

The finance minister is bankrupting our province, and he wants to talk about who is running Ontario down. The McGuinty government is running Ontario down: more than half a million unemployed, record deficits and debt, uncontrolled spending, trailing the country in job creation, three downgrades to our credit rating, and 65 consecutive months with higher unemployment.

Surely there is a better path, one based on lower taxes, affordable, reliable energy, a modern apprenticeship system to create jobs in the skilled trades, and getting our books in balance. That's the path the PCs see, a path to prosperity, a better Ontario, to bring those folks back from BC, Alberta, back home to Ontario—an Ontario that leads Canada again.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Can we assume on both sides that you're going to applaud after everyone and then not do it? Thank you.

Deputy Premier.

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** I suppose the Leader of the Opposition is going to find potash, oil and natural gas somewhere in Ontario. He is completely inaccurate in his portrayal of Ontario. Those provinces have growing economies resulting from a natural resource abundance.

But let's talk about our natural resource abundance, Mr. Speaker. I spoke of the Ring of Fire. Let's look at some new operations that are coming online: Rainy River Resources, a gold mine in Kenora, a potential to create 1,200 jobs—600 construction, 600 full time; Rubicon Minerals in Kenora-Rainy River; the Goldcorp Bruce Channel gold deposit. The list goes on and on.

The Leader of the Opposition may choose to run down Ontario. We choose to build a better future. Some 42% of new Canadians land right here in Ontario, and we're going to welcome them with tax credits that that leader and his party oppose. This is the party of the future, with a bright future—

*Interjection.*

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

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** —for Ontario and a strong economy with good schools, good health care and—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Member from Simcoe North come to order.

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** —a balanced budget.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** New question?

## ONTARIO BUDGET

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My question is to the Acting Premier. Yesterday, the Minister of Finance dismissed concerns that were raised in a legal brief about the government's 300-page omnibus bill. Does this government have an independent legal opinion of their own to back their interpretation of the bill?

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** In fact, I didn't agree with the legal opinion that was put forward. The characterization that the leader of the third party brings with respect to the budget bill is not accurate. In fact, most of it deals directly with ServiceOntario. About a third of the entire budget deals with ServiceOntario alone.

In fact, if you take that portion out—and it's an important portion, which, again, we signalled in the 2010 budget; we studied and moved forward on. If you take that out, it's one of the smaller budget bills. The schedules are dealing with relatively routine matters and when one looks at the history of budget bills over time, in fact it's relatively small.

Mr. Speaker, we are moving forward on that budget. It's the right plan for Ontario's future. It's about getting back to balance and it's about keeping the investments in health and education that have made our system—

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Yesterday, the minister didn't dispute that the bill in fact handed cabinet, and the Minister of Finance in particular, broad new powers. The government claims that these powers are not going to be used for a fire sale, Speaker, so what exactly do they need these powers for?

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, there's not one schedule in the budget bill that isn't referenced directly in the budget itself. Perhaps they didn't see that between the time they were briefed on March 28 and the time they reached an agreement with us on April 23.

Again, this House passed a motion that approved the budgetary policy of the government of Ontario. We're moving forward on that. We incorporated close to \$1 billion in changes resulting from the agreement that we had reached with the leader of the third party. The budget is the right course of action that will get us back to balance as we protect the important investments we've made in health care and education.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Well, Speaker, I don't recall getting an answer to my question. All I did was ask what these broad new powers are for. What does the Minister of Finance want these broad new powers for?

Ontario's Ombudsman has also raised concerns about provisions in this bill and says the bill creates oversight erosion and allows for new Ornge-like organizations operating outside of public scrutiny. Can we get the names today of the agencies that will be enforcing government legislation outside of public scrutiny?

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** To characterize this as being less public scrutiny is factually wrong, Mr. Speaker, number one. Number two, we have a bill before the House today that deals specifically with Ornge. We would like to get it passed, Mr. Speaker. It deals with enhanced accountability.

This is the government that brought freedom of information and privacy legislation to bear on the hydro agencies, which the previous government had kept hidden in a—didn't want to be seen, for obvious reasons. It became known afterwards.

The addendum to this year's budget is one of the most far-reaching and transparent documents, new initiatives in the budget that identify line by line where money and program savings are coming from. It was borrowed from—I know they like to quote the Obama administration. It was taken right from the Obama administration's budget documents, Mr. Speaker.

So it's about transparency; it's about accountability; it's about getting back to balance and, most importantly, protecting the investments we have made in health and education, for a better future for all Ontarians.

## ONTARIO BUDGET

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My next question is also to the Acting Premier. Serious concerns are being raised about a bill that seems to give the minister and the government a lot of new powers to make decisions that affect people's lives behind closed doors. And instead of answering basic questions, we get a lot of the same old tired politics from across the way. People deserve better in this province, Speaker. Can the minister explain, straight and clear, why he needs the sweeping powers the omnibus bill gives him and what he intends to do with those powers?

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, I would urge the leader of the third party to review the advice she has had from her loan guarantors and would just refer her to sections in the act that deal specifically with a number of things. Services under the proposed act would be provided in accordance with service agreements. Significant conditions and restrictions are imposed in the following way: appointment of auditors for a non-share corporation; of minister-issued policies and directives to the board in a non-share corporation; significant powers over a corporation's ability to establish, acquire, wind up, dispose or otherwise deal with a subsidiary, a partnership, a trust or any other entity; and to impose accountability and performance requirements on a service provider and requirements to submit to inspections, reviews and audits by the minister or a delegate, Mr. Speaker.

The act also would impose on a service provider the provisions of Ontario's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act regarding collection, retention, use and disclosure of personal information.

It is, in fact, accountable. It is sweeping in its accountability. Your interpretation is wrong. You ought to sit down with your loan guarantors and get it—

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Well, Speaker, the problem is that all the of this stuff that he just quoted can be done by ministers and their delegates, not done in the accountability of this Legislature, which is the problem.

Over the last three months, the people of Ontario have seen first-hand what happens when we ignore oversight and accountability. The waste and mismanagement at Ornge happened because this government decided that public scrutiny was not important.

I think that if the people of Ontario and if the members of this Legislature saw memos like the one that was revealed yesterday, our ambulance service might not be in the mess that it's in today, Speaker.

If the minister says he doesn't want another Ornge, is he willing to admit that his 300-page omnibus bill needs some changes?

1100

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, we have said, right from the beginning, we welcome amendments to the bill, as long as it protects the substance of the motion that was passed by the Legislature. We would like to get the bill into hearings. I know the government House leader is working diligently to do that. I believe we've tabled a time allocation motion that provides significant public hearings on the budget, and we would welcome amendments to make the budget bill better.

But make no mistake, we are simply moving forward in a way that we've always moved forward. In fact, this bill provides much greater accountability than has existed up to now, not just for agencies of the government, but also for any future arrangements that may or not be made with private sector delivery of services that are presently delivered publicly.

We welcome getting this bill to committee, getting it passed, and would likely accept amendments to the substance of the bill.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** The people who make this province work every day expect their government to spend public money wisely. They understand that they live in tough times and that we all live in tough times, but they also see that shortcuts like Ornge don't save money. They do the exact opposite.

Is the minister ready to look at changes to his omnibus bill that will ensure proper oversight, transparency and accountability?

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** We have those provisions built into the bill. If the leader of the third party has ways of enhancing that, yes. If, in fact, she's saying that there's no opportunity for further outsourcing and so on, no, we don't agree with that, because, frankly, a number of government services are not efficiently delivered. And so we look forward to enhancing the accountability provisions in the bill. We hope that we can get agreement to move the bill to committee and to get the budget bill passed.

So to the leader of the third party and her loan guarantors, I say, yes, indeed, we will look at those amendments. But make no mistake, this is the right plan for

Ontario's future. You agreed to it last month. You ought to keep your word to the people of Ontario.

#### AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

**Mr. Frank Klees:** My question is to the Minister of Health. Yesterday, we revealed that the Premier and his cabinet approved the Mazza scheme against the advice and warnings of senior civil servants. The minister in her response said this: "It's clear that with the benefit of hindsight we would have had a stronger performance agreement."

Speaker, what's clear is that even hindsight can't help this minister to get it right. Given the alarming number of calls to which Ornge has not been able to respond because of down-staffing and unqualified staff being available, one would have thought that the most important change to the performance agreement would be to entrench clearly defined service levels in that agreement to which Ornge could be held.

Speaker, I'd like to know from the minister, why is there no reference in that performance agreement to specific service levels to which Ornge would be held accountable?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** There are significant changes under way at Ornge, and we are absolutely committed to strengthening oversight at Ornge and to improve the quality of care that patients are receiving. One of the ways we're doing that is by collecting information that was not previously collected on a range of issues.

I'm very pleased that Bruce Farr has joined the leadership team at Ornge. He has a long history working with Toronto EMS. He started as an ambulance driver in Scarborough. He moved to the training division and was eventually promoted to the position of chief and general manager. He retired from that position and is now in a leadership role at Ornge. His experience in providing strategic direction, operational planning and leadership will prove indispensable. We look forward to continuing to strengthen—

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

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Renfrew is now warned. To be clear, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke is warned.

**Mr. Frank Klees:** Speaker, repeatedly in this place we've heard from the minister that the new performance agreement will set standards. She now—the minister—has refused to respond to my very specific question about levels of service that should be defined in that performance agreement. I quite frankly don't care how many new people are there; I want to know what the minister is doing about incorporating levels of service into the performance agreement to which Ornge can be held. Speaker, there are none. I'd like to know from the minister why not.

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

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Order. The member from Halton, come to order.

Government House leader.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Again, I never tire of reminding the member that a committee of this Legislature, the public accounts committee, is seized with this matter, and if he insists upon holding hearings on the floor of the Legislature, as I said, there are a variety of issues that we want to talk about on this side. For example, why did Ornge locate its headquarters in Oshawa instead of Peterborough, against the advice of senior Ornge executives, when we find out that there was lobbying on the part of the Conservatives? We will ask about Kelly Mitchell and the work he did in terms of lobbying the Progressive Conservative Party, putting together—

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

### LOBBYISTS

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** J'aimerais diriger ma question au premier ministre par intérim. Last week, the Integrity Commissioner called for a series of changes to the Lobbyists Registration Act in light of the scandal at Ornge. Her first recommendation is that her office be given investigative power and the power to issue penalties. Would the Deputy Premier agree to make these changes?

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** We take all of these issues very seriously. I'm proud of our record in bringing enhanced accountability to this government and to all public services. We will look at those carefully and give them due consideration over time.

I'm proud of the fact that we have enhanced the coverage of freedom of information and privacy, that we have made efforts to improve the sunshine list and a number of other things. There's always more to do and we welcome thoughtful input to these important pieces of legislation.

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

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Thank you for the answer, but by the actions of the party on the other side, it looks like they're worried that those new powers will reveal too much about their government relationship with well-connected insiders. Through Ornge—

*Interjections.*

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

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** —we now all know that the former president of the Liberal Party of Canada, Alfred Apps, and the Premier's close adviser and campaign manager, Don Guy, say they were not lobbying, although we now have an ever-growing body of evidence that suggests that Mr. Apps was setting up meetings with the Premier's office, that Mr. Guy was making calls on behalf of Ornge.

We need to know the truth, Mr. Speaker, and if the law was broken, there should be a penalty. Will the Deputy Premier agree to fix the Lobbyists Registration

Act so that the registrar can investigate and put a penalty on people who break the law?

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** To the Minister of Government Services.

**Hon. Harinder S. Takhar:** As the member knows, the Integrity Commissioner is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly. I have met with her and she has made some recommendations. We are looking at it very carefully, and we will evaluate those recommendations and then we will proceed accordingly.

### GOVERNMENT SERVICES

**Mr. David Zimmer:** My question is for the Minister of Government Services. Ontarians want high value for their government services. They expect those services will be delivered in a way that fits their lifestyle. Since 2006, about 13 million Ontario residents have used the new ServiceOntario for a variety of services: birth certificates, marriage certificates, health cards, driver's licences, licence plate renewals, even fishing and hunting licences.

ServiceOntario has made a lot of improvements in their conscious effort to go "green," but, Minister, what are you doing now to make ServiceOntario even easier to use for Ontarians?

**Hon. Harinder S. Takhar:** I agree with the member from Willowdale completely, and I want to thank him for asking this question. We have made continuous and significant progress on how to deliver government services. We are now offering Ontarians even more choices. Now they have the option of signing up for getting e-notification reminders for renewals of their driver and vehicle licences. This is a very simple and environmentally friendly process. They can sign up by creating their own account at serviceontario.ca. This will make our notification process faster and can save our government up to \$8 million.

1110

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

**Mr. David Zimmer:** Minister, I know you're trying to get ServiceOntario to drive more and more traffic online. In fact, constituents up in Willowdale are very happy that ServiceOntario is expanding the services online—from 37 health-card-issuing offices to almost 300 across the province.

There are a lot of positive changes. There are nine different new service guarantees, and now we're moving in this direction with the e-notification.

I know that other jurisdictions have been experimenting with this new e-notification application, but, Minister, what are your plans? Are we going to expand this e-notification? How's it working out in Ontario? How's it working out in other jurisdictions?

**Hon. Harinder S. Takhar:** The email notification process will be optional and was unofficially launched for real testing on March 12, 2012. Since then, approximately 10,000 Ontarians have already registered on email notification. Many enhancements that were identi-

fied during the user acceptance testing will also be implemented.

ServiceOntario is continuing to expand and enhance its online services in order to give Ontarians greater choices. This new service offering is designed to help busy families access government services around the clock, and their reminders will not be misplaced.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I want to say it will save the government up to \$8 million. Some 6.5 million vehicle stickers and 1.5 million driver licences are renewed annually, and we are working very closely with the—

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

#### AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

**Mr. Frank Klees:** Back to the Minister of Health: The most critical issue at Ornge is the fact that lives have been put at risk because of Ornge's inability to respond. In the vast majority of cases, the reason for that is understaffing of qualified paramedics and pilots.

There was a time in Ontario when Ontarians could count on their air ambulance service to respond to both critical, advanced and primary care responses. Essentially, the fact that there is no reference in the performance agreement to either critical care response or advanced care response reduces our air ambulance to a very expensive medical limousine service. Is this the minister's new vision of our air ambulance service?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I would urge the member opposite to actually read the performance agreement. I would urge the member opposite to support Bill 50, legislation before this House that will enhance transparency and oversight at Ornge.

The new performance agreement will give Ontarians better air ambulance care. It appoints a new patient advocate, publicly posting the complaints process. There will be annual public surveys on performance. The member opposite wants performance indicators; so do we. They're in the performance agreement. There will be improved reporting of emergency dispatch information, and we will be including cancelled and declined flights and land ambulance calls.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Answer.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** These are all important enhancements to Ornge, and I really wish the member opposite would just support Bill 50.

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

**Mr. Frank Klees:** Well, Speaker, you have called for an answer, I'm expecting an answer, and we're not getting an answer to my question.

Not only is there no reference in that performance agreement to critical and advanced standards of care, I have it on good authority that Mr. McKerlie, the minister's new CEO, has in fact now asked the ministry to water down the regulations governing paramedic qualifications. He is asking for regulations to reduce the requirement of having two paramedics down to one para-

medic to qualify for an air ambulance staff. This contradicts even Ornge's internal medical advisory committee.

Rather than demanding compliance with existing standards, the minister is now going to be complicit in actually compromising patient care. I'd like to know from the minister, why will she not, at least in this case, take the advice of her emergency health services branch, which is advising against watering down that regulation, and stand up for patient care—

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

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Speaker, rather than dealing with hypotheticals, which the member opposite has become famous for doing, I think it's important that we deal with the facts. The fact is, the members opposite are blocking passage of Bill 50. It is shameful.

Meanwhile, the front-line staff at Ornge are saving lives every single day. Just yesterday, the front-line staff at Ornge had one rotor-scene patient, 36 inter-facility transfers; 15 patients were transported by land ambulance, and 10 pediatric patients were transferred by Ornge.

The member opposite wants to criticize, criticize, criticize. Speaker, I think it's time that the member opposite stood up and said thank you to the front-line staff at Ornge.

#### ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

**Mr. John Vanthof:** My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. New Democrats sought access to documents about why your ministry decided to sell Ontario Northland without a single word to northerners. Instead of getting information, we got pages and pages that were censored and blacked out. Minister, what are you and your government hiding from northerners?

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** Absolutely nothing. What we did was, in 2003, when we assumed power, we decided that we would be as creative as possible to try to make the ONTC sustainable. So what we did over the course of the next eight years was invest \$436 million in the ONTC to try to make it sustainable, to try to make it viable, to try to ensure that it would meet the present and future needs of northern Ontario. Unfortunately, we realized that with a \$100-million subsidy every year, this was not sustainable. The business lines are good; the business model isn't. We're looking for a new business model.

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

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Speaker, with all due respect: Ornge—that was creative.

Minister, the censored documents date back to March 2009, well before the ONTC shops in North Bay lost the Metrolinx refurbishment contract. While this government was preparing to axe Ontario Northland, the minister was on hand in Sudbury to cut the ribbon on a new Ontario Northland Sudbury bus terminal. And while this govern-

ment was consulting northerners on the northern growth plan, the fate of the ONR was already being decided.

Once again, Minister, why are you withholding information that impacts over 1,000 jobs across the north?

**Hon. Rick Bartolucci:** The reality is, that's the farthest thing from the truth. The facts have been laid on the table. The ONTC is not sustainable in its present form. The ONTC lines are good business lines. The ONTC business model is not a good business model.

Now, the NDP might think that you can sustain a \$100-million subsidy to the ONTC over the next 2,000 years. The reality is, you can't. So what we're doing is building a transportation system that will meet the present and future needs and that will not be dependent on government sustaining it to the tune of \$100 million plus, every single year.

### FOREST FIRES

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** This morning, my question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, last week we saw how dangerous northern Ontario can be, despite its enduring beauty. The city of Timmins and Kirkland Lake declared a state of emergency when over 800 residents were asked to leave their homes. Tens of thousands more were put on high alert as large forest fires spread quickly throughout this region.

I know that the safety and well-being of Ontarians is a significant concern to our government. Even though steady rain and calm winds have brought some relief to the situation in the northeast, it is my understanding that communities are still on notice.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister share with this House the efforts of all those who have worked tirelessly to protect those people in northeastern Ontario?

**Hon. Michael Gravelle:** I do want to thank the member from Peterborough for that very important question. Our thoughts have certainly been with the families and all those impacted by the major forest fires in northeastern Ontario this past week, particularly those in Kirkland Lake and Timmins.

I did get an opportunity to speak with Mayor Enouy of Kirkland Lake and Mayor Laughren in Timmins last week also and assured them that the safety and well-being of Ontarians is our number one priority, and we will continue to use all our resources to fight those fires.

1120

Certainly, I know that they are very grateful, as we are, to the 1,300 firefighters and many more first responders who are standing on the front-lines aggressively battling the blaze, working long, hard hours to keep families safe. I think we have to thank the other provinces as well for bringing in their resources and their equipment to help us fight this major forest fire challenge.

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

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** I want to salute the minister for his great leadership in this particular situation. My supplementary is again to the Minister of Natural Resources. Thank you for the update on the status of these forest

fires in northeastern Ontario. As stated earlier, 800 residents were forced to leave their homes due to the threat of forest fires. In these challenging and demanding times, it's necessary that impacted communities are receiving adequate and timely information. They need to know when they are being evacuated, when they will be received and what their exit route is. To the Minister of Natural Resources: Can you tell me how this pertinent information is being communicated, and what is the status of the evacuated communities?

**Hon. Michael Gravelle:** To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** First, I want to thank all government resources, other provinces and the Red Cross, which have contributed to either our fire suppression or evacuation effort. Good communication is vital to such a challenging event. EMO has been holding teleconferences every day with affected municipalities, First Nations and other levels of government. Communication to local residents is being handled locally in the affected communities. The municipalities and police services have reached out to local media and contacted potential evacuees directly door-to-door and by phone. In addition, EMO is disseminating emergency information via a social media channel and website.

Thankfully, weather conditions fell in our favour over the weekend, and the majority of evacuees have returned home. The safety of our citizens is paramount.

### HEALTH CARE FUNDING

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, you will be familiar with the case of Liam Reid, who is a two-and-a-half-year-old boy diagnosed with an extremely rare eye condition known as bilateral PFVS/Norrie's. Without surgical intervention and treatment, most children with this condition are completely blind by the age of four.

In 2009, Liam's ophthalmologist completed a prior approval application for out-of-country coverage so that Liam could be treated by a leading expert in Michigan, Dr. Michael Trese. Despite the fact that there's no one in Ontario who is able to treat Liam and save his sight, his application for coverage has been denied. Minister, will you ensure that Liam receives the treatment he needs in order to preserve the little sight that he has left in his eyes?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Speaker, the first thing I, of course, want to do is acknowledge that this is a very, very difficult case, and my thoughts are with the family and this little boy who is facing a significant challenge. I cannot, of course, comment on any specific cases, but I can say that we have a very robust out-of-country plan. We are bringing more services home. Bariatric surgery, for example, is being performed in Ontario now; it was not, prior to changes we've made. What I can tell you, Speaker, is that there is a process to get funding for out-of-country care, and I urge the family to continue with that process.

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

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** Minister, there is a patent unfairness here of which you are fully aware, given the voluminous correspondence that I've sent you on this subject. It has come to our attention that there is another child in Ontario who has the very same condition, who has been treated by the very same physician in Michigan for a number of years, who has received approval for out-of-country funding. If this is the case, there is absolutely no justification for the refusal of the ministry to approve treatment for Liam out of country.

This decision, Minister, as you know, means the difference between partial sight and total blindness for this child. Surely that's what our health care system exists for: to treat children like this. Minister, will you do the right thing and grant approval for Liam's treatment?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Speaker, these cases are very, very difficult. What I can tell you is, we have a very strong process in place where experts make decisions. It is not appropriate that politicians make decisions. I simply must rely on expert advice.

When there are doctors here in Ontario who can perform services, that work must be done—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Member from Halton, a second warning.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** —so again, my heart breaks for this child, for other people who are facing significant health challenges—

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** How many do I get?

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** No more.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** —but we must have care provided in Ontario when that care is available in Ontario.

## FIRE SAFETY

**Mr. Paul Miller:** My question is to the Deputy Premier. Yesterday, the Premier suggested that consultation is needed before requiring automatic sprinklers. The experts disagree with the Premier and the minister. This has been studied, literally, to death.

The experts already agree with four recent inquests calling for this. The Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, the Firefighters Association of Ontario, the National Fire Protection Association and the former Ontario fire marshal have all called for this legislation.

Why is the Premier and his government the only one standing in the way of bringing forward legislation to require automatic sprinkler systems in every Ontario retirement home—not a year from now, now.

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** First of all, one death due to a fire is one too many. This minister here takes her job very seriously. I've been consulting with all the experts, including the fire marshal's office and the chief fire-fighter of the province, and we are actually looking to speed up the consultation. As the Premier said yesterday,

it's very important to have it right, because a consultation on the state of our residences in Ontario—long-term-care residences and homes for special needs—we know how many we have, but we don't know in what condition they are, so this technical consultation came from the experts. We need this technical consultation and they're all with us—

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

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** —to pursue this consultation.

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

**Mr. Paul Miller:** Well, Minister, they disagree with you. It's done. The consultations are done. The experts say move now.

You want to move quickly? Move Bill 54 forward, my bill. It has everything in it. The experts consulted with me. I've talked to all the experts.

This is another stall tactic. There's nothing to prevent this government from moving on automatic sprinklers legislation now while continuing their talks with the experts. But the experts have already told me that there's nothing more to say. Let's get on with it. Let's protect lives. You say you care about lives. Then put Bill 54 through and protect lives now, not a year from now when someone else will die.

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** I understand the passion of the member of the opposition and that's his job to do that. My job as minister is to make sure that we do it right, that we do it with our partners.

We have done a lot—all parties across the way have been in power and what have they done? Nothing. This minister is taking her job seriously. We're working with our partners and we will continue to—we need to know with the previous—Ontario is committed to working with its partners.

With the previous fire safety consultation completed, we have asked the Ontario fire marshal to conduct a technical consultation to identify fire safety improvements in residences.

One size does not fit all. What they're proposing will close a lot of these residences in rural communities and in the north. So we have to have it right and we will do it.

## SEXUAL ASSAULT

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. Sexual violence crosses all social boundaries, affects women of every age and cultural background and has devastating impacts on the lives of victims and their families. One third of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16 and over 93% of reported adult sexual assault victims are female.

**1130**

Our government has delivered on its commitment to protect women from all forms of sexual violence through Ontario's sexual violence action plan, but breaking down language barriers for survivors of sexual assault is a key factor in ensuring that women have better access to the support networks that they need.

I ask the minister: What is being done across the province to ensure that survivors of sexual assault have access to social, health care and legal services in their own languages?

**Hon. Laurel C. Broten:** I thank the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for the opportunity to speak about an issue that's very important to me, as I know it is for her.

With the launch of Ontario's sexual violence action plan in March 2011, our government reaffirmed its commitment to prevent sexual violence, improve services for victims and strengthen the criminal justice system. The action included \$15 million in investments over four years in public education, training and community services, and \$3 million to Ontario sexual assault centres to help them better respond to women in their communities.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to let you know that the work continues. Just last week, I announced investments of \$4 million to expand the language interpreter services program to serve sexual violence victims whose first language is not English or French. The program will help women in more than 70 languages. It will also include sign language interpretation for victims; 7,000 women will be supported.

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

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** Breaking down language barriers for survivors of sexual assault is vital to ensuring that women can access the support they need. May is sexual violence prevention month, so this is a great time to speak about the thousand more of women a year who will benefit from this new investment to expand language interpreter services.

But it is vital that, in addition to providing support to victims of sexual violence, we also work to prevent sexual violence from occurring. I ask the minister: What is this government doing to prevent sexual assault and sexual violence from occurring in the province of Ontario?

**Hon. Laurel C. Broten:** The member from Oak Ridges–Markham is absolutely right: Prevention is key. That's why we work in collaboration and have worked with our partners, including the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres and Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes, for the development of prevention public education materials and the rollout of a province-wide training for front-line service providers in the community health, education and justice sectors. We're also supporting public education campaigns to encourage men and boys to play an active role in preventing violence against women.

We work closely with our partners right across the province. We are pleased to have taken a collaborative approach and to have their support in the launch of the sexual violence action plan and the work that we have done and continue to do to prevent sexual violence in this province.

#### SKILLED TRADES

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, we're

all aware of the 1,000% increase your College of Trades is proposing to impose upon the journeymen and tradespeople for their certificate of qualification renewal fees. We know that you are embarrassed and humiliated to respond to such an outrageous tax grab, and now you might care to not respond to three new job-killing tax grabs. The College of Trades is proposing yearly new taxes on apprentices, trade workers and all the employers of skilled trade workers. And you know what? They don't even advertise that in their \$4-million ad campaign that they're running in the major newspapers—paid for by the province, by the taxpayers of Ontario.

These tradespeople already pay taxes and there is absolutely no need or benefit in belonging to the College of Trades. Can you explain to the House why you support these outrageous new job-killing tax increases, and why you allow four million scarce tax dollars to be spent on the College of Trades ads?

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** The College of Trades will probably have, if established, the lowest fees for any college, I think, if you compare it to any other craft, trade, or profession, many of which are \$500, \$1,000 to support these. This actually raises the standards of training and safety dramatically. It is a college of, and run by, people who work in the trades and the business associated with the trades. The member opposite's former colleague Ron Johnson is leading an extensive consultation, not an ad campaign, to survey that in a very democratic process, so that we will ask people to decide what kind of fee is appropriate and what kind of services they want. And maybe later I can sit down with the member over a cup of coffee and explain the difference between a licence and a College of Trades, because there's a difference between buying an apple and a bushel and he doesn't understand the difference.

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

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** I'd rather you just scrapped the College of Trades. I don't need the cup of coffee.

Again, you ducked the question. The people of Ontario are slowly learning that the College of Trades is a huge boondoggle. Minister, you've instituted this large, unnecessary body without consulting with Ontario's skilled trades workers or employers. We know that your college needs a minimum of \$31 million a year to service itself. They're going to get \$15 million of that, Mr. Speaker, from the electrical system.

Now you've decided, instead of taking financial responsibility for your growing boondoggle, you are now going to implement a new tax—and this is what it is; a new tax—on the backs of hard-working tradespeople and their employers all across our great province.

A Tim Hudak government will scrap the Working Families Coalition College of Trades. Will you support the tradespeople of Ontario and scrap this banana republic agency once and for all?

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** If that's the member decaffeinated, I can only imagine what he's like when he's caffeinated.

I have to ask for the member opposite to table a simple document with our ministry, which is the fictional 200,000 apprenticeships. I actually have travelled the entire province, and everyone refers to this as a joke. You have been asked now by business leaders and trades leaders to table your plan for 200,000 apprenticeships.

Let me tell the truth: There is no plan. What it would result in is what we had when they were in power, which was 15,000 apprenticeships compared to over 30,000 per year; half as many people in apprenticeships and trades; the loss of the capacity in the system; and we trailed Canada. That's what you're proposing, sir, and that's what you continue to stand by. One day, you should rise in the House and apologize to all—

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

#### AUTISM TREATMENT

**Miss Monique Taylor:** My question is to the Minister of Education. Jonathan Lowry is a six-year-old autistic boy living in Hamilton Mountain. After years of struggling to get the help he needs, Jonathan was enrolled in a partnership program between the school board and Hamilton Health Sciences. Jonathan has been responding very well to the treatment in this program. However, Jonathan's family has recently been told that the educational portion of the program at the Chedoke site will no longer be available due to the lack of funding from the Ministry of Education.

Can the minister lay out the rationale for cutting this program when it will lead to much greater costs down the road?

**Hon. Laurel C. Broten:** I'm very proud of the work that we have done in this province to provide better support for children with autism. Working in co-operation between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, we have seen significant new investments in communities across the province, and I know well the work that is done in Hamilton.

Obviously, Speaker, I don't have the facts of this particular case. I would certainly encourage the family to speak to their local board, to understand the decisions. I, too, would look for an opportunity to speak directly with the family and understand what is transpiring.

But certainly, what I can say is that when we came into office in 2003, we had a province where children's services were cut off at the age of six, Speaker. We made that change. We've significantly increased the investments, and we should be very proud of a broad range of services that we have for children with autism in this province.

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

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Back to the Minister of Education: Jonathan receives IBI therapy as part of the programming, and it's working out really well. The cut of the Ministry of Education will put him back into a regular classroom one day a week, an atmosphere which has resulted in regular suspensions of a six-year-old child. It

will also mean that his transportation to and from the IBI program at Chedoke for the other four days will be jeopardized.

Mr. Speaker, this makes no sense. This child is in danger of losing effective IBI treatment and the appropriate education supports so that the government will find minimal savings. Will the minister look into this program to find a solution that places the needs of families ahead of short-term savings?

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

**Hon. Laurel C. Broten:** To the Minister of Children and Youth Services, Speaker.

**Hon. Eric Hoskins:** As well, I'm not aware of the specifics of this individual case, but I will say that I would be pleased to look into it, along with the Minister of Education.

I want to reiterate just how many improvements have been made, including last year's investment of \$25 million annually for ABA treatment to provide opportunities for children and youth who are living with autism so that they can meet their full potential, and of course the quadrupling of our funding towards IBI services in this province since 2003, which has resulted in more than a tripling of the provision of IBI services to children across this province.

Of course, there's more work to be done, and I would be happy to speak to my critic to follow up on this specific case.

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

The member from Leeds–Grenville on a point of order.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Thank you, Speaker. In the question period just prior to constituency week when I asked the Minister of Agriculture about the improper grant to the municipality of Bluewater, he inferred it was a rural economic development program grant. In fact, according to agreements, the money doesn't seem to come from any official program—

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** That's not a point of order.

I have two quick points. Number one, the farmers' market outside would love to have you there to show support—buy Ontario. I'm taking over from Steve Peters.

Number two, a member has returned from this break that we've had, and we offer our congratulations. If not friend, at least colleague Madame Meilleur got married. Congratulations. Welcome to the club.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

*The House recessed from 1142 to 1500.*

#### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today Mr. John Phair, a well-known agricultural reporter for the Voice of the Farmer from southwestern Ontario. He's here to cover the famous farmers' market

today and also the Ontario Cattlemen's barbecue on the lawn tomorrow.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Introductions?

I'm not sure if the member from Algoma-Manitoulin is—okay, then I will move to the member from Huron-Bruce.

**Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:** I'm pleased to welcome to Queen's Park today the Zurich Public School. They'll be joining us in the gallery in a few moments.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Further introductions? Okay, the member is not standing anymore.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### JIM KILGOUR

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a man who will be sadly missed in the community of Collingwood. Jim Kilgour will be remembered fondly by the hundreds of students who passed through the doors of Collingwood Collegiate and into his much-loved biology class.

No matter who you talk to, everybody agrees: Jim Kilgour was the real deal. For more than 30 years, he made science fun, often using his wit to engage his students, and never lacking enthusiasm. As my constituency assistant, Joy Parks, told me, "He was one of those teachers that really stood out. From dissecting worms and frogs to watching a classmate drink water while standing on his head, we laughed and laughed."

He was also a devoted community leader, who was made a companion of the Order of Collingwood, the town's highest honour. As chair of Collingwood's waterfront harbourlands committee and leisure services advisory board, he oversaw the creation of Millennium Park and helped preserve Collingwood's rich shipbuilding heritage with the creation of the Walk of History.

Having joined the Collingwood Yacht Club in 1975, Jim served as commodore of the club in 1980, editor of its newspaper and organizer for the sailing competition of the Georgian Bay club. He also taught a marine radio course for more than 36 years.

For me, it was his genuine and fervent resolve to save the Nottawasaga lighthouse that caught my eye, for which he was tremendously successful.

Mr. Speaker, Jim Kilgour was a man who was very generous with his time, a man who put his students and his community ahead of himself, and for that, we are truly grateful. Jim will be greatly missed.

### FOREST FIREFIGHTING

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** People will know all across north-eastern Ontario, and particularly for me, in Timmins, that there were a number of forest fires still ongoing today. I just want to say a big thank you to those who have been involved in the suppression of these particular fires. In the case of the Timmins area, the fire there was quite

scary for a lot of people—smoke into the city of Timmins, pretty heavy on Thursday and Friday. There were a lot of evacuations all along Highways 101, 144 and 576. There was quite a bit of turmoil in regard to trying to make sure we got everybody out of there.

I just want to say that the people of the fire services of the city of Timmins, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the OPP, the Timmins police, the Emergency Measures Ontario people, the mayor, the municipality—all those people who have been involved—just really did a stellar job of making sure we do what's right when it comes to the protection of life and when it comes to the protection of property.

I was able to go in and visit the fire centre in South Porcupine and then the mobile command that was put up at Tembec later—sometime Friday, I guess—a really professional bunch of people that we have working for the MNR. They understand the nature of a fire. They understand what makes that fire tick, and understanding that allows them to be able to do the very professional job they have done.

On behalf of this Legislature and on behalf of the people of Timmins-James Bay, we want to thank all those people—who are still working on those fires—who made our community safe.

### FLOODING

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** The Thunder Bay region has been hit with a record amount of rain. So far this month, we've received three times the regular level of rainfall. The result has been widespread flooding.

The city of Thunder Bay and Oliver Paipoonge and Conmee have declared states of emergency. Highways and roadways have been washed out. Thunder Bay's Atlantic Avenue sewage treatment plant has been knocked out, and countless homes have been damaged by the flood waters destroying valuable investments and priceless family items. I want to acknowledge all those who have suffered as a result of this flooding.

Speaker, I contacted all of my rural municipalities early Monday morning: Conmee, Oliver Paipoonge, Neebing, Gillies and O'Connor. Emergency Management Ontario is in contact with all the municipalities that are in a state of emergency, and our Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program is available to provide help to those municipalities as well.

Please remember: After periods of significant rainfall, water levels can become dangerous very quickly and without warning, so please stay clear of waterways. If you're on a well in a rural area, please boil your water if your well has been compromised.

I want to thank all those who are working so hard to respond to the flooding: government officials, Thunder Bay Hydro, firemen and police, and everyday citizens who are working to bring our region back to normal and helping their neighbours in their time of need. A lot of hard work has been done already. These are difficult circumstances, but the people of Thunder Bay region are

extraordinary, and their exceptional nature is even more evident when we're facing adversity. I want to thank you all.

#### BLYTH FESTIVAL

**Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:** I have to tell you, I love getting back to my riding of Huron–Bruce during constituency week, because there are so many good things happening in rural Ontario.

Last week, I had the opportunity to meet with Eric Coates, the artistic director for the Blyth Festival, and tour their first-class facility. It was founded in 1975. The Blyth Centre for the Arts functions as an arts centre for Huron county. The Blyth Festival presents a summer season of exclusive Canadian theatre. The success of the Blyth Festival led to the founding of many summer theatres in similar town halls across the province, many of which have since adopted the policy of producing Canadian work.

The festival is fully professional, community-based theatre. It is a priority to produce scripts that hold a mirror to the culture and concerns of the region. When the theatre was founded in 1975, few scripts that fit this mandate were being written, so Blyth jumped into the creation of new work and has subsequently developed and premiered over 100 Canadian plays. Notable successes include Governor General's award winner *Quiet in the Land*, by Anne Chislett, and two recent finalists for the Governor General's award: *Reverend Jonah*, by Paul Ciuffo; and *Innocence Lost: A Play about Steven Truscott*, by Beverley Cooper. Developing and producing Canadian work in this context is an achievement worthy of our attention and praise.

I encourage all members to take in the Blyth theatre when they visit Huron–Bruce this summer.

#### ST. CLAIR KICK IT!

**Mr. Jonah Schein:** I rise today to speak about a wonderful community initiative in my riding. Kick It! is a community-run soccer festival on St. Clair Avenue West in my riding. It celebrates the historic roots of soccer on St. Clair that started with a spontaneous street celebration never seen before in Toronto, back in 1982 when the Italians won the World Cup. I remember, as a child, the excitement and the honking horns as over 300,000 Torontonians converged on the street to celebrate Italy's victory. It really marked a new chapter in this city, the cultural identity of the city as a diverse and multicultural place and a cosmopolitan centre. Decades later, St. Clair has changed, but it remains a diverse and a vibrant community and a wonderful part of our city.

The festival has been a real success. Kick It! organizers are working with community groups, with young people and with soccer coaches to bring our communities together. Community festivals like St. Clair's are vitally important. They foster positive dialogue about the iden-

tity of our community, about our history and about our common future. St. Clair Kick It! allows us to celebrate our heritage and diversity through a common love for the sport of soccer, and to remind the city that St. Clair in Davenport is the best place in Canada to enjoy soccer.

This Saturday, June 2, Kick It! will host Toronto's largest-ever pickup game of soccer at St. Clair and Oakwood, followed by an outdoor movie night about soccer. Please come join us. Players of every skill level are welcome, and the goal on Saturday will be to have fun.

#### SOMERSET WEST COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** It's a great honour for me to recognize a special anniversary for an important organization in my riding of Ottawa Centre. This year, the Somerset West Community Health Centre is celebrating 40 years of service to our community.

Somerset West Community Health Centre is a non-profit community-governed organization providing primary health care, health promotion and community development services using interdisciplinary teams of health providers, including physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, dietitians, health promoters, counsellors and others. Services and programs are designed to meet the specific needs of our community and provide a variety of health promotion and illness prevention services which focus on addressing and raising awareness of the broader social determinants of health, such as employment, education, environment, isolation, social exclusion and poverty.

Many great people have been involved over the last 40 years with the Somerset West Community Health Centre. The current executive director, Jack McCarthy, has been the ED of the centre since 1989. In recognition of his many years of community service, Jack was honoured with the Community Builder of the Year Award in 2009 by the United Way of Ottawa.

#### 1510

I also want to thank all of the volunteers and staff over the last 40 years for their excellent work for the centre. The current board of directors: a big thanks to them—Mike Bell, Nancy Douglas, Tony Boghossian, Grace Xue Xin, Valerie Adams, Elda Allen, Andy Chirona, Cliff Gaze, Annie Hillis, Dau-Thi Huynh, Marguarite Keeley, Kristie Kelly, Glenn McLeish, Sally Rutherford, Vicky Smallman, John Becvar and Daniela Buri—for serving our community.

#### AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** A year ago today, our leader, Tim Hudak, announced that a PC government would implement one-window access for farmers and agribusinesses. Rather than dealing with conflicting answers from different ministries and struggling to find all the

permits and regulations, they would have a one-window access to the provincial government through OMAFRA.

Three months later, the Liberals copied our commitment and promised one window, but they've done nothing about it. The red tape problem facing the agriculture industry is just as bad as ever but this government continues to ignore the problem in rural Ontario. It's hurting our agriculture industry and costing us jobs. Agribusinesses are deciding not to expand because the compliance system is so confusing and difficult.

Food processors that try to locate in Ontario complain that they can't get a straight answer on the rules they are required to meet. Farmers are spending too much time on paperwork and needless regulation instead of focusing on growing great Ontario food.

We've heard numerous stories of farmers and companies who asked the government what they needed to do and completed all the requirements only to be told there's another test, another study or another permit.

It has been a year since we announced we would create a one-window access for farmers and agribusinesses. We're flattered that the McGuinty government copied our idea, but they haven't done anything to implement it. It's time to reduce red tape for our agriculture industry. It's time to actually follow through on a commitment and implement our one-window access. Thank you very much.

#### CEMENT ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

**Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** It's a pleasure to rise in the House to welcome the Ontario cement manufacturers to Queen's Park on their annual cement caucus day.

The cement and concrete industries employ over 16,000 people and they generate over \$6 billion of economic activity for our province. There are over 200 cranes in the sky in the GTA area alone, so it's easy to see why cement and concrete are one of Ontario's most essential and most strategic building commodities. In Oakville alone, in my own community, I see examples of this every day, such as the new Oakville hospital being built, or the new parking garage at the Oakville GO station.

Working with government, communities and NGOs on climate change and on clean air issues, the cement industry and the concrete industry are a willing partner and actively try to reduce their carbon footprint. We all benefit when government and industry work together to solve common issues of concern for all Ontarians. Collaboration and listening lead to more jobs, a better environment and a better economy.

I hope all members will join me—even the NDP—at the reception tonight in the legislative dining room from 5 to 7:30 to hear more about the cement industry in Ontario and how, working in partnership, we can address some of the economic and environmental issues that are facing our province today. Unlike others, I would like to

welcome members of the Cement Association for their presence today at Queen's Park, and I'd like to personally thank them for the great work they do.

#### ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

**Mr. Victor Fedeli:** There's much concern in Nipissing over the review of the local distribution companies announced last month by the Minister of Energy. They're worried that the minister and his advisory panel may try to implement their typical one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to LDC consolidation.

The council of the city of North Bay passed a resolution to this effect. It reads:

"Be it therefore resolved that the consolidation of local distribution utilities should be voluntary and beneficial for the shareholders, and results in reduced costs for electricity consumers; and further, that the city of North Bay confirms that the North Bay Hydro distribution system is not for sale."

I will be sending them my energy white paper, which calls for a voluntary approach for LDCs.

Council is also very concerned with the negative impact on competitiveness that electricity pricing in Ontario is having. They point out that 2012 global adjustment costs are trending to be 43% of the total cost for electricity. Their next resolution asks that the province immediately apply the same global adjustment allocation methodology to northern Ontario medium-sized customers with electricity demands greater than one megawatt. It also asks that the province use its announced review of the electrical sector to find solutions to this situation, which is seriously threatening the survival of businesses in northern Ontario.

Again, my white paper calls for new commercial pricing.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member for Oxford to a point of order.

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** On a point of order: I rise to recognize all the great farmers who were at Queen's Park today, especially the Ontario Beekeepers' Association, as today is the Day of the Honeybee, Mr. Speaker. The organizers have succeeded in declaring this day officially the Day of the Honeybee in a lot of provinces, but they have not yet been successful to convince the Minister of Agriculture and Food in Ontario to declare that day—

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Actually, that is not a point of order, and my heart goes out to all the honeybees. That was a little bit different introduction than I've heard in the past, so I think maybe the member would know better.

#### CORRECTION OF RECORD

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Now, before we do move on, I do have my own personal correction of record. This morning I introduced someone who wasn't here. They're now here. So, in the Speaker's gallery, we have with us today Her Holiness, Amma Karunamayi, who has been recognized internationally for her commit-

ment to providing welfare programs to the underprivileged in India, with her delegation. We welcome Her Holiness.

And that is actually correcting the record.

## REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I beg to inform the House that the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated May 29, 2012, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

*Report deemed adopted.*

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### NATIONAL ACCESS AWARENESS WEEK

### SEMAINE NATIONALE POUR L'INTÉGRATION

### DES PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES

**Hon. John Milloy:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday marked the beginning of National Access Awareness Week. Across Canada and in communities throughout Ontario, Canadians are celebrating our continuing efforts to improve accessibility. Just seven years ago, Mr. Speaker, honourable members of this Legislature came together to unanimously support our groundbreaking legislation, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Since then, we've made enormous strides to develop accessibility standards, to work with individuals and businesses and to promote accessibility and to change public attitudes.

We know that accessibility is not just about physical accessibility; Mr. Speaker, it's truly about social change. We know that accessibility is the right thing to do, but we also recognize that greater accessibility means greater opportunity for Ontario.

Chaque membre de cette Assemblée peut être fier du fait que l'Ontario est la première province à adopter une approche proactive vis-à-vis de l'accessibilité, ce qui nous place en position de chef de file mondial en la matière.

An approach that looks at accessibility as more, Mr. Speaker, than just ramps or designated parking spaces, it aims to embed accessibility into all aspects of life and business in Ontario; to help businesses harness the buying power of more people; to cultivate the next generation of businesses and entrepreneurs based on inclusive design, products and services; to enable people with disabilities to participate fully in our economy; and

to help employers find a source of untapped talent. These are the real benefits of accessibility.

En 2010, le secteur public a commencé à observer notre première norme d'accessibilité, soit celle concernant les services à la clientèle. Cette année, cette même norme est entrée en vigueur pour toutes les entreprises de l'Ontario. Elle les aide à satisfaire aux besoins des personnes handicapées et à bénéficier de leur pouvoir d'achat.

But that is just the beginning. Over the next 10 years, we will make information and communications, employment and transportation more accessible for all Ontarians. These standards will help to make new websites more accessible, they will help organizations recruit and train employees of all abilities, and they will make it easier for all Ontarians to get around our province.

### 1520

I know there are many accessibility events planned in communities right across Ontario. I would encourage all members to join me in supporting these worthwhile community celebrations. I know that if we're going to make accessibility a top priority in Ontario, we're going to need strong champions—champions like the honourable women and men of this Legislature, champions who will drive Ontario to continue to be a world leader in accessibility. Together we can help make our communities more accessible, together we can help open the doors of opportunity to people of all abilities, and together we can make a real difference.

Mr. Speaker, I call upon all honourable members to join me in recognizing National Access Awareness Week.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Responses.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** Many of us in the House and across Ontario remember the original Rick Hansen, the 40,000-kilometre Man in Motion World Tour; I certainly do. My office at that time was right on the Queensway, No. 3 Highway in Simcoe. We all walked out to see what was going on. The highway was lined for miles. Many of us, again, joined for the 25-year tribute—that was just last November—and of course it was largely in response to Rick Hansen's efforts that the first National Access Awareness Week was established, in 1988, to promote better community access, obviously, for people with disabilities.

Here we are today, recognizing accessibility week, 25 years and one week after that final stop in Vancouver of the Man in Motion. Certainly in those 25 years there has been slow progress—progress to be sure, Speaker—aimed at making buildings and programs and services more accessible.

One in seven people in Ontario lives with a disability. It's projected to be one in five over the next two decades. And there is an understanding, I sincerely believe, amongst all of us of the need to ensure that Ontario's buildings and services are accessible.

Of course, we're all aware of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, the AODA, which followed the lead of the former PC government's Ontarians with

Disabilities Act to establish a framework from which standards are created for people with disabilities.

In recent years, we have seen the implementation of the AODA's customer service standard and the progress towards standards for transportation, employment—very important—as well as information and communications. In fact, there was some new information about that today, something that the opposition had worked on several years ago.

I would note that in conjunction with legislation there are other ways, one very simply being awareness to encourage people to think about ways to break down barriers. You know, you don't need a law for everything—just move forward. Move forward with programs and take action.

So what are we talking about when we discuss barriers? Simply put, anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability.

Access: When we talk about accessibility, we mean more than just removing those barriers. It means changing attitudes, and supports, again, to better enable people with disabilities to be part of society.

When we discuss access for all people with disabilities, we are referring to people with mobility, sensory, non-visible, intellectual disabilities—referring to access, for example, to a safe and dignified experience in school, free from harassment and intimidation, access to the benefits and programs of school legislation to prevent so-called bullying that is inclusive of all, including those with an impaired ability.

Our party brought a mindset to committee with respect to Bill 231, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act. Our party at that time had seven motions accepted by government—that was a good thing—to strengthen accessibility for those wishing to participate in Ontario elections.

That said, a number of our attempts for improvement were rejected. Our former social services critic reported of rejected amendments to require that documents be available on an accessible website. These were turned down.

Now, today, we have an announcement from the government—this would be a couple of years later, as I recall. It's heartening to see this government talking of accessible websites. However, I think there was a 10-year time frame on that one. I think we can do a little better on that.

However, we do see progress, Speaker—slow progress. It's very important to recognize and to honour those people who make businesses barrier-free and very important to recognize employers who hire people who have disabilities.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** It's an honour to rise on National Access Awareness Week to speak on behalf of the New Democratic Party on this important topic. I remind those who are watching at home that we're talking about a due date here for an accessible Ontario set by this government of 2025. That's 13 years from now, Mr. Speaker.

Most of us will be gone from this chamber in 13 years, and I warrant some of us—the unlucky ones—will be gone from this earth in 13 years. So this is not exactly an imminent prospect.

I'm going to channel David Lepofsky here because everybody knows who he is. He's the chair of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance. Here's what they say about this government: "Government is clearly behind on achieving a fully accessible Ontario for all persons with disabilities by 2025."

So even though this is 13 years away, this government is still way behind on its goals and its achievements.

They also go on to say: "However, they"—the Liberal ministers—"give very little in the way of specifics"—this is on their plan—"on the government's future plans for new action to keep Premier McGuinty's election promises. A number of our key inquiries, anchored to Premier McGuinty's specific election commitments to us, go unanswered."

Here is the reality of living with a disability in Ontario: One in five live in poverty. Those who live on ODSP live on about \$1,000 a month—that's living in poverty—and even when they live in poverty, this government attacks them. How do they attack them? I'll tell you several ways. First of all—people don't know this—if you marry someone who has a disability and you have a disability, you get your disability payments clawed back. That is absolutely egregious. This is absolutely anti any sense of human rights. That's number one.

If you get a child increment—if you have a child on disability, you get it clawed back. Again, I would say a human rights—that's a grievable action under Ontario human rights. Also, if you earn any income—forget about trying to work. This government will claw that money back from you as well. I could go on. That's just on ODSP of \$1,000 a month.

Also, just recently, the Special Services at Home for adults have been cut. That's \$500 a month. This allowed those adults who lived at home, some of them forever with their parents—they're not going to get that extra money from this government. I've received numerous letters about this. This is outrageous. And we have today in the House MS awareness. We're all wearing these carnations.

Mr. Speaker, try to air condition a house on ODSP. You can't afford to do it, and heat is one of those factors that people living with MS have to fight and mitigate against. So try to pay your bills on ODSP.

Finally, what can we say about this? Yes, it's great to acknowledge a week, but acknowledging a week is almost a slap in the face to those who have to live with disabilities all year long—and have to live with disabilities all year long looking forward to a time when maybe their children can live in an accessible Ontario. There's a great deal of work to do, and we're not even on track to do it. That's the sad reality.

I really urge all members to read the reports that have been put out by the AODA Alliance. I urge all members to actually talk to—especially my friends from across the

aisle—their ministers, to talk to their cabinet and urge them that, really and truly, we are in breach of United Nations standards in this province when it comes to those who live with disabilities.

**1530**

This is something that we should be ashamed of, and when we stand during this week to speak about those who live with disabilities, we should do so in a spirit of atonement, quite frankly, and we should pledge to do better. Because we're not doing better; we're doing worse.

We are condemning those with disabilities to live in poverty, and the results speak for themselves. They are living in poverty. We're doing nothing to ameliorate that. In fact, even in their poverty, we're coming after what little is given them and clawing that back. Take, for example, only the one issue that is particularly galling to me: You can't marry someone with a disability, if you have a disability, without being penalized for it. This calls for a challenge. I certainly suggest and know that the AODA Alliance is challenging the government on this.

That's what we need to say. We in the NDP certainly support the Beer report, which came out a while back, and all that's in it. Here's to a better tomorrow.

## PETITIONS

### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I think I might need two pages for the size of this petition. As I read it, I want to recognize the two mayors who have joined us here, with your permission, Speaker: Mayor Bentley from Grimsby and Mayor Joyner from West Lincoln. The issue is important to them. I'm glad to see that they're here. I know that Mayor Hodgson from Lincoln joined us yesterday. I met with him in addition.

I, Tim Hudak, MPP for Niagara West–Glanbrook, submit this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of west Niagara residents and the community leaders present here with us in the gallery and at Queen's Park today. It reads as follows:

"Whereas residents who depend on the vital services provided at West Lincoln Memorial Hospital have raised millions of dollars and fulfilled their part of the commitment to redevelop the hospital;

"Whereas health care officials, doctors, nurses, hospital employees and the community at large are expecting the government of Ontario to honour its promise and commitment to redevelop the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital;

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

"That all members of the Ontario Legislative Assembly fully restore the funding committed to the re-development project of the West Lincoln Memorial

Hospital in Grimsby, Ontario, which was cancelled in the 2012 budget."

I agree with this petition and, with the 12,169 signatories to this, I affix my signature in support of this very worthy cause.

### OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

**Mr. John Vanthof:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas two-up ATVs and UTVs are not allowed to legally cross roads in Ontario but are allowed to do so in all other jurisdictions;

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

"That the department of transportation updates regulation 316 in order to recognize the definitions and the use of two-up ATVs and side-by-side vehicles."

I agree and send this petition down with Kendra.

### SCHOOL FACILITIES

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** "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 Sam.

### AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

"Whereas a subsidiary of Ornge bought the head office building in Mississauga for just over \$15 million

and then leased it back to Ornge at a rate 40% higher than fair market rent;

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

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

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

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

I obviously support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Dana to take to the table.

#### AIR-RAIL LINK

**Mr. Jonah Schein:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

“Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

“Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

“Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

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

“That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

“That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route.”

I approve this petition. I will affix my name to it and give it to page Tameem.

#### RADIATION SAFETY

**Mr. Reza Moridi:** I have a number of petitions to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas subsection 6(2)8 of the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act identifies dental hygienists as persons deemed to be qualified to operate an X-ray machine; and

“Whereas dental hygienists in independent practice need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection officers in order to provide their clients with safe and convenient access to a medically necessary procedure, as is already the case in many comparable jurisdictions;

“We, the dental hygienists in independent practice, 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, sign it and pass it on to page Daxime.

#### ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

**Mr. Jeff Yurek:** I have a petition to present. I'm currently learning French and this petition is in French, so just bear with my pronunciation.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que l'article 23 de la Charte canadienne des droits et libertés garantit l'accès à un enseignement public de langue française;

« Attendu qu'il y a, depuis des années, une pénurie sérieuse d'écoles élémentaires publiques de langue française à London;

« Attendu que le ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario refuse les fonds au Conseil scolaire Viamonde;

« Nous, soussignés, membres de la communauté francophone et francophile de London, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Que le gouvernement de l'Ontario respecte nos droits constitutionnels et transfère les fonds nécessaires pour une troisième école élémentaire à London. »

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

#### AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** It gives me great pleasure to present 1,288 signatures today, part of my 1,000-signatures-a-day campaign. This petition reads as follows:

“Auto insurance reform needed: Protect consumers.

“Whereas auto insurance rates are too high in the province of Ontario and continue to increase;

“Whereas families across the greater Toronto area (GTA) are facing unfair insurance premiums that have more to do with where they live than their accident history or driving ability; and

“Whereas insurance premiums across the GTA differ by as much as 150% for drivers with the same driving record;

**1540**

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

“That the Ontario Legislative Assembly undertake auto insurance reform that protects consumers, ensuring that premiums are based on a fair assessment of a driver's known ability and history, rather than unfairly targeting drivers on the basis of where they live.”

I strongly agree with this petition, affix my signature to it and will give it to page Alexander.

## RADIATION SAFETY

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** I have a stack of petitions to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that read:

“Whereas there are risks inherent in the use of ionizing, magnetic and other radiations in medical diagnostic and radiation therapy procedures; and

“Whereas the main piece of legislation governing these activities, the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (HARPA), dates from the 1980s; and

“Whereas neither the legislation nor the regulations established under the act have kept pace with the explosion in imaging examinations, including image-guided procedures used in cardiology, radiation therapy, ultrasound, orthopaedics etc.;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care establish, as soon as possible, 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 to bring it up to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and the public and covers all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes.”

As I agree with this petition, I will sign it and send it to the table with page Gopi.

## AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

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

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

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

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

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

“Whereas the latest scandal follows the eHealth boondoggle, where over \$2 billion in health dollars were wasted; and

“Whereas current committees of the Legislature have no ability to subpoena witnesses;

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

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

I affix my signature.

## TOURISM

**Ms. Sarah Campbell:** My petition reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas northwestern Ontario’s tourist economy has been under attack by government policies such as the cancellation of the spring bear hunt, the harmonized sales tax (HST), the strong Canadian dollar and difficulties passing through the Canada/United States border; and

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

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

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

I proudly support this and will give this to page Tameem to deliver.

## ONTARIO PLACE

**Mr. Rob E. Milligan:** I have a petition here to save Ontario Place.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has closed most of Ontario Place to plan the ‘revitalization’ of the 96-acre site;

“Whereas Ontario Place was dedicated to the ‘People of Ontario—Past, Present and Future,’ when it was opened in 1971;

“Whereas Ontario Place was turning the corner when the government pulled the rug out from under it;

“Whereas after decades of neglect, an investment of \$10.8 million in new rides and refurbished attractions resulted in an 89% increase in attendance in 2011;

“Whereas revenues from ride ticket sales, concession sales, Play All Day passes and Cinesphere tickets all went up; and

“Whereas closing the park now is a waste of the money invested less than 12 months ago;

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

“Ontario Place must be kept open while the revitalization plans are being developed and the park must remain a public, family-oriented space for all Ontarians to enjoy now and into the future.”

I agree with this petition, Madam Speaker, and I'll affix my name to it.

#### DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

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

“Whereas the Ontario government is making positron emission tomography, PET scanning, a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients under conditions where PET scans have been proven to be clinically effective; and

“Whereas by October 2009, insured PET scans will be performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

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

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

I fully support this petition, Mrs. Speaker, and present it to Kyra.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

##### STRONG ACTION FOR ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2012

##### LOI DE 2012 SUR UNE ACTION ÉNERGIQUE POUR L'ONTARIO (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 28, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts / Projet de loi 55, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

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

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Look, a pleasure—saddened that I only have 10 minutes to speak today. The government is already limiting debate on the budget bill.

This is the budget bill, Madam Speaker, some 327 pages. There's a lot of stuff in there, but most of it's not worth the paper it's written on, which is typical of the budgets we've had in this Parliament since the McGuinty Liberals were elected in 2003. And they sold this budget, Madam Speaker, on the basis of it being a budget for austere times, an austerity budget, one that was going to

tackle the fiscal mess that Ontario finds itself in; and I say that kind of tongue-in-cheek, because Ontario doesn't find itself in anything. Ontario has been placed in a fiscal mess by the current government because of its tax-and-spend habits without any regard for the ability of the taxpayer to pay. I cite as evidence, Madam Speaker, if you look at the numbers—let's just talk about the raw numbers for the time being.

In 2003, when this government was elected, spending in this province was \$68 billion. Spending for the current fiscal year will be over \$126 billion. That is a whopping 85% increase since this government took office. Now, if there's anybody out there who's getting 85% more for doing a worse job since 2003, let me know.

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** Mr. Mazza.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Chris Mazza, yes; Chris Mazza. We'll get to Chris Mazza at some point today.

So an 85% increase in spending: I challenge the government, as I have on many occasions, you tell me where that 85% went. You show me where Ontario is 85% better off or 85% better. You show me the improvements of what you've got for your \$126 billion in spending. You know what, Madam Speaker? That's when the conversation ends, because they can't do it. They can't show it. The evidence is not there. In fact, every time you turn around when you travel around this province, people talk about how Ontario is backsliding. It's going backwards. Government is spending \$126 billion, but Ontario is going backwards.

**1550**

So let's just, again, talk about the raw numbers. The debt in this province, Madam Speaker, is \$257.5 billion. That debt has to be repaid at some point, but all we're doing, because we continue to run deficits—and I'll get to that in a minute—is paying the interest on that debt. The budgeted amount for the interest on the debt this fiscal year is over \$10.6 billion.

Let's put that into perspective. The highest-cost ministry, the most expensive ministry in the province, is the Ministry of Health. Understood; we'd expect it to be so. Health care is expensive, and it's universal, and it's pretty all-inclusive. In general, we have a pretty darn good health system in this province.

The next costliest ministry is the Minister of Education. You know what? That makes sense, too. You can't have a productive jurisdiction if you don't have an educated population, and it is the responsibility of the province to educate our children. So that comes in at number two.

But I wonder if people out there really know that the third-largest line item in the budget here in the province of Ontario is interest on the debt.

**Mr. Todd Smith:** Sad.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** That's sad: \$10.6 billion. That's more than it costs to police this province. It's more than it costs to put fire protection in this province. It's more than it costs to build roads and bridges and all of the infrastructure in this province.

**Mr. Todd Smith:** It would buy a lot of health care.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Buy a lot of health care for \$10.6 billion: I thank my colleague from Prince Edward–Hastings.

So I think people really have to understand where we are in Ontario from a fiscal point of view, and then it will be very easy for them to understand, Madam Speaker, why we cannot and will not support this budget, Bill 55. We made that clear from the outset. When we looked at the numbers—and it didn't take long, Madam Speaker. Thirty minutes of examination on this budget made it very clear that this is not changing the channel. It is not changing the direction that Ontario is going. An "austere budget." Well, don't take my word for it. Let's just look at the numbers: the deficit of last year, \$15.3 billion; the deficit this year, \$15.2 billion; so, a one-tenth-of-a-billion-dollar reduction of the deficit.

At that rate, you know what? The good news, Madam Speaker, is, we'll be able to clear off the deficit in about 100 years. That's the good news. The bad news is, I'm not going to be around.

**Hon. John Milloy:** No; say it ain't so.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** No, I know. I'm not. I say to the House leader on the other side, I will not be around.

So at that rate, it's basically 100 years to clear off the deficit.

The government does have this so-called ambitious plan, but it always seems to start down the road. Why, if you have an ambitious plan to eliminate the deficit and start tackling our debt, wouldn't it have started now? Why did you just squander another year and watch the deficit essentially stagnate, and maybe by the end of the year it might even go up?

There is an old saying—I don't know how old it is, exactly, but the first time I ever heard it was when Donald Rumsfeld said it to Saddam Hussein about the Iraqi war with Kuwait, when he attacked Kuwait. He said, "You know, when you're in a hole, the first thing you've got to do is stop digging." You'd think the government would get it. They're in a hole. They're in a massive hole, Madam Speaker, and they had better stop digging.

What did this budget get us? Well, it got us downgrades from Moody's and Standard and Poor's, two of the biggest debt-rating agencies in the world. So the consequence of that could be—and exactly likely will be—that we'll actually be paying more than \$10.6 billion in interest on debt, because with a credit downgrade, the rate of interest that we pay is likely to go higher. If your credit rating drops, even on a personal basis, then likely the interest rates that you need to pay to borrow money will rise.

But let's talk about another issue, and to the crux of the matter—and I want people to understand why we've been ringing bells in this House, Madam Speaker. Ornge Air Ambulance and Related Services—that's the auditor's report—it's a disgrace. Each and every day we ask more questions, and each and every day there's more revelations about what has gone wrong there, but the government House leader stands in his place and ignores

everything we say. The health minister ignores everything we say. They promised a select committee on Ornge; they broke their word. We then offered to just change the terms of reference for the standing committee, and they broke their word on that.

Madam Speaker, with the mess at Ornge and the intransience of this government, it leaves me no option but to call for adjournment of the debate.

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

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

*The division bells rang from 1556 to 1626.*

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

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

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):** The ayes are 27; the nays are 34.

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

The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** For reasons I've already articulated on the terrible handling of the Ornge ambulance issue by this government—this government that has become disgraceful in the way it treats this Legislature—I move adjournment of the House.

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

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

*The division bells rang from 1629 to 1659.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** I would ask all members to take their seats.

Mr. Yakabuski has moved adjournment of the House. All those in favour will stand and be counted by the table.

You may sit down.

All those opposed, please rise and be counted by the Clerk.

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):** The ayes are 26; the nays are 38.

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

Questions and comments?

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** It would have been a more interesting speech had it been more lengthy. But the member decided to spend his time in parliamentary foolishness, in my view, by ringing bells instead of debating. I really like to hear him debate, because he has something interesting to say from time to time.

I know that whenever his leader gets up to make a speech about saving money, I keep thinking about

Highway 417 and the fact that there's money needed to widen Highway 417 for safety purposes—it will contribute immensely to tourism. I keep thinking of that hospital in Cambridge and saying, “My gosh, the Conservatives must not want that to proceed,” because of course they are saying—they're demanding—that there be no further expenditures and that there be a great contraction. Then I think of the hospital in Burlington, the Joe Brant hospital. It certainly needs its funding, and I believe the psychiatric facility in Simcoe North needs funding.

So on one hand, we have the opposition demanding cuts, and on the other, they are complaining about the fact that we're not spending as much money as we could and demanding that we do so. I just do not understand that.

I know that the Premier was at a 407 east project announcement. I suspect that the member for Oshawa, the member for Durham and the member for Whitby–Oshawa would all be in favour of that. Well, if we were to listen to what the official opposition has to say—if they ever said it and quit ringing bells—we would not be investing funds in wonderful projects such as that.

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

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** I'm pleased to rise today and comment on my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke about the budget measures. Now, he threw a lot of figures out there. They're all accurate figures. The government knows them. They listened to them, I hope. But anyway, I'll repeat some of them for them.

Spending is up 85% since you took office. Ontario is not better governed, nor does it have better policies. In fact, we are going backwards, if you haven't noticed our record debt and deficit. The third-largest spending item is actually interest servicing. I mean, really?

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** How many more MRIs, member from Peterborough, are you going to get when the third-largest budget item is spending on your overspending?

My God, you can't run a province like that and give responsible health care and education. You're going to hit the road.

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** As he eloquently said, when you're in the hole, you do need to stop digging. They don't seem to realize that.

Let me tell you: The people in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock can't keep up with their household bills. Luckily, some have jobs—there is higher than average unemployment. That's the same for Peterborough too, I would just like to point out—higher than average unemployment from the province.

The unemployment rate is up for how many months in a row? For 65 months in a row, Ontario has led the unemployment rate for the whole of Canada. How can that government over there stand and be proud of that record?

You've had two downgrades by financial institutions, and yet the Minister of Finance acts like that's nothing.

That is something. That's called interest rates are going to rise and you're going to have to pay more money to service that debt and deficit.

What good is that doing for the people of Ontario when you mismanage their money and have increased debt and deficit? It is doing them no good. Don't try to pretend it is.

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

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** I'm pleased to stand here today and comment on some of the responders, comment on the outlook of the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. He talked a lot about the budget but didn't say much about some of the options that they had to offer to make this budget workable for the people of Ontario—offer some suggestions. There were none that I had listened to. He talked about—

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** This is just this particular day. He may have mentioned some a different day. So we're talking about the present moment.

He talked about, in Ontario, the two major expenses we have here, which are health and education, and that the debt was the third most expensive item. I was listening to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, but what I wanted to say was that the approach—as I mentioned, I didn't hear any productive suggestions about what you'd like to contribute to the budget.

But the NDP did have proposals. We listened to the people, that they didn't want another election, and they wanted the minority government to work together to make this budget more fair for the people of Ontario, and that's what we did by our proposals. The first, of course, was bringing in the 2% surtax on people making over \$500,000 a year, which was very popular, and people agreed that that was something that was fair to do. The second proposal that we had was that instead of lowering the corporate tax rate, let's keep it at 11.5%, and again, the Liberals did agree to that. So those were two fair items that we proposed to this budget to try to make it a little more balanced.

But one thing that we wanted to also see in this budget was more job creation, a job creation plan. We felt that this was lacking in this budget, so one thing we need to do is also work on that, so that we can have Ontarians come out of this budget with jobs and contribute back to the economy to help reduce the deficit.

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

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** I listened carefully to the remarks made by the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, and he actually wasted an hour that could have been used for further debate on a very important bill, which is the budget bill, one of the most important pieces of legislation that goes through this House.

I looked at the member, and he felt a little bit uncomfortable, because he had 10 minutes to speak and he kept on looking at the clock at around a minute and a half or so. Then he pulled the trigger and decided, “Let me ring

the bells.” I guess we all knew it was going to happen, but he rang the bells on one of the most important pieces of legislation we have in this House, and that’s the budget. That affects every Ontarian, all 13 million of them. Instead of debating the bill, he pulled the trigger for the bells.

I hear remarks from the other side saying, “We don’t support the budget,” but what do you want? Over your 10 minutes, you could say, “We don’t like this budget, but here is what we do like.” Instead, it was just a diatribe of attacks on the government.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** I hear people yelling over there about Ornge. There’s a time and a place to discuss that. We have rules in this House, but there’s also something called debate. It’s very clear how this House works. We have routine proceedings; then we have the rest of the afternoon for debate. With two seconds left, another 30 minutes wasted. It’s unfortunate the member can’t speak—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Thank you. I’d ask the member to respond.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I’d like to thank the Minister of the Environment, the members for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, London–Fanshawe and Scarborough Southwest for their comments. Some I agree with; some I don’t. That’s not unusual in this House.

I did want to touch a little bit on the comments from the Minister of the Environment. He takes a very simplistic approach. When you talk about reducing the debt, the spending and the deficit in this province, he says, “Oh, you guys don’t want to spend any money. You’re just going to stop spending money.” That’s sort of like saying that if a family looks at their budget and realizes, “You know what? We are spending too much money on the food portion of our budget,” I don’t think anybody is suggesting that they stop eating, but maybe they need to go to the restaurant less and cook a few more meals at home, which is far more economical.

1710

There’s a different way of spending your money. The projects that the minister speaks about are all valid projects, but it’s not like the government doesn’t spend enough money to do those projects—\$126 billion. The question is, how have they managed the financial affairs of this province? According to the debt-rating agencies, badly—badly. When you get your credit downgraded by Moody’s and Standard and Poor’s, you’re not doing a good job of managing the fiscal affairs of the province. That’s fact. It’s not a debate. If you’re not doing your job, you get your credit downgraded; if you’re doing a good job, your credit either stays or it even gets upgraded. So the government is not doing a very good job.

If I had more time, we could talk about the positive things we’ve asked for from this government. But I’m sorry, there isn’t enough time. So suffice to say, for no—we could not in good conscience support the government

on this budget, and therefore the PC caucus will be voting against this bill when it comes time for a vote.

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

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** I’m pleased to join in the debate discussing Bill 55. When confronted with the government bill, with the government budget, we were caught balancing between the situation that we were presented with in Ontario, which was some severe economic and post-recession—a climate of post-recession and economic downturn. And so our priorities were that we needed to maintain some fairness for Ontarians. We needed to keep in mind what our priorities were. Our priorities are that we need to ensure we have a strong and robust health care system. We need to ensure that our children are educated. We also need to ensure that jobs are created. That’s an issue that is province-wide, that’s an issue that everyone is impacted by, and that’s an issue that this bill falls very short on.

The other issue is that when times are difficult, when you have an economic downturn, when pocketbooks are tight, we have to ensure that those who are less well off, those who are less fortunate, the vulnerable people in society, are protected, and that austerity measures don’t make an already precarious situation any worse. That’s another issue with the budget that we were presented with. So we tried to inject some safeguards to protect against these issues, the fact that we have a bill that proposes some cuts that will have some quite drastic and devastating effects on a number of Ontarians across the province.

One of our biggest issues, like I said, is jobs. Looking at jobs, there is a severe job crisis across Ontario. We have a significant unemployment rate which needs to be tackled. In the city of Brampton alone, the unemployment rate is 7.7%. That is about the provincial average. It’s a serious concern, and we need to have some constructive ideas that actually will address this issue. We need to do something that will directly affect the lack of jobs in the province.

We also have a circumstance where the average wage that employees are earning is decreasing. We need to have some safeguards in place to encourage a decent wage, so that people in this province can earn a decent living.

We certainly don’t believe that ideas like privatization and deregulation will solve the problems. That’s not the answer. Time and time again governments who have taken that approach have seen the repercussions. Deregulation and privatization do not work; they do not help a struggling economy. What the focus must be is on direct steps to create jobs in Ontario. That’s why I want to spend some time talking about some really innovative or new ideas, some fresh ideas to actually get the economy going.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Excuse me just one moment. I think there are a number of conversations going around the room. I’d just remind members that we need to hear the speaker.

Continue.

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** Thank you very much.

One approach is a targeted tax approach, a targeted tax cut that would affect businesses that actually hire new employees. So if you create a job in Ontario, if you invest in infrastructure in Ontario, then you get a tax cut. That's a direct approach to encouraging job growth here in Ontario.

The proposal to freeze the corporate tax rate was a good proposal. It was a step in the right direction, but we need to go further than that. Simply freezing the tax rate is recognizing the realities that we face, but it doesn't represent a proactive measure in facilitating job growth in Ontario. Some creative or innovative ways to create or facilitate job growth would be a tax cut targeted at job creation.

In addition, we need to recognize that for a prosperous province, we need to have a skilled job force. A skilled and trained population can then be employed. Whether it's in the Ring of Fire in the north, whether it's in southern portions of Ontario or whether it's here in the GTA, we need to ensure that we have methods and a strategy to train individuals, particularly those who are historically less well off, historically oppressed.

For example, First Nations people need a strategy that involves recognition of their worth and a jobs training, skills enhancement strategy province-wide to address this issue, so that they can have the tools to engage in new employment and can be hired, and resources that exist here in Ontario and should be used in Ontario, and investment made here in Ontario for extraction and processing or refinement of these materials is kept in Ontario with a skilled workforce that can actually do the job.

Looking at another issue that was touched on by some other colleagues in the House, the fact that the budget needs to be balanced, that's something the NDP supports. If you look country-wide, NDP provincial governments have been quite successful at balancing budgets. We have a Manitoba NDP government that has a stellar track record of balancing budgets. Nova Scotia has had a great track record, as an NDP government, in balancing their budget. That's a very important issue, and we acknowledge and recognize that.

But balancing the books is not just numbers on a page. It's not a financial report where there is a loss column and a profit column. In these columns there are actually people, and people need to be taken care of. People can't be treated like numbers. People must be treated with the dignity they deserve. It's for that reason that an austerity approach is the wrong approach. Simply looking at a red column or a black column on a financial report or balance sheet is not the way to properly and justly and fairly administer a province.

There are people who are struggling, who need to be taken care of, and a progressive approach to solving the problems in Ontario involves ensuring that everyone is taken care of along the way. That would be a more comprehensive and a more wholesome approach to solving the problem. We can't just look at, "Okay, if we

cut here, we can save some money." But when we cut here, we put thousands of people out of work. Or if we cut here, we lose the only public transport available to northerners, the railroad we have spoken about. In this analysis, we can't forget that people's lives are at stake.

**1720**

One issue that has been addressed on a limited scale, but needs to be broadened, is the concept of Buy Ontario. For successful economies, there should be a notion of a global perspective, of a national perspective. That's obviously the reality of the time we live in. We live in a global market. But where there are state resources, where there are provincial funds, if we can allocate at least all provincial funds to be reinvested into the economy by ensuring that provincial establishments and institutions are mandated to buy in Ontario, that's one way to encourage a local economy. We can ensure that we have money that's state money, public money, reinvested into the community by ensuring that at least, at a minimum, where we have a provincial institution, we mandate a Buy Ontario program.

This type of program exists, as I said, to a limited degree in transit and green energy, but let's expand that. Let's talk about expanding that to the requirements that you purchase made-in-Ontario furniture in provincial buildings, made-in-Ontario equipment wherever possible. If we had a broader Buy Ontario scheme, we could reinvest in our province.

The key difference between a developing nation and a—

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

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** It's a privilege to be able to make some comments on the remarks that were made by the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton. First of all, I want to say thank you for participating in the debate today and not trying to shut down debate, and offering some suggestions, unlike the official opposition. I think that's the way the Legislature should work.

Earlier on in the budget process, the NDP did make some suggested changes. For example, one of them was to put a tax on people who make over, I think it's \$500,000, and I think we incorporated that and a few other changes that I can mention at another point in time.

I think part of the comments that were made focused on balancing the books, and that's what we plan to do and, by 2017-18, have a balanced budget.

He also spoke about austerity, and perhaps that's not the best way to go. We have a plan to grow the economy and, therefore, balance the budget—grow the economy and create more jobs by growing the economy. That way, the economy can become stronger and we can create more jobs, and we can keep our two most important areas, education and health care, strong. They're both important, both education, of course, and health care. They're probably the two most-discussed issues in this House in the past several weeks.

I think if we engage in intelligent debate like we are right now, we can talk about issues and come to an

agreement, or at least look at some of the suggestions. But at least the NDP is open to discussing things, unlike the official opposition, which just rings the bells and says—

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

**Mr. Victor Fedeli:** Following the downgrade of the province of Ontario's rating last month, a number of what are called "linked issuers"—those are people who have credit ratings linked to the province of Ontario's—also received downgrades to reflect the province's lower rating, including Hydro One, which saw its senior unsecured debt rating fall from AA1 to AA3.

Moody's recent credit downgrading will result in even higher power costs for Ontario families and businesses, and it seems this government finds new ways to add to power costs in this province at every turn. When Hydro One's borrowing costs go up as a result, you will know that the burden will ultimately be borne by Ontario families and businesses in the form of even higher hydro rates.

Now, Speaker, I broke the news two weeks ago that the city of North Bay would likely face a downgrade to reflect the province's rating change, which Moody's confirmed on May 1. And, sure enough, through absolutely no fault of the municipality of North Bay, Moody's did indeed downgrade the city's credit rating. Six other linked issuers also saw their debt ratings cut, including the Hospital for Sick Children, 55 school board trusts, the Ontario School Boards Financing Corp., the Ontario Infrastructure and Lands Corp., the University of Ottawa and the University of Toronto. Again, these organizations did absolutely nothing to deserve a downgrade. They should be rewarded. They had the highest credit ratings in the province. But as we said earlier, you can't have a higher rating than your guarantor, so their changes in ratings are solely as a result of the downgrade issued to the province of Ontario.

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

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** It's always a pleasure to rise behind my brother here, my colleague from Bramalea-Gore-Malton. He always does his homework when he speaks in the House in regard to addressing particular issues, and it's always a privilege to listen to how he brings some of his views forward on how it's affecting Ontarians.

One of the major points that he was bringing forward was how this austerity budget is going to affect a lot of our everyday people in Ontario. It's going to have a devastating effect on them.

If you look within our health care sector, the people who are on our front lines, who are trying to provide these services to our most needy individuals, are going to be left out in the cold trying to find the ways and means of providing the services that we need to our seniors. The individuals who are on Ontario Works, again, are the ones who need our help the most.

He highlighted the point that we shouldn't look at individuals as red columns or black columns. I think

that's eloquently put. We really have to look at the faces of individuals who are going to be affected by the choices that we're making in this House. This budget is really going to make a terrible and very devastating impact on those individuals by taking away some of the funds that were there for them to advance, where they saw there was an opportunity that they could advance and at least make some type of living for their family. Individuals are going to be making the decision, "I want to help my partner, who is on ODSP. I want to try to help my family, but if I go out there, I'm going to be clawed back. So the benefits that I'm trying to bring to my family—I'm going to be put down and those dollars are going to be clawed back from me."

So we really need to take a really good look at where we're going—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Thank you. The member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

**Ms. Soo Wong:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to be given an opportunity to speak following my colleague the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton. His comments and suggestions about job creation—we recognize as a government that this is of absolute importance in terms of the economy. We must have jobs.

Let me remind my colleague that our government recently established a new chair of the Jobs and Prosperity Council, led by Gord Nixon, which will be advising the government in terms of how to boost the economy in terms of productivity. That's a really good thing in terms of giving us some more external expertise.

The other thing is, in order to have a strong economy and job creation, you must have an educated job force. As someone who has taught at post-secondary, as someone who is passionate about public education, I want to share with everyone in the House the fact that Employment Ontario is currently helping more than one million Ontarians each year acquire and retain a job. Again, it is something that we're committed to. Training and education is the right thing to do.

Almost 55,000 Ontarians are benefiting from the Second Career programs which are helping those who are laid off for no fault of their own—there may be economic changes, but helping those who need to be retrained so that they can have a second career. I saw that in my nursing program when I taught at Humber.

The other thing is, our government has committed \$251 million this year to support the Second Career program, helping over 12,000 Ontarians in this program. So, through this kind of training, you will have opportunities; you will have jobs.

Yes, of course, more can be done, and I do appreciate the member opposite in terms of his suggestions on how to improve the economy. It's always welcome. There's always room for improvement. But at the end of the day, in order to be a successful province and have a successful economy, we must have a well-educated, well-trained workforce. And most importantly, we have to work together.

1730

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** The member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton has two minutes to respond.

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** I thank all the honourable members who participated in the debate. I thank you for your comments.

I want to touch on two points with my remaining time. One was the point that I was beginning to make: that the difference between a developing nation and a fully developed nation in terms of its economy is the ability to add value to resources. Once we extract the resource, an economy that's developed will then refine or add value to that product. That's something that we really need to look at as a strategy here in Ontario. We have a number of natural resources, and we need to take those resources and also look at the processing side, the refining side, the value-added side. That is the distinction between a developed economy, and that's the direction we really need to head, and to implement policies on a provincial level to ensure that that's what we have: a legislated approach to refining or manufacturing or processing that it has to be done here in Ontario. At least a portion would be a step in the right direction.

The second issue that I wanted to touch on was some of the fears or the problems around privatization. With ServiceOntario, we need to be very careful. When you privatize or outsource a public service, it opens up a Pandora's box to misuse of funds. It opens up a Pandora's box with respect to misallocation of funds. We've seen some of the problems that can occur when you outsource with Ornge. My fear is that with the privatization of certain services and without the proper oversight legislated, like Ombudsman inputs and other mechanisms of oversight, we may see a number of Ornge-type scandals erupting across—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Thank you very much. Further debate?

**Mr. Steve Clark:** It's a pleasure to rise to join in the debate on this beautiful afternoon. We had a wonderful farmers' market out on the front lawn. The MS Society was here to give us carnations. There's a very solemn ceremony—I thought it was starting at 6, but it sounds like it's starting down on the grand staircase—for our fallen police officers today. There are a number of things happening here at Queen's Park.

We're here to discuss Bill 55, which the government has called the Strong Action for Ontario Act. Certainly, I don't think anyone would argue that, given the state of Ontario's books after nine years of the government opposite, there definitely was a need, Speaker, to have strong action in Ontario.

Unfortunately, though, once you read this document, I think it's a classic case of false advertising. That side of the House may talk a good game, but actually when you read the product that's the results of their policies, they certainly don't deliver. Speaker, I would contend that there's no strong action here, and everyone knows it. There is no evidence that the Premier and his finance

minister are prepared to show the type of leadership that is required in Ontario. It's really more of the same. We're desperately in need of turning our economy around and changing the course that's headed, unfortunately, to a \$30-billion deficit and a provincial debt of \$411 billion.

It's a tragedy for the people of Ontario, particularly a tragedy for those half a million that are out of work. Instead of strong action, this budget that we're debating here represents, I contend, a continuation of the failed policies and the runaway spending that has put Ontario in such dire straits.

Speaker, we saw evidence of that with the release of StatsCan's latest employment data. Unemployment climbed by 7.8% in April. Incredibly, when the rest of Canada added more than 60,000 jobs, we here in Ontario lost 7,700—a tragedy. This government now has the shameful distinction of having caused Ontario's jobless rate to be ahead of the national average for 64 straight months. Somehow when we talk about Ontario being a leader in Confederation again, I don't think that's what we were talking about, that we would lead the country in that.

But we in the Ontario PC caucus are looking for an exit from the road that the government opposite has put us on. We're looking for a new direction, and I want to take people back to the member for Thornhill, our PC critic for finance, who stated during his leadoff speech that that was just never in the cards for this budget. From the time that our leader, Tim Hudak, and Mr. Shurman, our finance critic, began meeting with the government to discuss our ideas about job creation, our ideas to put a hold on spending, it was clear that the government wasn't listening.

We put our ideas like a legislated public sector wage freeze on the table and it was ignored, just like every other idea our caucus put to the table. We recognize that this province is at a crossroads and we need to take decisive action to head off what we believe could be—and we hope not—an economic catastrophe. But somehow, even with those warning bells going off, I believe the government remains in denial.

We're not standing in opposition against this budget just for the sense of doing so. We provided those options, those ideas, and the government just didn't listen. In fact, they didn't listen to anyone speak. They didn't listen to their hand-picked deficit reduction guru, Don Drummond, when they shelved his report almost at the time that it hit the table. They're not listening to the chorus of private sector employers who sound alarm bells about the cost of power in this province. They didn't listen to the rating agencies turning a thumbs down to their fiscal plan. They're not listening to the horse racing industry with their attack on rural Ontario that could cost up to 60,000 jobs. And they're not listening to Ontarians, because the finance minister didn't even have the courtesy to go out on the road and ask them at the committee. So when it looks at the fact that our caucus wasn't listened to, you look at that company—we were in some pretty good company of people that the government also

didn't take the time to consult when they put this budget forward. Our objective, as I said earlier, was not necessarily to be obstructionist as an opposition, but more to make sure that our ideas to move Ontario forward were put on the table.

In fact, as many, many speakers on this side of the aisle talked about, this budget increases spending when at the present time the cost to service the province's debt is already over \$10 billion. When you factor in the continued turmoil in the European economy, the downgrading of Ontario's credit rating, and the fact that this budget adds about \$15 billion more to the debt, we know where costs are going to go: They're going to go up and up and up. The government's whole forecast is a house of cards that could come down at any time and throw this province tumbling into a real, full-blown crisis.

Speaker, I want to take the remaining few minutes just to talk about some of the things that I hear when I go home. I enjoy, when I go back to my riding, the opportunity to talk to constituents at events, and I think we all just enjoyed our constituency week. I can't believe what I get in my inboxes at my constituency office in terms of emails, letters, phone calls, approaches that people make to me. I just can't believe that this government can sit idly by and not take into consideration what Ontarians are saying to them about this budget.

I decided, since the treasurer wouldn't have his own pre-budget consultations, to have my own in the riding for the first time. I spoke to people in Kemptville and Gananoque and Brockville. I did a bit of a tour. I got some great, great ideas. I remember one very straight-talking lady, Cecile Artelle, who filled out her "have your say" sheets. She had lots of comments about the green energy policies of this government and the fact that the cost to the individual residents and business is too high; the fact that we need to protect jobs and to stop large companies from closing their doors on workers and leaving the country.

**1740**

She spoke about severance payments to civil servants, to be able to reduce the size and costs of government. She feared the cost of all-day kindergarten. And she really wanted the government to encourage businesses to come to Ontario and create well-paying, long-term jobs.

Speaker, in my last couple of minutes, I want to pick up on what the member for Nipissing talked about in terms of one of his businesses—because one of my industries is Northern Cables and their plant manager, Shelley Bacon. They've called Brockville their home. They started their business out of the ashes of a failed company, and they have just done tremendously. He is extremely concerned about his latest hydro bill. The surcharge or global adjustment fee, which is basically Dalton McGuinty's green energy tax, was nearly \$12,000 on one of his bills. That's \$5,000 more than Northern Cables paid on the actual electricity that it used; in fact, in one month, the company handed over nearly \$25,000 from its three sites because of Dalton McGuinty's failed energy experiments.

I want to put that into perspective. Shelley gave me a quote, and his quote was, "You should know we compete against companies less than 100 miles from here who pay only three cents per kilowatt hour in the United States." At that rate, and without a green energy tax, this site would have paid about \$8,100 for power. That's \$18,500 in Ontario; \$8,100 in the United States.

Now, don't get me wrong. Shelley is not planning to move his plant anywhere—he's very content and happy to operate in the city of Brockville—but he felt that it was extremely important, while we're trying to get new businesses into our riding, that we realize that your policies, policies right in this bill and throughout your nine years, are crippling this economy. They are stopping job creators from continuing to grow and flourish.

We want Ontario to become the leader again, so please listen to some of the ideas we have. You haven't listened to us at all since we started this process. Stand up and listen to the people of Ontario.

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

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** I'm delighted to comment on the member for Leeds-Grenville's 10-minute summary of the budget bill, Bill 55, Strong Action.... He had mentioned that the Liberals weren't listening to Ontarians and that the Tories did not want to obstruct the process because they wanted to put their ideas on the table, and part of that, putting your ideas on the table—when we had the lock-up, we all had a chance to get a summary of the budget or a briefing on the budget, and from that day forward, the leader of the official opposition, Mr. Hudak, decided to decline to even participate in that process. So when we're not listening to Ontarians, the opposition wasn't a voice for their constituents.

The member from Leeds-Grenville did say he had gone out and he had spoken to a particular woman there, and she had expressed what she'd like to see in the budget, but again, the talks weren't there with the Progressive Conservatives. They hadn't put any proposals, so perhaps if they were at the table at the time, maybe that woman's ideas could be brought to their caucus and discussed amongst them and then proposed.

It's not our budget—it's a Liberal budget—but we listened to Ontarians. They didn't want an election, so we went out and we consulted with them and we listened to their suggestions, and that's why we were able to make that budget a little fairer and actually propose those things that people felt were going to make this budget more fair for the average Ontarian. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Mario Sergio:** I'm pleased to add my remarks to the comments made by the member from Leeds-Grenville. I have to say, Madam Speaker, that the budget as presented is the road map for the economy for the next year or so. I have to tell my colleague from Leeds-Grenville and all the members on the other side that they had plenty of opportunity in the past to make some

reasonable proposals. They will have, I hope, the time to make some more reasonable suggestions, as we have requested on many, many occasions. I do hope, indeed that when the bill will have the opportunity to go for public hearings, they will come up with some reasonable suggestions, because I have to say, with all due respect to the member, this is what we have presented. Now, if they are not happy with it, then let us know what you would like to see changed. But so far, they have been very silent. There have been criticizing, but they have not brought any reasonable—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Mario Sergio:** They have been given the chance, like we have given the chance to the NDP.

Let me say this, Madam Speaker: They don't want us to spend any money. I wonder where they would like to see cuts. In education? In health care? In home care? In creating jobs? Where would they like us to cut? Would they like to cut some of the hospitals in Brampton or in Mississauga or in Burlington or in Cambridge? Where would they like us to cut funding? I hope that when the budget comes back, we'll have their—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Thank you.

The member for Prince Edward–Hastings.

**Mr. Todd Smith:** It's a pleasure to stand up here and add some commentary to the great commentary from our member from Leeds–Grenville on Bill 55, which, of course, is the budget bill. The budget bill was sold as an austerity budget, and it was false advertising on behalf of the government of Ontario. Coming from a media background, I used to deal with all kinds of advertising, and this has been false advertising—there's no question about that.

The member from Leeds–Grenville, though, spoke often during his 10 minutes about the fact that the government isn't listening. The government did not listen to Tim Hudak, our leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, on several occasions when he spoke on the strong measures that were needed that would have actually gotten the finances of the province of Ontario under control. They were ignored by the finance minister on a couple of different occasions. They were strong measures, something that the finance minister said that he was going to take, that he was going to implement strong measures. We didn't see any strong measures.

You know what? I'm not a speed-reader, but I can tell you when I sat in the budget lock-up that day in the budget deliberations, it was very evident within a couple of hours that this budget was increasing spending in the province of Ontario. It's a Liberal tradition; I understand that. I know you're trying to break from the tradition of increasing spending, and maybe you took the gas pedal down just a bit. You took your foot off the gas a bit, but you're increasing spending in 14 of 24 ministries. You're going to take tough action, but you increase spending in the budget.

It just didn't add up, and it was false advertising. The government didn't listen to Tim Hudak. The government

didn't listen to anybody. The member from Leeds–Grenville spoke often about the fact that the Green Energy Act is a perfect example of the government not listening.

Electricity prices are going through the roof, and we have the Cement Association downstairs here in a reception right now. They're complaining to me about the—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Thank you.

The member for Kenora–Rainy River.

**Ms. Sarah Campbell:** I'm pleased to provide some commentary on what the member from Leeds–Grenville said. I wanted to kind of build on what he talked about. I think he started off by talking about how this budget is titled Strong Action for Ontario. The government does talk about how concerned they are with putting Ontarians back to work, but what really struck me when I went through the budget when it first came out and since I have had time to review it is how short-sighted the budget really is, especially in terms of putting people back to work.

Recently, we brought to light the issue of the MNR privatization of the processing of hunting and fishing licences. There was nothing done in this budget to address that. That issue that we brought up was a stark reminder of what privatization really means under NAFTA, because those jobs that could be in Ontario, call centre jobs—certainly we can do that—have been shipped off to Tennessee. That's what happens under NAFTA, when you really do appeal to the lowest common denominator, where we have people, whoever can submit the lowest bid, getting the contract, and where we're competing with the United States and Mexico. How can we possibly compete with that?

That also brings to light what's going to be happening with ServiceOntario. The government is planning more privatization with ServiceOntario, with the argument that more people are accessing the service online, despite how costly it is. People need to have a computer, an Internet subscription and they need to have a credit card. The biggest thing is that in northwestern Ontario, where we need to access this service, we don't have the infrastructure in place. This is the same argument that I've been using whenever the government talks about moving to online services. Whether it's with the Ontario travel information centres, ServiceOntario, we need to have the infrastructure in place. So until we invest in that infrastructure, we are not there yet and we should not be doing this.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Thank you. I'd ask the member for Leeds–Grenville to respond.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the comments from the members for London–Fanshawe, York West, Prince Edward–Hastings and Kenora–Rainy River.

I want to make sure I again reiterate that I applaud Tim Hudak and our caucus's position. I think we had a very principled stand when it came to the budget.

Certainly, when I was having my pre-budget consultations, many people who attended talked about issues that were important to them: reducing the size and cost of government; having discussions about a mandatory public sector wage freeze; trying to wrestle the deficit down, not increase it, as this government has done under their watch.

The other thing is the fact that there are so many other issues—and I didn't ring bells in respect for the ceremony that started a little early, but I think it's important to put on the record the fact that this Ornge scandal needs to be addressed by this government. You can't continually stand in this House every day when we ask very important questions, put your head in the sand and not address it. Because you know what? In the days ahead,

the bells are going to continue to ring until your government gets it through its head.

I didn't bother taking my 10 minutes to talk about the seat-saver program. Who knows how much money this government spent in Oakville and Mississauga to save a couple of seats? I didn't do that. I took the opportunity to speak about what we feel was important, and that's getting our fiscal house in order, creating private sector jobs and making sure that this province is back to being the economic engine of this country, not the caboose.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro):** Thank you. It being close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

*The House adjourned at 1753.*

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Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
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MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
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Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
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Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
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Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha  
Jane McKenna  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch







**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS /  
PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS**

Mr. Robert Bailey .....	2558
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson .....	2559

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS /  
DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS**

**Jim Kilgour**

Mr. Jim Wilson .....	2559
----------------------	------

**Forest firefighting**

Mr. Gilles Bisson .....	2559
-------------------------	------

**Flooding**

Mr. Bill Mauro .....	2559
----------------------	------

**Blyth Festival**

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson .....	2560
----------------------------	------

**St. Clair Kick It!**

Mr. Jonah Schein.....	2560
-----------------------	------

**Somerset West Community Health Centre**

Mr. Yasir Naqvi .....	2560
-----------------------	------

**Agriculture industry**

Mr. Ernie Hardeman.....	2560
-------------------------	------

**Cement Association of Canada**

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn.....	2561
-----------------------------	------

**Electricity supply**

Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	2561
------------------------	------

**Correction of record**

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	2561
------------------------------------	------

**REPORTS BY COMMITTEES /  
RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS**

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies**

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	2562
Report deemed adopted.....	2562

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY  
AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS  
MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES**

**National Access Awareness Week / Semaine  
nationale pour l'intégration des personnes  
handicapées**

Hon. John Milloy .....	2562
Mr. Toby Barrett .....	2562
Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	2563

**Hospital funding**

Mr. Tim Hudak.....	2564
--------------------	------

**Off-road vehicles**

Mr. John Vanthof .....	2564
------------------------	------

**School facilities**

Mrs. Laura Albanese .....	2564
---------------------------	------

**Air ambulance service**

Ms. Sylvia Jones.....	2564
-----------------------	------

**Air-rail link**

Mr. Jonah Schein.....	2565
-----------------------	------

**Radiation safety**

Mr. Reza Moridi.....	2565
----------------------	------

**Éducation en français**

Mr. Jeff Yurek.....	2565
---------------------	------

**Automobile insurance**

Mr. Jagmeet Singh .....	2565
-------------------------	------

**Radiation safety**

Ms. Helena Jaczek.....	2566
------------------------	------

**Air ambulance service**

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette.....	2566
-----------------------------	------

**Tourism**

Ms. Sarah Campbell .....	2566
--------------------------	------

**Ontario Place**

Mr. Rob E. Milligan .....	2566
---------------------------	------

**Diagnostic services**

Mr. Michael Mantha.....	2567
-------------------------	------

**ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR**

**Strong Action for Ontario Act (Budget Measures),  
2012, Bill 55, Mr. Duncan / Loi de 2012 sur une  
action énergétique pour l'Ontario (mesures  
budgétaires), projet de loi 55, M. Duncan**

Mr. John Yakabuski .....	2567
Hon. James J. Bradley .....	2568
Ms. Laurie Scott .....	2569
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong .....	2569
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti.....	2569
Mr. John Yakabuski .....	2570
Mr. Jagmeet Singh .....	2570
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti.....	2571
Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	2572
Mr. Michael Mantha.....	2572
Ms. Soo Wong.....	2572
Mr. Jagmeet Singh .....	2573
Mr. Steve Clark .....	2573
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong .....	2574

Mr. Mario Sergio .....	2574
Mr. Todd Smith .....	2575
Ms. Sarah Campbell .....	2575
Mr. Steve Clark.....	2575
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	2576

# CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 29 May 2012 / Mardi 29 mai 2012

## ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

### Wireless Services Agreements Act, 2012, Bill 82, Ms. Best / Loi de 2012 sur les conventions de services sans fil, projet de loi 82, Mme Best

Hon. Margaret R. Best .....	2537
Mr. David Oraziotti .....	2539
Mr. Jim McDonell .....	2545
Mr. Paul Miller .....	2545
Mr. Jeff Leal .....	2546
Mr. John Yakabuski .....	2546
Mr. David Oraziotti .....	2546
Second reading debate deemed adjourned .....	2547

### Wearing of carnations

Mme France G�linas .....	2547
--------------------------	------

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PR SENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. James J. Bradley .....	2547
Mr. Rob E. Milligan .....	2547
Mme France G�linas .....	2547
Ms. Dipika Damerla .....	2547
Mr. Michael Harris .....	2547
Mr. Yasir Naqvi .....	2547
Mr. Tim Hudak .....	2547
Hon. Deborah Matthews .....	2547
Mr. John O'Toole .....	2547
Hon. Bob Chiarelli .....	2547
Mrs. Christine Elliott .....	2547
Mr. Mario Sergio .....	2547
Mr. John O'Toole .....	2547
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne .....	2548
Hon. Linda Jeffrey .....	2548
Mr. Jeff Yurek .....	2548
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac) .....	2548

### Legislative pages

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac) .....	2548
-------------------------------------	------

## ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

### Ontario public service

Mr. Tim Hudak .....	2548
Hon. Dwight Duncan .....	2548

### Ontario economy

Mr. Tim Hudak .....	2549
Hon. Dwight Duncan .....	2549

### Ontario budget

Ms. Andrea Horwath .....	2551
Hon. Dwight Duncan .....	2551

### Ontario budget

Ms. Andrea Horwath .....	2551
Hon. Dwight Duncan .....	2551

### Air ambulance service

Mr. Frank Klees .....	2552
Hon. Deborah Matthews .....	2552
Hon. John Milloy .....	2553

### Lobbyists

Mme France G�linas .....	2553
Hon. Dwight Duncan .....	2553
Hon. Harinder S. Takhar .....	2553

### Government services

Mr. David Zimmer .....	2553
Hon. Harinder S. Takhar .....	2553

### Air ambulance service

Mr. Frank Klees .....	2554
Hon. Deborah Matthews .....	2554

### Ontario Northland Transportation Commission

Mr. John Vanthof .....	2554
Hon. Rick Bartolucci .....	2554

### Forest fires

Mr. Jeff Leal .....	2555
Hon. Michael Gravelle .....	2555
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur .....	2555

### Health care funding

Mrs. Christine Elliott .....	2555
Hon. Deborah Matthews .....	2555

### Fire safety

Mr. Paul Miller .....	2556
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur .....	2556

### Sexual assault

Ms. Helena Jaczek .....	2556
Hon. Laurel C. Broten .....	2557

### Skilled trades

Mr. Garfield Dunlop .....	2557
Hon. Glen R. Murray .....	2557

### Autism treatment

Miss Monique Taylor .....	2558
Hon. Laurel C. Broten .....	2558
Hon. Eric Hoskins .....	2558

*Continued on inside back cover*