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Wednesday 30 May 2012

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Mercredi 30 mai 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 30 May 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 30 mai 2012

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT ACT (RENT INCREASE GUIDELINE), 2012 LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA LOCATION À USAGE D'HABITATION (TAUX LÉGAL D'AUGMENTATION DES LOYERS)

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

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

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's my pleasure to speak regarding Bill 19 today, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of the rent increase guideline.

I want to first start by just recapping for people what this bill does. Of course, when we talk about what it does, we'll also see what it doesn't do. At the end of the day, looking at what it does and what it doesn't do, you have to wonder why this bill was put forward in the form that it is. Briefly, this bill restricts and sets both a ceiling and a guideline for rent increases in Ontario. The floor is 1% and the ceiling is 2.5%, regardless of any other circumstances or contexts that landlords may experience. So 1% will be a minimum increase, and no greater than 2.5%.

Where it falls between 1% and 2.5% will be based on the consumer price index. Of course, a lot of people in this House realize that hydroelectricity costs are not included in the consumer price index, and we've seen that, even by the government's own accounts, hydroelectricity costs will rise by 47% by 2015. That additional cost and burden will be placed on landlords, and they will have no ability to recoup those losses.

What was really the motivator behind this bill was the Liberal government's insistence on putting in an HST bill

a few years ago, which harmonized sales taxes and put additional costs on for everybody, including landlords.

But I want to say, if the government was truly serious about solving or correcting a number of the injustices in the Residential Tenancies Act, this would have been an opportune time for them to actually make some substantive changes and well-needed changes.

I'll just give you a couple of examples, and I'm sure every member in this chamber has heard directly from their constituents, constituents who are landlords, about the atrocious environment it is in this province to be a landlord. We have the tribunal for landlords and tenants. Many people know that if a landlord takes a tenant to a tribunal hearing, the landlord pays his submission fees and pays for his own lawyer. Tenants, however, have their submission fees covered, and tenants also have their legal fees and a lawyer provided free of charge—I shouldn't say free of charge; it's at the taxpayers' expense. It's a double standard here in the Residential Tenancies Act, one that is obvious, one that causes hardship and one that should have been addressed within this Bill 19.

Just further on with expenses, other utility costs such as water and sewer charges, which are increasing at a rate, typically, of around 8%—those additional increases aren't included and can't be recouped by landlords under this Bill 19.

I think it's also important just to put on the record some of the horror stories that happen with that landlord and tenant tribunal. I've experienced a number of them myself, with constituents who have come to me looking for assistance. Let me just share a couple of stories.

I had one constituent come to see me. He had shown a house to a prospective tenant, but then turned the tenant down for a number of reasons and would not rent the unit, the house, to that prospective tenant. A couple of days later, the owner of that home came back to that house and found that the person he had rejected as a tenant had moved in and was indeed squatting in his home. She had phoned up hydro and had the hydro put in her name, and he could not get her out. It took him three months to evict that person who had squatted in his home.

Needless to say, there was also significant damage done to it by the time he did get her out—he did so at great cost to himself—but there was no protection under the Residential Tenancies Act for people who actually squat in other people's properties. It was just an outrageous example of the abuses that can, and do, happen under this flawed legislation that we now have, the Residential Tenancies Act, and which are not being addressed

in Bill 19. That person, actually, when he tried to go and reclaim his house from the squatter, was charged with public mischief by the OPP for trying to reclaim his home.

I have another example—that one was in Frontenac county. I have another one from Smiths Falls, a similar situation, where the landlord had shown a prospective tenant a rental unit. The landlord rejected the application, and a couple of weeks later he came back and found that the rejected applicant had moved in and was squatting in his apartment. She had broken the window to access, changed the locks, put the hydro in her name and lived there for three months without cost. She went to the tribunal hearings and had her fees paid for by the public, and the landlord had to bear all of his own costs. In addition, that rejected tenant caused over \$3,000 worth of damage to the rental unit during that eviction process with the tribunal board.

0910

You know, we have stories and stories of this sort of abuse that happens, and what have we got for a bill in front of the House now, Bill 19, which sets a minimum rent increase and a maximum increase of 2.5%, has no regard for additional costs that the government is putting on everyone, especially hydro costs, and fails miserably to address any of the other faults and failings of the Residential Tenancies Act. Truly, if this government was being honest to itself and honest to the people of Ontario, Bill 19 should be withdrawn. Come back with a proper bill that does address the deficiencies and the failures of the existing Residential Tenancies Act.

I have another one here—again, this is in the Smiths Falls area—where a landlord went in to inspect his property. A large family was living there. An entire room was full, from floor to ceiling, with garbage. It was impossible to navigate in that dwelling, much like what you might see on these reality TV shows—Hoarders, I think it's called. In this case, it took the landlord four months, through the tribunal system, at, again, a significant cost to himself, at no cost to the tenant, and the tenant actually received three one-month deferrals before finally that family was evicted, then a significant cost to clean up that atrocious mess that was left behind.

I really would like to see the minister redraw this piece of legislation; we can't support it like this. It doesn't take into account any of the additional costs that landlords face, nor does it even attempt to address the deficiencies in the existing Residential Tenancies Act.

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

Mr. Jonah Schein: So it's Wednesday morning and we're speaking to this bill again. I have to admit I have some growing impatience about this. I feel like, more and more, we are disconnected in here from what's actually going on in the province of Ontario. I think when it comes to rent control and protecting tenants and making sure that we have a province where people can live, we can't afford to stall anymore. We need to move this forward; it's really urgent. Paying the bills is something that

people have to do at least once a month, and the unfortunate truth is that more and more people are struggling to do this.

I respectfully listened to the member from Sarnia-Lambton, but the people who I'm here to represent absolutely include people who are landlords, but they include tenants. The tenants in this province are the people who are struggling most in most cases. They are the people who are having the most trouble putting food on the table for their families, and they're the people who expect me and people in this House to stand up and speak for them, because they're too busy making ends meet to be able to speak up here.

I'm really concerned at the pace of how this is going. I am concerned that the voices of the people who really matter are being left out of this. I am concerned that we right now have a government that's pushing forward a budget bill that's going to have really devastating implications, in some cases, on the future of this province, and that the people who matter are left out.

I'm also concerned about the lack of consultation, that the government has refused to have a select committee on Ornge. But the response has been ringing bells, and it means that we don't have a chance to have discussion that needs to happen. The truth is that people in Ontario can't wait for these things. They can't wait to put food on the table. The rent is due in just a few days, and we need to push this forward.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I am pleased to be given an opportunity to speak about Bill 19, Mr. Speaker.

I want to remind my colleague from Simcoe North that today we're debating on Bill 19, not about the difficulties that landlords have with their tenants, the bad tenants and the difficulty evicting them. It's not about the hoarders you talk about. It's about how to protect the tenants to make sure that they have stability and, most important, also supporting the landlords. So let me remind my colleague opposite—it's very clear in Bill 19, okay? It's quoted here that, "The section is amended to provide that the guideline shall not be less than 1% and not more than 2.5%." That's the purpose of the bill.

The bill is not about the tenants' difficulty or the landlords' difficulty with the tenants. Our government is committed to providing strong protection for tenants across Ontario, but we are also concerned about the landlords. So in case you have forgotten to read this piece, my colleagues opposite, the government is providing some firm support for both tenants and landlords, providing stability for both the landlords and the tenants.

Our government also recognizes the contributions made by the landlords. The members opposite need to read the bill. It talks about the fact that the landlord can continue to apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board for an above-guideline rent increase if there are extraordinary increases in municipal taxes and charges for utilities. They can also apply to this board for eligibility for capital expenditures. So please, let's focus on this bill's

debate, as opposed to talking about bad tenants and what have you. The bill is here to protect tenants. I have those challenging tenants as well, but at the end of the day I have difficulties, but also the financial challenges of my constituents, and they are looking forward to this bill.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I came specifically this morning to listen to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. He brought a certain story to the debate that I believe has some merit. You know, this Bill 19 was introduced on December 6, 2011. The bill itself—I'm surprised. If you look at it, this bill—here is the bill, for the viewers. That's the bill right there. There is nothing in this bill, absolutely nothing. Look at it, it's one paragraph. I'm going to read what it says. "Section 120 of the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 limits annual rent increases in accordance with a guideline which is linked to the consumer price index for Ontario, reported by Statistics Canada. The section is amended to provide that the guideline shall be not less than 1% and not more than 2.5%." That's all it does.

There are real issues in housing, affordable housing specifically, that the member I believe was talking about. For instance, they should have added a section here on landlord-tenant disputes. There should be a special tribunal to expedite these hearings. In terms of the landlord, they're euchred. If the landlords file a complaint now—they're going to say because we're Tories, we're against the people who are in a rental situation. That's totally false. The current bill that's being amended here allows the minister to really set the rent increase guideline.

The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington always brings a very direct response to these bills that are frivolous. We should get on with more important things, like jobs and the economy in Ontario. Then people could afford their homes. The economy under Dalton McGuinty is on the way downhill. It's unfortunate.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I just want to add a couple of comments to what we heard from the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. I think all of us understand that it's a very small bill. It deals with a provision of providing a ceiling and a floor in terms of increases. But what lurks behind it are obviously some perennial problems in terms of landlords and tenants. I'll have an opportunity to make further remarks, but the fact that most, like 98%—and I haven't got the StatsCan number here, but anecdotally we know that the vast majority of people have a good landlord and the landlords have good tenants and everything goes along quite smoothly. It's really a question of providing the balance, the piece of legislation that will create that balance, so that people have access to a third party. That's really the essence of what we're looking at here.

0920

The question, then, of having an ability to respond to unforeseen costs—certainly, people recognize that there

are going to be unforeseen costs, and this is a way, then, to provide some kind of balance between the landlord and the tenant.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'd like to thank the members from Davenport, Scarborough–Agincourt, Durham and Simcoe for their comments.

I'll focus some of my response here to the member from Scarborough, because I think her comments were very important for everybody to see and hear. She's willing to leave every injustice in place in the Residential Tenancies Act. She's willing to gloss over every injustice created by the legislation, in order to go after these floor and ceiling increases of 1% and 2.5%. When members say they're concerned about the rental increase—absolutely. Be concerned about the rental increase, but also be concerned about the fairness or the injustice that a piece of legislation creates as well.

I would say this, Speaker: If the member from Scarborough–Agincourt, or from Davenport, is so demonstrable in helping their constituents keep within this low threshold of 1% or 2.5% rent increases, go out and buy a few apartments. I'm sure you can afford it on MPP wages. Go out and buy a couple of apartments, rent them out and keep under that. Maybe even do something altruistic and go below the 1% rent increase. Put your money where your mouth is. Show people just how much you care for your constituents. Buy a couple of apartments and then experience the Residential Tenancies Act on your own. Experience the tribunal and experience when things do go wrong. They don't often go wrong, but when they do, they go atrociously wrong, and this government still refuses to recognize that injustice.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to make a few remarks this morning on Bill 19.

One of the things that came out in this, and was offered as part of the reason for the bill, is the imposition of the HST adding additional costs to several of the services that landlords are required to provide—such things as snow removal service—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I think we have about five sidebars, and three of them happen to be on the side where the speaker is speaking—your own person. So maybe what you want to do is give a little respect and listen to the speaker from your own caucus. Thanks very much.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I was explaining that part of this urgency to provide further guidance in the way of Bill 19 came as a result of the addition of HST costs on services. Obviously, there are all of these pressures that are constantly being put forward for the landlord. The question of costs increasing, such as hydro—these are all things that people understood would in fact impact on the land-

lord, and ultimately on the tenant, with the imposition of HST. So I think that in any of these discussions, one of the things that is so important to understand is that balance.

I made reference a few moments ago to the fact that hundreds of thousands of people have a relationship with their landlord, and the landlord with the tenant, that works fine and people come in and pay the bills and everything moves along. What we have, as others have mentioned, with the rent review tribunal and bodies such as that, is to deal with those periods when there is such an imbalance, when one is trying to take advantage of the other. But for the large part, this is a very stable, vibrant part of the housing stock that people can choose from and also for investors to invest in.

But in the case of the discussion here this morning, with the imposition of the HST, landlords were really given no option when those additional burdens of taxation were put upon the landlord. Then there is only one option for them, and that's to look at raising rents. The point here is that looking at the base of 1% and 2.5% I think is fairly reasonable. When I look at the tax base in municipalities on individual homes, the individual homeowner certainly doesn't have any say in what the municipality, and the combination of the municipality and the upper-tier government, decides to raise the percentages for property owners, homeowners. So when you look at that as sort of being something of an equivalent, you can see that the homeowners probably feel they have less protection from the imposition of those kinds of tax rates that they see almost annually.

But I think that as we're looking at this particular piece of legislation, which many speakers have identified as one that is less than a page long, it provides us with an opportunity in debate to look at some of the bigger issues for people to be looking at long-term. I think about the fact that we have over half a million people unemployed in this province. How many of them are trying to make a rent payment or a mortgage payment? There seems to be, on the part of the government, very little in the way of response to job creation.

At the same time as that is taking place, we're looking at the fact that we have, just to service the debt, an amount of over \$10 billion, and \$10 billion ranks, if this were a ministry, as the third-largest part of the budget. When you think of that \$10 billion, and the kind of missed opportunities that we have in this province because we are paying \$10 billion, it's really like just having a bonfire, because the money is not doing anything more for the people of the province of Ontario than if it were put to a bonfire. But it's that \$10 billion that is the burden that we carry on a daily basis—and then there is the debt, which obviously is the inheritance we leave for our children and our grandchildren. I think that when we look at the context of the province in the larger sense, the \$10 billion, the fact that there are only two ministries that have larger budgets; the fact that the debt, obviously, grows with our decline in the credit rating—we can only speculate on what happens when the government goes

out to refinance those bonds that Bob Rae put in 20 years ago and what's going to happen to the interest rates that we're going to have to pay in servicing our continued debt.

0930

I think it's things like that—whether you have a monthly rental payment to make or a mortgage payment, people need to understand that there are some grim realities for the province that are bigger than those payments. I think that people can feel justifiably concerned about what they see as a lack of action on the part of the government in regard to these things.

I think we need to look at Bill 19, certainly, as something that gives rental people some kind of surety in terms of the floor and the ceiling on increased rents, but they also need to understand that there are some very large macro parts of the economy that will ultimately come to affect them as well. It's really in that context that we need to look at Bill 19. I think that, given that these were to accommodate the increases of the HST, the government also has to explain the fact that those increases really could only be passed on to the tenants.

As always, in the big picture for tenant and landlord, the goal is always a balance. There's a need for residential rental housing; there's a need, then, to provide an investment climate for those who wish to invest; and then there's the fairness for those tenants who must pay the rent. Always, whenever we're having a conversation about landlord-tenant, it always has to be framed by the need for balance on both sides.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from Nepean-Renfrew—sorry, Renfrew-Nepean—Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: We're so close, you're going to join us, I know.

Speaker, I appreciated the comments of my colleague from York-Simcoe. We've talked about how insignificant this bill is: one page, translated in both English and French. You have to ask yourself, what is the need for this bill at this time in Ontario? It sets a ceiling of 2.5% and a floor of 1%. That's sort of like legislating that the hours of daylight will not exceed 18 hours in Ontario, and they will not be less than six hours in Ontario, because we know that throughout history, it's going to fall somewhere in between there. You're going to have the shortest day on December 21 and you're going to have the longest day on June 21.

You see, in five years, the rent increase has never gone outside those two parameters. It has never been less than 1%; it has never been more than 2.5%. But these guys over here, when Ontario is going through the biggest fiscal crisis in its history since Confederation, they see it as a priority to bring in some kind of a floor and ceiling for rent increases, and they set the parameters outside of what has ever happened in the last five years.

So I'm looking forward to the legislation, probably to be tabled soon, on daylight hours in the province of Ontario, because these are priorities for this government. I mean, could we not get on with the work of doing what

is necessary? We've got a \$15-billion deficit, we've got \$257 billion in debt in this province, and this is the kind of stuff—they're bringing in the bill, but the members of the government don't speak to the bill. It's beyond me, Mr. Speaker. I hope that I'm here long enough to make some sense of what the people on the other side are actually doing.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the opportunity to speak on this legislation. I was, of course, inspired and prompted by my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, as well as my colleague from York–Simcoe, who obviously brings a great deal of experience and passion to this Legislature.

Speaker, two weeks ago I had an opportunity to speak to this piece of legislation. I indicated at the time how the HST has been a big factor in why the government brought this in. I called this the “Oops, they did it again” bill, because this is not the first time that this government has had to create legislation to backtrack off the awful effects of their not-so-revenue-neutral HST. It was a greedy tax grab.

Remember, at the time they took \$3 billion extra out of the pockets of soccer moms, seniors and small business owners, and that has impacted affordable housing in this community, as well as greater Ontario. It is for that reason that obviously we like to stand in opposition to the Liberals, because they're the worst fiscal managers this province has ever seen, as my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke mentioned.

We are in a great financial crisis. They have made affordable housing less affordable because they are taking more money out of the pockets of everyday people, including renters and including landlords, and that's why they're trying to put this half-measured bill in front of us. But we are too clever for them. We are going to continue to talk about the awful effects from what they have done with our economy and the pocketbooks of the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Thank you so much, Speaker. There has been a lot of very good comment about the content of this bill, and a lot of I think very important points made that, although this bill speaks to an issue of importance, of significance, it is relatively short. There is a very simple solution. We surely have had all the comments that could possibly be made on this very short bill—very short. So it sounds like we have a consensus within the House that this very short bill should be brought to a vote, and then those who support it can say they support it, and those who oppose it can say they oppose it, and we can dispose of this in a relatively short period of time to get on to address the budget or the other issues. It seems to me that that is the sum total of what we have heard this morning and have been hearing over the hours of debate: some for, some against, all agreeing

these are very short, focused, specific provisions that deal with an important issue. So let's get on with it. Let's bring it to a vote. I know that's what the people watching would want us to do.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Interesting comments that the member opposite made, but you know, I don't think he grasps the frustration that people on this side of the House might feel. The people in the audience, the people in the bleachers, the people watching the television might sense that there is a bit of frustration on this side of the House. Here we are in Ontario, the once leader of Confederation, once the richest province in Canada, now falling on very hard times. The demise of our manufacturing industry—a manufacturing industry that was built on reasonable electricity costs, because of Niagara Falls opening in the early 1920s. That attracted huge amounts of industry to Ontario, because we had cheap and reliable electricity rates. That built a tremendous province, a wealthy province, a province that knew no bounds as to where it would go. Then, in the 1930s, the Depression came along and wouldn't you know it, Ontario elected a Liberal government, the one of Mitch Hepburn. It drove the province into huge debt and increased the provincial budget, doubled and tripled the provincial budget—

Interjection.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: —until in 1942 the Ontario electorate kicked out the Liberal government and brought in a 42-year reign of a provincial government which made this province into—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I guess the member from Peterborough didn't hear me. Last warning. Thank you.

0940

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: You've cut my history lesson short, Speaker. The Liberals were re-elected under David Peterson, where again they doubled the budget. They were elected under Dalton McGuinty, and again they've doubled the budget. They have no fiscal responsibility. All they know how to do is to spend money that isn't theirs.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'd like to thank the members for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and Nepean–Carleton, the Minister of Energy and the member for Halton.

I think that as we went around the speakers responding, the message is very loud and clear that this is a relatively small piece of the pie, that it's in the legislative complexities, and that the very large issues of the economy, the things that will affect these people, as certainly I would argue, to a greater extent than a question of a 1% to 2.5% range for rent increases—these are being ignored by the government.

They are allowing the micro issues to dominate in a way that keeps everyone's attention away from those very serious issues that others, as well as I, have identified in terms of the spending, the gap between revenue and spending, and the kind of problem that we face when we have the burden of debt.

These are the big issues. These are the ones that—frankly, this is a sideshow to take people's minds off what is really important for this province.

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

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm proud to stand up today and to be able to commit my two cents to this bill. I'm representing my constituents in my riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London.

This bill is very interesting. When I first received it, I opened it up to read it, and I was pretty shocked at how little there is in this bill and the fact that the government would actually come forward and put aside fixing our economic crisis in Ontario to come across with this bill.

I see this as just another mismanagement by this government on another portfolio, and it's basically because they're catering to special interests. They're picking and choosing who they help out. If they actually looked at Ontario as a whole and decided to help everyone equally, I think we'd have a better province. We wouldn't be in this fiscal mess, and they wouldn't be picking and choosing winners and losers.

This is drastically affecting affordable housing, which is a huge issue in my riding. Currently, there's too long a waiting list, especially if I look at Aylmer, Ontario. The government has run out of money to create any more affordable spaces. There's now a long waiting list in Aylmer alone, and it has been drastically hit by this recession. Because of mismanagement of our dollars, there are no funds to continue to build or create new affordable housing homes.

When I'm at home talking about this bill, the constituents are scratching their heads and they're going, "What is going on with this bill?" I think this bill is nothing but a charade. They're trying to create it as a decisive action—"We're taking action"—but, in fact, I think they aren't doing too much about this. I'm not saying it just to pick on the Liberals, because it's easy to do; I'm just saying it because I truly feel they have missed the mark. They've totally missed the mark, and they're ignoring the real problems affecting affordable housing, as I've said.

Truly, I think, this bill is here because, as Ms. MacLeod said earlier, it's their misguided implementation of the HST. I think what the bill is really about is that when the HST came into effect, the government thought this was a sure way to increase their revenue, and they just spent like crazy. When they started spending money without thought that there is no money tree here in Queen's Park—I've been looking for it here. Now they've run out of money.

We're seeing that the government is bringing in record revenues here, but their spending has tripled. They've doubled the debt, and we're heading toward \$400 billion

in debt. The HST they brought in was to help supplement their spending.

When you look at the real world out there, if we overspend on our homes we don't go to a bank and say, "We've overspent. Give us more money"; whereas the Liberals decide, "Let's just go after the taxpayers and take more of their money." As I said before, we're heading to a \$400-billion debt and a \$30-billion deficit.

I'll go back to the HST. When the HST was brought in, it had a negative effect on a number of groups, and one of the groups was Ontario's rental housing providers. It drastically increased the cost of providing rental housing in this province, because rents were already tied to the consumer price index, and this forced providers to absorb the additional costs imposed by the Liberals. It should be noted that at the time, the McGuinty government told the providers just to deal with this new reality: "Change your business model and just deal with it."

Faced with increased costs, and limited in their ability to pay such a levy of higher rental charges, housing providers were forced to use money from reserve funds that they put away for upgrades to their affordable housing units so that people renting them aren't living in shacks or shanties. They have money set aside. So the government is now forcing, with these high costs due to the HST—they're actually having to go into the reserves and use these funds.

Ultimately, what you'll see is that affordable housing providers just get out of the business, therefore decreasing the amount of affordable housing available to Ontarians. But that's only part of the problem. With higher costs and rental charge increases restricted, in my area they have left. They've proved time and again—the Liberals don't understand the economics of any sort of business at all. When the cost of business reaches a prohibitive level, you leave the business; you get out.

Mr. Speaker, they talk about poverty and helping the poor and how this is supposed to protect people. I'm just going to go to an aside pretty quick. It's pretty shocking. This past week, at home, in my constituency week—my riding is Elgin, part of London and part of Middlesex. We have our ODSP office for people on disability in Elgin county. Because of the mismanagement that this government has done with the funds, they're looking at any and every way to save money. So their solution—because they're protecting disabled people who need help from the government—was to close our ODSP office and move it to downtown London. In my pharmacy, I deal with a lot of these clients. These clients don't have cars. These clients actually need face-to-face assistance. So I'm still waiting for an answer from the government: What are these people supposed to do now? They're here with this great big mega-bill, to make sure rents go between 1% and 2.5%, but at the same time we're going to take anybody on ODSP—you're going to have to move out of St. Thomas if you really want to get help from their office or you're going to drop off the system. I've had emails from people who are really upset about this decision.

If you look back entirely, they're mismanaging this province, and it is now having an effect on those who need government's help, those disabled or low-income people. Their solution is to try to control rent. I mean, where's the thought process behind that?

I'm quite sickened by the fact that this government says their poverty reduction plan is the big plan they have—and what do they do? They're closing a disability office in St. Thomas which serves all of Elgin county and moving it totally out of the riding. It might even be in the Minister of Energy's riding, or it might be in the Minister of Health's riding; one of the two. I just don't see the logic behind that, other than the fact that they can't manage their finances and now we're starting to suffer.

Back to the bill—sorry, I went off a bit.

Interjection: You digress.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I digress. Thank you.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: But you made very important points about how the mismanagement is affecting—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I did.

Going back to the bill: It does nothing to reduce poverty. In fact, maybe they should keep the ODSP office and services open to people who need it. The bill simply mandates a rental increase of 1% to 2.5%. I can buy that having guidelines for rental increases on affordable housing provides relief for those living below the poverty line, but in fact it's pretty much already in place. Tying rental increases to the CPI accomplishes this.

0950

The Bank of Canada has an inflation rate between 1% and 3%. Over the past 11 years, the annual inflation rate has never been above 3%. It would seem that the Bank of Canada, in terms of inflation targeting, is pretty good at its job. But as they always do, the McGuinty government think they know better, and they think they can direct the economic forces better than anyone. I have a strong suspicion that this is the reason our unemployment rate has been above the national average for 65 months now. I don't know what number they're targeting—I would like it to stop.

Before I digress again, another plant in my city of St. Thomas closed: Timken. It had been in my city for over 60 years, with 150 people employed. They're closing, and it's another sad day in my riding, with closure after closure. To top it off, they closed the disability office. But I'm digressing again; I'm sorry.

So if the inflation rate has actually been relatively stable and the bill does nothing to reduce poverty, why did the government introduce it? I think the answer lies in the point I made earlier.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Diversion.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Well, I think they're trying to win back support from the housing providers. They lost all that money on the HST, the higher cost.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I really appreciate the dialogue, but could we go through the Chair

instead of talking to each other? I feel left out. Thanks very much.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Sorry, Speaker. I got carried away here.

The amendments make sure the rental increases do not fall below 1%, a way to guarantee rent increases for providers. However, over the past 10 years—actually 30 years, in fact, if you look at it—the rental increase guidelines have never fallen below 1%. So I ask the government this: If the problem facing rental providers is increased costs and you guarantee them a minimum increase that falls below any increase guideline they've experienced, how are you solving the problem of the high cost of HST? The answer is, you're not. You're doing what Liberals and the McGuinty government are good at, which is making it seem like action is being taken to avoid addressing the real problems in our society.

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's a pleasure to stand and recognize the eloquent, real-life examples of how mismanagement by the Liberal government today is impacting ridings across Ontario. I commend our member from Elgin—Middlesex—London for commenting and recognizing that this government is picking winners and losers. Unfortunately, based on the examples that this member shared just recently, again, it's showing how the Liberal government is leaving small-town, rural Ontario behind, and instead is choosing to bring forth into this House very, very thin legislation that really, in the big picture, just further emphasizes how they're mismanaging.

In terms of Bill 19, affordable housing, in our perspective it's totally missing the mark. We don't need affordable housing in Ontario; we need affordable living. To spend an effort to introduce legislation that has such a small impact on the big picture of things, when my member eloquently pointed out that HST is the bigger issue—that's leaving little money in everyone's pocket at the end of the day for living, and what do they choose to do? They don't address how to make life more affordable for all Ontarians. They chose winners and losers, and this Bill 19 is a perfect example of that.

As opposed to thinking about economic drivers that will benefit all Ontarians, they again choose to be very narrow-minded, forget to look at the big picture, and just prove that they don't get it. They have lost touch, and it's an absolute shame. As they continue to lose touch, business is moving out of Ontario yet again. Just like in my riding a couple of years back, where Volvo, which used to be Champion, moved out of Goderich and moved to Pennsylvania because it was cheaper to operate there, Timken, 160 years in St. Thomas, is choosing to relocate because they can't afford to operate.

Affordable housing is just one slim wedge or slice in the big picture which we need to address, which is affordable living, affordable energy, and bringing Ontario back to prosperity.

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

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'm pleased again to rise to speak to the comments made by my honourable colleague.

Just a few little points: I was interested in the comments about affordable housing. There are quite a number of projects in his riding that the former member worked very hard to make sure came to fruition—units built. It's interesting, though, that when the Conservatives were in power before 2003, they cancelled the programs and did not fund affordable housing. Just so that we know that the affordable housing proponents in his riding wouldn't be getting any joy from them.

I was fascinated as well with the discussion about the HST. Of course, one of the points about the HST was to make sure that manufacturers, who have been challenged by low-cost labour in other jurisdictions, had the opportunity in Ontario. It's interesting hearing comments from the party opposite about the HST, because, the day before we introduced the HST, they supported it; the day we introduced it, they flipped and flopped and changed their mind, and all of the things that were good suddenly became bad.

It's also interesting hearing my colleague speak about affordability and about the people challenged on low incomes, because the heart of this bill, of course, is to assist in some significant but small way those who are challenged with incomes. What I said before was that there has been a lot of discussion about this; the point has been very eloquently made by the party opposite that this is a very short piece of bill. There's only so long you need to speak about a short bit of bill. Let's call it for a vote and then they can say no and we can say yes and we can get on with all of the other important issues that they've raised in their comments that have nothing to do with this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just had to rise. It's only a couple of minutes we're allowed to speak, but what a great speech by my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London. He talked about all of the right issues. Then we slide over to the Minister of Energy, and he wants to talk about ancient history. Let's take about recent history. He wants to talk about affordable housing. I'm just wondering about how many affordable housing units could be built in this province if we weren't in the crux of looking at possibly spending a couple of billion dollars for compensation for cancelling two gas hydro projects, one in Oakville and one in Mississauga. It could cost up to \$2 billion. The one in Mississauga is already a third up. They're going to christen it the Sousa Centre, after the member for Mississauga South, Mr. Sousa. So if you want to talk about affordable housing, if you want to talk about a record, I'll talk about the record of the past Conservative government, that created almost 1.1 million net new jobs in this province. We're stagnating here, under this government: 65 consecutive months above the national average for unemployment.

So when people on that side of the House want to lecture, my goodness gracious, all they need to do is invest five bucks in a small mirror. That's what you need to do, I say to the Minister of Energy: take a look in that mirror and ask what you've done to the people of this province when you are putting them behind the eight ball of \$2 billion in wasted money because of your ill-conceived political decisions. That's what is shameful in this province. Since December we've been talking about this bill. Do you know what this bill is for them? It's a filler in the House. We've got serious problems in this province, and that's what we should be addressing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The members will sit down, please. Thank you.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I want to congratulate the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London for commenting thoughtfully on this bill. But I do want to make my comments to the Minister of Energy. When he first found his legs and managed to stand up to comment on this bill, he said, "We've heard everything. We don't need to hear anything else. Let's put it to a vote." Then, of course, the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London spoke, and the Minister of Energy got up and said he enjoyed hearing those thoughts and comments. This is so typical of the Minister of Energy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This is the second member who has not directed to the member who was speaking. You've been attacking the government instead of dealing with what your member said. Please stop.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker, for that gentle reminder. The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London put it clearly: There are big problems facing this country, this province.

1000

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Who said that?

Mr. Randy Hillier: The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

It is falling on deaf ears on the government side. We have plants closing up. We have Timken, which he mentioned just recently closed up, and I will say, as we heard from some of the other members, that there are challenges. The biggest challenge facing industry in this province right now is this Liberal government and their failed energy plan.

The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London puts it clearly in front of you: It's not time for the vote if there is still valid debate going on, as the Minister of Energy himself recognized value in the debate. So we'll continue this debate, and maybe we'll drive some sense into some of the members on the other side.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London has two minutes to respond, and I remind him to keep to the script. Thank you.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Speaker, and I'd like to thank the member from Huron–Bruce, the Minister of Energy, the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and

Addington and the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. You guys have long riding names. Thank you very much for your comments.

I'm appreciative that I got to speak to this bill, and there are a few more members here, I'm sure, who would love to speak to it, because all that I'm doing here is lending views from my constituents to this House, and I think that's our job—not to rush through and just push through bills, without clear and thoughtful debate.

This bill itself, as I said, is not really needed. Let's tie it to the consumer price index. That would achieve the same results, and we could move on and deal with the other problems that are occurring in this province due to the mismanagement of this current government and the picking of its winners and losers. The fact of the matter is, we are starting to suffer. I'm sure, in your riding, you are seeing it too, Mr. Speaker, especially in the rural areas, which it's drastically affecting. This bill itself does nothing to address any of those issues, ranging from over 6,000 jobs lost in my riding plus more closing of services like ODSP; affecting the horse racing industry, which is greatly affecting my rural community; and definitely with the rescoping, the flip-flop of the government, which last August, just before the election, announced the full redevelopment of my hospital, only to go back on their word and cut the project drastically. We are still waiting for what the rescoping means—and the fact that our mental health hospital in St. Thomas is closing in the year, and we need these beds ASAP.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: I am pleased to take this opportunity to address Bill 19 and provide some insight and some value and stand up and speak to this important issue on behalf of my constituents of Kitchener–Conestoga and the rest of Ontario.

I think all of us in this House can agree in fact that the cost of living has risen too quickly in the province for Ontario families. I have heard from many constituents in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga who tell me that life under the Liberal government has become completely unaffordable. We know that far too many tenant households in Ontario are stretched to the limit trying to pay their bills, including their rent. Despite this worsening situation, the Premier continues to allow the HST and skyrocketing hydro rates to eat away at what little disposable income these households have left.

Ironically, the Liberal government continues to pride itself on standing up for tenants, yet its own failed policies, like the feed-in tariff program, continue to increase the cost of living for those who can least afford it. Now, more Ontarians are turning to affordable housing as their only option to make ends meet. According to the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, there were more than 152,000 households on municipal waiting lists for assisted housing as of early 2011. That number was up by nearly 10,500 households from 2010, an increase of 7.4% in just one year.

Closer to my home, in the region of Waterloo there are 3,000 individuals and families currently waiting to move

into an affordable home. The wait, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, is long. According to Waterloo Region Housing, seniors can wait up to two years to move into an affordable home, while families typically wait six months to four years and individuals wait four to six years. This reality puts a real strain on families already going through tough times. We know that 20% of tenant households in Ontario spend more than 50% of their income on rent, while roughly 32% are in housing that fails to meet the standards of adequacy, suitability and, most importantly, affordability. Still, it looks as though assisted-housing lists will only continue to grow, largely because of the lack of affordable housing units.

Recently I was talking to Mark Paul, the executive director for the Central Ontario Co-operative Housing Federation, in my constituency office in Kitchener–Conestoga. During our meeting he told me that there hasn't been a co-operative home built in the Waterloo region for more than 20 years. Clearly we have an opportunity to make a difference, but the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing would rather offer Ontarians window-dressing instead of credible policies.

I must say I find it laughable, in fact, that the minister has tried to suggest that Bill 19 improves the situation of tenants struggling to pay their bills. Recently, while speaking about Bill 19, she even cited the Poverty by Postal Code 2: Vertical Poverty study released by the United Way. She went on to reference the study's finding that almost half of the tenants said they worry about paying their rent each month, while one in three indicated that they and their family do without the necessities of life—tragic. Speaker, the minister knows full well that Bill 19 would do absolutely nothing for the tenants cited in the United Way study if it, in fact, passes, so to suggest otherwise is plainly disingenuous.

But let's talk about why Bill 19 is just more smoke and mirrors from the Liberal government. We all know how this bill came about. Last year, the minister announced that landlords could raise their rents 3.1% in 2012. As expected, the government's move caused an outcry from tenants' groups. In an attempt to ensure tenants didn't blame the Liberal government for making their lives even more unaffordable, the minister tabled Bill 19. This bill would mandate that the rental increase guidelines be based on the annual consumer price index for Ontario, as reported by Statistics Canada, and that the increase fall between 1% and 2.5%.

I have to ask: Is this bill really changing? If we take a look at the facts over the past 10 years, the average rent increase was 2.1%, and over the last five years, the average was just 1.8%. That means that the current formula for rental increase guidelines already keeps the annual figure between what's proposed here in this legislation.

Let's go back just for a second to the 3.1% increase for 2012 that caused the minister to table this legislation in the first place. I'll remind members that the guideline, just last year, was 0.7%. So when you average it out over two years, you get a 1.9% increase, which, again, falls into the range being proposed in this legislation.

Let's call a spade a spade. Let's tell Ontarians the truth. Bill 19 is nothing more than the minister's weak attempt to convince the tenants' groups she enraged last year that she's really on their side. But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that it's more than obvious that the minister hasn't fooled anyone. In fact, many tenants' groups have come out and called this piece of legislation what it really is: yet another empty Liberal proposal that fails to see the big picture. The funny part is, the Liberals think they can fool all of us, but we on this side of the House, and a growing number of Ontarians—yes, a growing number—know that the Liberals only like to give the appearance they are doing the heavy lifting necessary when they're really holding four-pound dumbbells.

Take Kenn Hale, the director of advocacy and legal services at the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario. In his response to this bill, he asked, "Why is this government doing so little to protect the homes of hundreds of thousands of tenants after promising so much more?" Mr. Speaker, that's a great question. Why do the Liberals say one thing and do another, especially when we have a real opportunity before us to roll up our sleeves and actually do something substantive to help tenant households? Unfortunately, Bill 19 doesn't offer anything substantive for families in need, nor does it provide any relief for landlords in this province who have seen their costs continually rise.

Part of the solution for making sure Ontarians have affordable housing also includes consulting landlords, particularly small business landlords. The landlords I've met with in my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga are not the rich, fat-cat, wine-sipping, Cadillac-driving folks that Liberals so often like to portray them as, belittling landlords. These are average, hard-working business people just trying to make an honest living and help the people who can't afford to buy a home. But after seeing hydro rates soar roughly 85% since 2003, many of them are questioning whether they'll be able to continue to invest in the Ontario residential real estate market. Unsurprisingly, Bill 19 totally fails to take into consideration this reality.

Since the minister forgot, consider the costs for businesses in this bill. I'd like to highlight some of them, in fact. First off, the cost of operating rental units rises up to 6% every year. Instead of consulting with the small business people, the minister, in typical Liberal fashion, just picked a number out of the air to cap rental rates at. In this case, it just so happened to be at 2.5%. Consider that the average two-bedroom monthly rent, adjusted for inflation, has edged down to \$840. That's \$43 less a month than what landlords were getting back in 2002. Once you factor in diminishing rental returns and all of the additional costs landlords need to cope with, like soaring hydro rates, it doesn't take long to see why many of them choose not to purchase rentals properties in Ontario anymore. In many cases, it just doesn't make financial sense.

You would think that an industry facing these many challenges would be consulted on government bills that

specifically affect its business. But as usual, the Liberals introduced this bill without even talking to Ontario landlords.

I'd like to share what the president and CEO of the Federation of Rental-housing Providers said in reaction to this bill. He said, "The government is unilaterally imposing a cap without any discussion with an entire industry and is initiating a policy that will be particularly devastating for small landlords." He went on to say, "We understand the government's efforts to mitigate price volatility, but setting an arbitrary price ceiling fails to recognize that housing industry costs, like repairs and maintenance, are not subject to any price caps." Obviously, the Liberal government neglected to assess these challenges, which, of course, isn't surprising.

I'll take an opportunity to end there, and I'll address my final comments in my wrap-up.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to welcome the Ontario Cattlemen's Association to Queen's Park to join us here today. The PC caucus appreciated the opportunity to meet with them this morning, and I hope all members will join them for a great lunch of corn-fed beef on the front lawn of Queen's Park. We look forward to seeing them all there.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I'd like to introduce Andrew Streisfield, who is going to be a summer intern this summer at Queen's Park.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you three of the pages from just the last session: Manak, Georgia and Constantine. They're all with us in the House here today.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to welcome a special delegation from Ukraine that consists of representatives from national, regional and local levels of government in Ukraine. The delegation is making a stop at Queen's Park amidst a cross-country tour of Canada hosted by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and funded by CIDA. Today, the delegation will be talking with my municipal affairs and housing officials about local governance and how to better foster municipal economic development within the municipal sector in Ukraine.

Welcome to Queen's Park. Vitayu.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to welcome Hanover's Holy Family School here. They're not in the House yet, but they are on their way, and I'm going to meet them on the staircase for a photo.

Hon. Michael Chan: I would like to welcome Cecil Fong and Andrea Wilson to the House. They are visiting from my constituency office. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I have a guest this morning from my home office in St. Thomas, giving great service to our constituents, Whitney McWilliam.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: It's my pleasure to introduce Rumana Deena from Scarborough-Rouge River. Rumana is the mom of Tameem Hassan, a page who is with us in the Legislature.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce today my wife, Jane, her friend Jane Rock, and our other friends Ray Johnston and Connie Johnston. These are our friends from Moncton and my wife.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd like to introduce the president of the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, Dan Darling, and directors Matt Bowman, Rick Hobbs, Tim Fugard and John Lunn. As the member from Oxford indicated, there will be a barbecue out front, and we'd like to welcome everybody to come out and enjoy some of Ontario's best beef.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to introduce the family of Stavroula Georgiadis, who's one of our pages: Maria Kanelopoulos, her mother; George Georgiadis, her father; and Panayioti Georgiadis, her brother. If I got the pronunciation wrong, I apologize, but welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In the Speaker's gallery, from the great riding of Brant, we have joining us today a "lunch with Dave" recipient, Mr. Brian Wittiveen and Barb Joiner. We're glad that they're here today. Thank you for being with us.

Also in the Speaker's gallery, my summer student at the constituency office, Leanne Winkels. Thank you for joining us, Leanne.

We still have some more guests. The member from Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. They're just going through security right now, but John Lunn is here today. John Lunn is a very active beef farmer in the riding of Peterborough and on the board of directors of the Ontario Cattlemen's Association.

Of course, I remind everybody in the House that there's a terrific barbecue that will commence at about 11:45. Get there early and you'll enjoy some very delicious Ontario beef.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Premier. Premier, since October, we've been calling on your government to legislate a public sector wage freeze. This is about leadership. It's about sending a message to credit rating agencies, international investors and businesses that you understand the gravity of Ontario's fiscal crisis and you're prepared to take action.

Tomorrow we vote on a bill that will legislate a public sector wage freeze. Why won't you stand with us and vote in favour of it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question from my honourable colleague and the opportunity to engage in this very important discussion.

I want to begin by saying that I think we share the same objective. We both understand that more than half the money that we invest as a government on behalf of Ontarians goes into compensation. But I think it's important, when it comes to addressing compensation, that we adopt a methodology, that we choose a way which is in fact going to work.

The approach being promoted by my honourable colleague and her caucus is not going to work, I say with the greatest respect. It is simplistic. It has been rejected by all the other provinces and the federal government, notwithstanding varying political stripes. We have chosen an approach that will in fact work. It will in fact get the job done and is respectful of our labour partners at the same time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The fact of the matter, Premier, is that this approach has worked in many other jurisdictions, and you do have the ability to take action and to do this in pressing fiscal circumstances. And as you yourself have pointed out many times in your justification for cutting health spending, we're in pressing fiscal circumstances right now. This bill will accomplish a fair, equal wage freeze for all public sector employees and it's going to save the province \$2 billion.

Premier, credit rating agencies, investors and the rest of the country are watching our every move. It's time to show leadership and do something for Ontario's long-term benefit. Will you stop playing political games and take the steps that Ontario so desperately needs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would say to my honourable colleague that they are the ones engaging in gamesmanship, Speaker. This is too serious a matter and there is too much at stake, too much dependent upon the success of our fiscal plan, for us not to choose a method which is in fact going to work.

Again I say to my honourable colleague, she should ask herself, and I recommend that all her colleagues ask themselves, why did the federal government choose to reject the approach that they're advocating? Why did all the other provinces—NDP, PC and Liberal provinces—reject that particular approach? They rejected it because it won't work.

Our responsibility, a heavy one that we owe to the people of Ontario, is to do something that works. We've committed to a compensation restraint package, Speaker. We will do everything necessary to achieve that, but we won't use the approach adopted by my honourable colleague, because it won't work.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Speaker, I can assure the Premier, through you, that there are no political games being played on this side. We realize this is a desperately serious situation.

Isn't the threat of another—the fourth—downgrade serious enough for you to take action? Isn't Don Drum-

mond's dire warning about a \$30-billion deficit and a \$400-billion debt enough for you to take ownership of this fiscal crisis and lead this province?

Premier, I'm beginning to wonder what it's going to take for you to start taking measured, prudent and substantive action to start getting this province back on track. It's time for you to do what everybody else knows you need to do. Won't you stand in your place and take action and vote in favour of a legislated public sector wage freeze?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We're taking action now. It's not easy, but we're taking it nonetheless. We're into difficult discussions with our teachers, our partners there. We're into difficult discussions with our doctors, our partners there as well, Speaker.

The approach advocated by my honourable colleague was one that was adopted by BC a number of years ago that ended up costing BC taxpayers \$85 million for, I think, some 9,000 public sector workers. We have over a million public sector workers in Ontario. I'm afraid to think of the penalties that would be exacted upon Ontario taxpayers, were we to adopt the methodology promoted by my honourable colleague.

There's a sure way to get this done, Speaker. There's a balanced, thoughtful and effective way to get this done, and that's exactly what we're doing here.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, on Monday I asked the Premier why he and his cabinet sold out Ontario's air ambulance service to Dr. Chris Mazza for \$1, against the advice of senior civil servants and legal advice from the Attorney General. The Premier refused to answer, as he has refused to answer most questions about the Ornge scandal over the last number of months.

Given the warnings about potential financial abuse and risk to patients, and seeing that we're now reaping the results of that wrong decision, I believe the people of this province deserve to hear from the Premier as to why he and his cabinet approved that faulty proposal by Dr. Mazza.

1040

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

Hon. John Milloy: The honourable member is aware that this is a matter which is right now before the public accounts committee.

Every member of this House would acknowledge that there were problems with Ornge. That is why the Minister of Health took fast action—

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: —when she was alerted to those problems. She took a number of measures in terms of new administration at Ornge and forensic auditors that came in. Unfortunately, the Ontario Provincial Police had to be called in.

But the most important thing—

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: —is that we have a piece of legislation before this Legislature, Bill 50. I think the honourable member owes it to the people of Ontario to tell them why he is blocking an important piece of legislation which would strengthen Ornge and address many of the concerns that he raises—

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

It's starting. A question gets asked, and there's heckling even on the side of the people asking the questions, and heckling happening on the side of people giving answers. Even though the minister is sitting right there, it's getting hard to hear. Bring it down.

Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I think what's owed the people of this province is a response from the Premier, who ultimately is responsible for the decisions that are made in this government. Seeing as the Premier is not willing to respond in this House, and seeing as his government House leader continues to tell us that these proceedings should be conducted in the public accounts committee, I want to put the Premier on notice that I will be putting a motion forward at the public accounts committee to call the Premier to come and testify at the committee.

Interjections.

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

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, if the honourable member insists upon holding hearings on the floor of the Legislature, then let's get into it. Let's talk about what happened at the Oshawa airport. Let's talk about the fact that two weeks ago—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will now do two things: Remind you that I will individually identify you, and ask that you do not interrupt when I'm standing. And the finger-pointing is not necessary.

Minister.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, a former Ornge executive, a senior aviation expert, said he had opposed the move to Oshawa airport. Despite that, we know that the member for Whitby-Oshawa not only lobbied to get a base in her riding—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland–Quinte West, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: —but she also posed for a snazzy photo in her Ornge helicopter. We know that the member from Durham also lobbied—

Interjections.

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

Hon. John Milloy: —sending a letter to the Minister of Health—

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

Final supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: The government House leader tells us not to conduct the hearings here. I'm willing to com-

ply with that. That's why we'll be putting forward a motion to call the Premier to the public accounts committee so that we can hear from him once and for all, without the interruption and the rhetoric from his government House leader.

We want to know from the Premier: Why did he and his cabinet approve this proposal by Dr. Mazza, against the recommendation of senior civil servants—and we have the mess on our hands today. The public deserves to know from this Premier.

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

Interjections.

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

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I'll continue the story of the Oshawa airport and Ornge. Members may want to review the Toronto Star this morning. Three emails obtained by the Star imply that one Jim Flaherty, the federal finance minister—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Peterborough, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: —was interested in where Ornge was going to be—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Huron-Bruce, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: I quote, Mr. Speaker: “The first email, dated Saturday, June 11, and sent by Ornge staffer Matthew Ellis”—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean-Carleton, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: —“to Lisa Kirbie, the agency’s director of government relations”—and a former Tory staffer—“said: ‘Jim Flaherty is eagerly awaiting a decision on whether or not we’ll be going to Oshawa.’”

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. The government’s 300-page omnibus Bill 55 will amend 69 pieces of government legislation. How many can the Premier name?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The 17 schedules in the budget, which are all referenced—and I will submit to the Legislature the page references in the budget—have all been clearly outlined. Fully one third of the budget bill deals with relatively modest changes to improve services at ServiceOntario for all Ontarians.

We have tabled a budget that protects investments in health care, protects investments in education, freezes the corporate tax rate, as was requested by the third party, and applies a new tax on Ontarians who earn more than \$500,000. The budget is comprehensive. It’s actually relatively a small budget bill when you remove the sec-

tions that deal strictly with ServiceOntario. It’s the right plan for a better future for Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: I’m sure that the Premier and finance minister would agree that changes like this, these wholesale changes, require scrutiny. In Ottawa, the federal Conservatives are pushing their own omnibus bill and the Premier’s federal counterparts in the Liberal Party are asking serious questions about whether this is good for democracy in Canada. One MPP said that the environmental changes “all amount to an incoherent plan buried in a budget bill so as not to see the light of day.” Who was this person? It was the Premier’s seatmate in Ottawa South, David McGuinty.

Does the finance minister think his counterparts in Ottawa, including the Premier’s brother, are wrong about the threat of changes buried in the omnibus bill, or does he agree that we need to take adequate time to consider important legislation?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I don’t recall the Prime Minister of Canada sitting down with the leader of the NDP to discuss their budget and have extensive negotiations. You may not be aware of this: Those discussions are going on this morning. So it’s a very different situation.

To the member’s point: Let’s review Bill 55. Schedule 1 deals with ambulance services collective bargaining. It’s referenced on pages 74 and 75 of the budget. Schedule 2 deals with the Assessment Act—requests made by municipalities; page 264 of the budget. The Automobile Insurance Rate Stabilization Act, which is designed to keep auto insurance rates low, is referenced on pages 55 to 59 and 264 of the budget. That’s in there.

Please don’t stop these important reforms that have been asked of us by consumers, by municipalities, to build that—

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

Mr. Michael Prue: New Democrats are very proud of what we’ve achieved in this budget process. We worked hard to make changes that would make life better for parents who need child care or patients waiting for health care, and we made the budget a little more fair by asking high-income earners to pay more. Is the government ready to admit that their 300-page omnibus bill can be improved as well? If so, if you think it can be improved, will you commit to enough time to closely look at it and make those improvements?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We did that on two occasions yesterday: once here in question period, and the government House leader tabled a motion that provides for extensive hearings. You should be proud of this bill, and that’s why you should vote for it; you had an input into it.

Let me tell you what else you’re slowing down. Let’s talk about some of these other omnibus things that are detrimental. Schedule 29 deals with implementing building Highway 407 east, which will create hundreds of jobs. We need this passed to get people working, to build that highway. What do you have against that?

Let's look at some others. Here are two extremely controversial parts of the bill: schedules 25 and 26, which deal with the Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act and the Funeral Directors and Establishments Act, changes that that industry has been asking—

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

1050

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Jonah Schein: This question is to the Premier. In 1993, the Legislature passed the Environment Bill of Rights. It passed with the support of Liberal MPPs, including some cabinet ministers who are still here. Under the Environmental Bill of Rights in Ontario, citizens have a right to comment on important legal, regulatory and policy changes that can affect the quality of our air, our water, our lands and our wildlife. Does this government still believe in this principle?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Naturally, Mr. Speaker, the government believes in that and has, on a number of issues, engaged in very extensive consultations. We're always interested in hearing from those who reside in the province of Ontario. We even hear from people outside of Ontario. We don't think that somehow there's a conspiracy going on that there are people being funded from outside of Ontario. We believe in hearing from all of these folks. So, yes, we think it's extremely important.

That's why when we have hearings in committees, for instance, there's an opportunity for people to make their representations on those occasions. They can send emails to us. They can send letters to us. They have individual meetings. So the kind of engagement that's taking place is very extensive.

I welcome the thoughts of the member of the opposition on matters related to the environment and, indeed, any other matters that come before the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jonah Schein: Back to the Premier: Environmental stakeholders actually disagree with what you've said here.

The government's 300-page omnibus bill includes significant changes to many of Ontario's environmental laws, yet this government is effectively bypassing the public consultation and transparency required by the Environmental Bill of Rights. If this government does believe that citizens should have a right to comment on important policy changes that can affect the quality of our air, our water and our land, why haven't they put these changes through the Environmental Bill of Rights and allowed for true public consultation?

Hon. James J. Bradley: What I'm very worried about is, a Conservative member of the Legislature brought forward a bill which would, in effect, some people said, gut the Endangered Species Act. When the vote came to the House, overwhelmingly members of the NDP caucus

joined with members of the Conservative caucus to try to gut the Endangered Species Act. There were a couple of exceptions—the member for Beaches—East York and yourself—but you were unable to persuade your colleagues to stand up for the environment first instead of some kind of convenience. I'm going to report that to Ruth Grier. I'm going to report that to Bud Wildman.

People in the environmental community are wondering what's happening. You voted against the pesticide ban for cosmetic purposes. You voted against the Endangered Species Act.

I am genuinely concerned with—

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

Mr. Jonah Schein: Back to the Premier: You know, we have heard from Bud Wildman, we've heard from folks. We're talking about a government bill that's going to hurt the environment.

The principles of consultation are very basic, and they've worked very well for over 20 years. Citizens have a right to see and to comment on changes that affect the environment. When will this government listen to the people of Ontario?

Hon. James J. Bradley: In fact, that's exactly what has been happening. You will see that the legislation is coming forward and the regulations and the policies are reflective of what we've heard from the people of Ontario.

I can tell you that the environmental community out there is very concerned about the new direction of the NDP. Apparently, the environmental wing of the NDP has been hijacked. Now there's little difference between the Conservative Party and the NDP on issues that come before the House. They're one big happy family against the environment. This is a change from what used to happen in years gone by. I know there must be a tear coming down the eye of my friend Bud Wildman and a frown of concern from my friend Ruth Grier that the NDP has abandoned the environment.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I have a very simple question to the Premier, and I want to make this as simple as possible. All I really would like is either yes or no.

Will the Premier agree to come to the public accounts committee to answer questions on this important issue? Because the people of this province are waiting to hear from the man himself who's responsible for the decisions that were made to give air ambulance service in Ontario to Dr. Chris Mazza.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'll be delighted to speak to the question. Let me say, Speaker, that we've spent a considerable amount of time and devoted a lot of energy and committee time—and appropriately so—to addressing this issue. But I think it's important to distinguish between the perspective held by my honourable colleague opposite and ours on this side of the House.

I would suggest that a confused public might pay attention to objective, dispassionate, arm's-length, non-partisan, reliable officials in this matter. That's why we had the auditor take a look at this. I think it's important that we rely on his observations and his recommendations.

We've also invited the Ontario Provincial Police in to conduct their own investigation, and I think we should await the outcome of that investigation again. I think that's the appropriate thing to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Well, Speaker, I guess I didn't make it simple enough. We have a very straightforward question for the Premier. If he has been watching the proceedings of the committee, we're hearing a great deal of information—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: —about decisions that were made to entrust Ontario's air ambulance service to people who were not competent to carry out that program. We heard that again today.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence, come to order.

Mr. Frank Klees: So we would like to know from the Premier, given that he has refused to answer direct questions here, will he agree to come before the public accounts committee in response to a motion that I will be filing to call him to that committee?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I'll say it again and a little bit more directly. My honourable colleague's interest in this is purely partisan. We have a responsibility in government to uphold the public interest.

Again I say to the public, I think we can and should rely on the auditor's report. I think we can and should rely on the investigation being conducted by the Ontario Provincial Police. I think we can and should rely on some of the measures that we've already put in place.

We have replaced the leadership at Ornge. We have put in place a new performance agreement so that we can lend better direction and bring more transparency and more oversight to bear.

We also have a bill on the floor of this House, Speaker, which even objectively will improve our ability—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: —to ensure we get the very best out of Ornge from a variety of different perspectives. Again I say to my honourable colleague, if his interest is truly the public interest, then let's move forward with the bill that's already before this House.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est également pour le premier ministre. Today, Tom Rothfels, a former Ornge

executive, said that he was so concerned with the operation at Ornge that he actually called one of the board members of Ornge, although he had been forbidden from doing that. Jacob Blum testified that he also became so concerned that he went directly to the ministry and talked to ministry officials. Earlier this week, we saw an internal memo from the legal department of the Ministry of Health, expressing deep concern about the Ornge model.

It seems to me that everyone who became familiar with the situation at Ornge saw the red flag, rang the alarm bell. Can the Premier explain why the minister didn't listen?

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

Hon. John Milloy: There is no secret that action has been taken to correct many of the concerns that have been raised at Ornge. But, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: No, the opposition is right. The final piece of the puzzle is Bill 50, and the question is, why won't they let it pass?

But if the member wants to talk about concerns, what about all the concerns that were raised about Oshawa airport? Despite that, Mr. Speaker, we saw lobbying by Jim Flaherty. We saw lobbying by local Conservative members.

Again to quote from the Toronto Star, Matthew Ellis, another former Conservative—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I haven't given up, and I won't. I'll wait those extra seconds.

Minister.

1100

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, Matthew Ellis, a prominent Conservative who was working for Ornge, sent an email on June 18, 2011, stating, "Any answer on Oshawa base? I'm being confronted by two Flahertys, Chris Alexander," the Conservative MP for the riding of Ajax–Pickering, "and several candidates," at an event that he attended. I think that if concerns were raised about Oshawa, we want to know, why did the Conservative Party continue to lobby?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is directed at the Premier. He was delighted to answer questions from the previous member. I would be delighted if he answered my question.

The problems at Ornge were apparent to anyone who looked and to anyone who asked, from salaries that were out of control to kickbacks that Mr. Rothfels described as very concerning. The ministry ignored its own legal department; they ignored executives at Ornge; they even ignored questions from the MPPs in this Legislature. I guess alarm bells were loud enough, but as long as there were insiders like Alfred Apps and Don Guy operating behind the scene, nobody was listening. This is what it looks like from this side of the House.

Why does the Premier think that the minister's excuses are credible?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm quite frankly a little astonished by the member's question. We've discussed here numerous times in this Legislature the correspondence that was received by the New Democratic Party early on in the process about Ornge, and yet they failed to raise any red flags. We've talked about the fact that the prominent Conservatives that were working at Ornge brought in Kelly Mitchell with the express purpose of lobbying the Conservative Party, lobbying members. All they did is pose for snazzy pictures and continue to lobby to have it come to the Oshawa airport.

The concerns that the honourable member is talking about are based on information that was received by the leader of the opposition, the leader of the New Democratic Party, by herself and by many, many members across the floor in the Progressive Conservative and NDP caucuses.

ASSISTANCE TO FLOOD VICTIMS

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Over the last several days there has been severe flooding in Thunder Bay. In fact, the city of Thunder Bay has declared a state of emergency. And in fact, two other communities in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Conmee and Oliver Paipoonge, have both declared states of emergency. There has been severe, widespread flooding. Hundreds of basements have been flooded out. Large sections of highway have been completely removed, and power and gas turned off to hundreds of homes.

Minister, we know water flows can become dangerous and very high very quickly. We've got a number of dams in our regions that have released water or will be releasing water, and that can have dramatic impacts.

Can the minister please inform this House what our government is doing to assist the municipalities affected and to ensure the safety of the residents?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I want to thank my colleague for the question. The member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan and I are working very closely together to provide whatever support we can to the municipalities that are impacted by this major flooding crisis. There's no question that the enormous amount of rain that resulted in the declarations of emergency by Thunder Bay, Conmee and Oliver Paipoonge required many agencies to work closely together on an urgent basis to deal with this crisis.

Certainly, the Ministry of Natural Resources is playing a vital role in providing up-to-date and immediate information to the Lakehead Region Conservation Authority, the OPP and Ontario Power Generation regarding ever-changing water levels in our area watersheds. Through our Surface Water Monitoring Centre we can accurately monitor and we can predict water levels where flooding may take place, particularly as river and lake levels crest. We will continue to work closely with all of our partners to provide any assistance as requested.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Minister, I thank you for that. There still remains a very serious situation. The ground is saturated. It can't take any more water and we don't know what will happen with the weather over the course of the next several days. If the region is to experience further significant rainfall, it could force water levels to rise very quickly and potentially displace hundreds of residents, creating challenges for emergency vehicles and school buses, and the list goes on.

The residents in the affected communities need to know that they will have somewhere to go in the event that they are displaced. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Natural Resources, what will the government do to ensure that an emergency precautionary plan is in place should the flood situation worsen? Will there be support in place to help the residents of Thunder Bay–Atikokan?

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

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: We always take great interest in emergency declaration. Water flows and levels can become dangerous very quickly and without notice. That's why it is of the utmost importance that Ontarians in the area stay clear of waterways and be careful on roads. All residents should take heed of flood warnings on municipal websites and contact local officials for regular updates.

Emergency Management Ontario will continue to contact the affected communities daily to ensure we can help address any challenges they may face. With that said, EMO will work with our emergency partners, monitor the situation very closely and make the necessary preliminary preparations so we are ready in case the northwestern Ontario flood situation escalates. If need be, the OPP will go door to door to advise people to stay out of a dangerous situation.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Minister of Health. On November 28, emergency dispatchers failed to quickly deploy land ambulances to a site of a fatal helicopter crash in Waterloo region. Even though 911 dispatchers knew the location of the crash three minutes after it happened, it took them 12 minutes to relay that information to emergency crews.

As the Waterloo Region Record recently pointed out, it's easy to imagine scenarios in which the inability to quickly dispatch emergency crews could lead to "a crash victim experiencing needless pain—or even ... dying."

Minister, are you even aware of the problems with emergency dispatching in our community of Kitchener–Waterloo?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I can tell you is that patient safety is our highest priority when it comes to our health care system and when it comes to our ambulance system. We investigate every incident thoroughly and we investigate it carefully, and where there are changes that

ought to be made, Speaker, we make sure those changes are made.

When it comes to ambulance safety, we understand that response is sometimes a matter of life and death, and we take these situations extremely seriously.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Harris: Again to the minister: Since 2007, Waterloo region council has received seven reports calling for emergency dispatching to be streamlined. One study in 2009 concluded that a streamlined system could reduce emergency response times significantly. In a more recent study, former police chief Larry Gravill called for dispatching services to be handled under one roof, as this would improve information-sharing and response times.

The people of Kitchener-Waterloo need the province to step up to the plate, but as the Waterloo Region Record recently pointed out, so far the Liberal government “has been an unwilling partner” in making the necessary changes to streamline emergency dispatch services.

Minister, will you take action to fix our community’s broken emergency dispatch system, or will you continue to give the residents of Kitchener-Waterloo more excuses?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I can assure the member opposite is that I would be more than happy to work with him to address an issue in his community, as I am with all members of this House, regardless of where in this House they sit.

I can tell you, Speaker, that we are monitoring dispatch response times very closely. We are making improvements to the system. One of those improvements that we’re looking very carefully at is simultaneous dispatch so that responders get there as quickly as possible, whether they’re fire or EMS.

There’s work to be done, and we are doing that work. I’d be more than happy to work with the member opposite.

1110

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Jonah Schein: This question is for the Premier. The government has repeatedly stated that the Eglinton LRT will be completed by 2020, but according to a new review by the American Public Transportation Association, this line won’t be in operation until 2022 or 2023. That’s because Metrolinx, by going with a P3 model, is shutting down the design of underground stations until they can find a private sector contract that won’t be awarded until 2014.

Why is the government putting an untested and ideologically driven preference for a public-private partnership first instead of the goal of getting the LRT completed as soon as possible to provide relief for gridlocked commuters?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for the question because it is topical in the media.

Metrolinx and Infrastructure Ontario are recognized for their expertise in delivering major transit and transportation projects. Infrastructure Ontario indeed has, over the last five years, completed 55 projects worth \$22 billion, virtually all on time and many of them under budget.

We’re extremely proud of the investments we’re making in transit. Our Toronto caucus has been able to deliver \$8.4 billion for four transit projects in the city of Toronto. And, Mr. Speaker, it’s not all about those four LRT projects either. Transit now under construction in the Toronto area: Toronto-York-Spadina subway extension, Eglinton crosstown, Union Station GO and subway stations, Pearson-Union Station air-rail link, GO Transit Georgetown rail corridor and many others. We’re proud of our accomplishments—

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

Mr. Jonah Schein: In response to the Minister of Transportation: To the contrary, this government’s record on light rail in Toronto is one of false promises, it’s one of cutbacks and it’s one of delays.

Now Metrolinx’s P3 model is causing further delays, not only on the Eglinton line. The American Public Transportation Association review says that construction on the Sheppard East line could start today, instead of 2014, if it wasn’t for the requirements of Metrolinx’s financing model.

Why won’t the government direct Metrolinx to show flexibility in its delivery model and start construction immediately on the Sheppard East line?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The reality is that the TTC, Metrolinx and Infrastructure Ontario are working in partnership to advance these particular projects, which are urgently required. We are determined to deliver these and get the shovels in the ground. We have a deadline that we are going to meet. Metrolinx and Infrastructure Ontario are confident that they can meet that deadline. It is a tight deadline but they’re confident that they can meet it.

What we are tired of, Mr. Speaker, is the ideological bent that the NDP want to put on just about every issue. This is not about triple Ps. This is about partnership. It’s about tremendous investments in transit in the greater Toronto area. We’re proud of it.

We will be on time. We will be under budget.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: My question today is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, I know you’ve often spoken in this House about the customer service standard for the AODA. This being accessibility week, I am very pleased to ask another question this week about the AODA.

I continue to inform my constituents in Pickering-Scarborough East about all five standards proposed, and the customer service standard one, of course, is already being implemented in our great province.

Could the minister please tell the House more about the employment standard under the AODA?

Hon. John Milloy: I thank the honourable member for the question, and I'm pleased to take this opportunity to inform members of this House about the AODA employment standard. The member's question is a timely one.

The first provision of the employment standard came into effect on January 1 of this year. This provision requires that all organizations work with their employees, including those with disabilities, to determine what kind of information they might need in case of an emergency. The provision further requires that organizations provide their employees with disabilities with emergency response information that's tailored to each employee's needs, and make public emergency information accessible upon request.

As I've often said, Mr. Speaker, this is obviously the right thing to do, but it's also about giving employers the opportunity to tap into a whole pool of individuals, persons with disabilities, who can serve the needs that they have as employers, as employees with their companies.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Thanks to the minister for sharing this information with the House. It's good to hear that provisions help ensure that all employees, including those with disabilities, are safe in case of an emergency.

I hear from people all the time, in my riding and throughout the province, about the need to increase the employment rates of persons with disabilities. We know that they have higher retention rates and higher education rates. It is about changing attitudes and working towards removing all barriers, including barriers and negative attitudes about persons with disabilities and employment. This is a real opportunity for business, as well as being the right thing to do.

Can the minister please share with the House an example of true accessibility in the workplace?

Hon. John Milloy: I thank the member. Mr. Speaker, at the risk of being parochial, I'd like to cite an example from my own riding of Kitchener Centre. Scott and Jamie Burton of Dolphin Digital Technologies pride themselves on their knowledgeable and skilled team, a team that was built using their own knowledge that inclusive hiring is smart hiring.

Their commitment to hiring the best talent, regardless of disability, and accommodating each employee's unique needs has really paid off. In the last two years, Dolphin has had zero staff turnover and only one sick day taken, numbers that are unheard of for most businesses. Says Jamie of their hiring practices, in a recent interview, "There's a two-and-a-half-times return on investment for hiring a person with a disability. Put aside the myths and look at the benefits."

I'd like to just congratulate Dolphin Digital Technologies for their leadership in this very, very important area.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Todd Smith: It's to the Minister of Finance this morning: Minister, you've done some creative accounting with your government's economic record this week in the House, but here's a number that you can't run away from. It's 16.5—16.5% of Ontarians under 25 are out of work. That's roughly one in every six in the province of Ontario. It's almost three points higher than the national average. I talk to parents all the time, in Prince Edward-Hastings and across the province, whose children are going out to the oil sands, or wherever they can get a job, and it's usually not here in Ontario.

Minister, with one in six young people in Ontario desperate for a job, why did your government bring in a budget that makes it harder to do business in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Youth unemployment here in Ontario and across Canada—indeed, throughout the Western world—is always a challenge; it has been. The numbers are too high. That's why, in this budget, we increased funding for youth employment, summer jobs, and I think that's why we need to pass the budget.

By the way, I remind the member opposite that 42% of new jobs created in Canada have been created here in Ontario. There remains much to be done. We have taken appropriate steps to help with that.

By the way, we're very proud of our investments in education, which you and your party have voted against. A better education, higher graduation rates, more post-secondary achievement: Those are the important determinants of employment for young people. That member and his party have tried to block every one of those important initiatives.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's great to have an educated workforce, but you need the jobs, and we need a Minister of Finance who can create the environment in the province of Ontario so that one out of six isn't going without a job.

The fact is, Minister, you're responsible for Ontario's youth unemployment being roughly twice that of Alberta and Saskatchewan, and six points higher than youth unemployment in the province of British Columbia. The Ontario of opportunity that I moved to 20 years ago and that flourished in the 1990s has become the Ontario of mediocrity because of your tenure as the Minister of Finance.

Minister, why is it acceptable to you that Ontario's youth unemployment is twice that of the western provinces?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This summer, 100,000 students will find work through our summer jobs strategy. There is no doubt that more needs to be done. But what we know is, those important investments in education, whether it is in skills training through our community colleges; through more apprenticeship programs; through higher graduation rates; through higher levels of post-secondary attainment—those are the determinants of long-term growth and short-term jobs for our young people.

There remains much to be done. We remain committed to these important concepts. The young people of Ontario know that they have a friend in this government.

1120

BEAR CONTROL

Ms. Sarah Campbell: To the Minister of Natural Resources: Earlier this month, the Minister of Natural Resources announced the cancellation of the Bear Wise trapping and relocation program without notice. At that time, the minister said police organizations would take over the responsibility for emergency bear calls, something that the police immediately denied. Since the cancellation of the trapping and relocation program, there have been close calls in North Bay, Timmins and even Burlington.

On the Victoria Day weekend, residents of Sioux Lookout frantically called both the MNR and police with reports of at least one dangerous bear, and for 24 hours nobody responded. As expected, the bear attacked a person.

Minister, your decision to cancel the program without an alternate plan in place has jeopardized public safety. Will you agree today to reverse that decision?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks very much for the question. Certainly the Bear Wise program does continue, and may I say, Ontario is the only province that actually has a Bear Wise program at all. We are continuing to support it, obviously, through the work our MNR technicians are doing and the other work that we're doing, working with our provincial police and with our local police forces. And may I say, we do have a protocol, working with the OPP and local police forces, that if there is indeed an emergency, people should call the local police. I understand that they'll be working closely with all those people in the municipalities.

May I also say—perhaps I'll respond in the supplementary—but in terms of the situation that happened north of Sioux Lookout, obviously our concerns go out to the gentleman who was attacked by the bear. I look forward to having an opportunity in the supplementary to speak more specifically to that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Minister, we know what happened. The Bear Wise hotline even acknowledged they've received a number of calls from residents but still did nothing.

Residents across northern Ontario are scared for their safety. For example, children in Sioux Lookout are being forced to stay indoors at recess because of public safety concerns.

Minister, you have offered no solutions or alternatives. The problem will not go away on its own. Will you reinstate the trapping and relocation program today until such a time as a realistic plan is in place to ensure public safety?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Certainly, it's important for me to point out immediately that indeed, if it's deter-

mined by the police that there's a situation where the trapping or the tranquilizing, immobilizing of a bear is necessary, our bear technicians and our senior staff will be there to work with the local police. In all those situations, we are going to continue to do that. Again, we are the only province that has that problem.

In terms of the situation that happened north of Sioux Lookout, the member knows this well. It happened 100 kilometres north of Sioux Lookout. Certainly that would be described as bear country. There would have been no ability for anyone to get up there to deal with that situation. The gentleman was in a specific situation where the bear managed to get to him.

But as always, our people will be there. Our ministry will be there. Our—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: —will be there when the police determine that indeed an emergency situation is occurring. We'll be there to work with them, with the community and others to see the situation is handled as best as it can be.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Ontarians are facing a new challenge that requires them to have the right skills and talents to thrive in our new economy. That's why we need to focus on identifying underserved labour markets, so we can help Ontario train for high-demands jobs.

I've met with several constituents in my riding that need to change their jobs. Some Ontarians are looking for new employment or working fewer than 20 hours per week. This often puts an individual in a difficult position, requiring them to find several part-time jobs at a lower pay scale and below their skill level. Our government could help these Ontarians by providing the support they require to upgrade and acquire new skills.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities: How is the minister going to ensure that we prepare our workers for the right job with the right amount of government support?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member for his question and also for his advocacy in his constituency on this, because I know he has raised the awareness quite significantly in his community amongst displaced workers.

Mr. Speaker, we have a very excellent program that has been imitated now in many parts of the US and other parts of the world, which is called Second Career. During the global recession out of the US, I think many of us are aware that many people lost their jobs. We've recovered over 500,000 jobs, but a quarter of a million Ontarians lost jobs during that. Eighty-one percent of those people who lost jobs did not have a high school education. While we have several hundred thousand jobs now created net of that, we have to upskill the people who lost their workforce to get some college or university

education. We have about 62,000 people right now who get \$28,000 to go to our excellent colleges, universities and private career colleges to get re-skilled for the job market.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Mr. Speaker, it's truly unfortunate to see hard-working people who are committed to supporting their families and communities be put out of work. But we live in a global, competitive economy, and that's why it's important for our government to attract and retain good jobs in Ontario.

Our government must be effective in immediately providing assistance to workers hard hit by layoffs and plant closures so they can quickly access the existing Employment Ontario programs and service. We set up action centres where recently laid-off workers go to receive employment and training services. They are generally the result of a contract agreement reached between our government and the company, as well as the union representing the workers and the community.

How can laid-off workers access Second Career through the action centres we've set up to help workers find employment and training services?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We have over 300 employment service offices in Ontario that are in every single rural, northern and urban community in the south, and they can apply there.

We are investing over \$1 billion a year in employment programs, to great success. As a matter of fact, right now there are more than 55,000 folks in the Second Career program alone. This has an excellent track record because three out of four people who go through this program get a higher-paying job. I think that's an incredible accomplishment. This is also helping the federal government, which wants to get people back to work.

Simply demanding that people take jobs that are low-paying jobs means they're likely going to be back unemployed again. Our strategy is to actually raise the skill level, get people better-paying jobs, increase higher income earning and get people back. I think the contrast between the Conservative approach and our approach is dramatic, and I'm hoping we can work with the federal government to—

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

PENSION PLANS

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is to the Minister of Finance. The McGuinty government is denying Ontarians the ability to opt into pooled registered pension plans. Instead, the government says that increasing mandatory CPP contributions is the best way to go. The CFIB is advocating for PRPPs instead of mandatory CPP hikes.

Minister, your government is not interested in giving Ontario employees a chance to join a pooled registered model. Why don't you trust Ontarians to make their own decisions, or are you convinced that increasing job-killing CPP premiums is the right choice?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, we are quite prepared, as I indicated in the budget in clear and unequivocal terms, to bring forward enabling legislation on PRPPs, provided Canada deals with Canada pension and provides modest enhancements so that more Ontarians will have a more secure retirement. Mr. Speaker, 70% of Ontarians do not have a pension today. It is important that we build on the successes of Canada pension as we offer Ontarians and all Canadians more opportunities for savings.

I will also point out to the member opposite that more than \$900 billion of unused RRSP room is currently present in this country. PRPPs represent one additional alternative for choice, but until the other provinces, and the federal government particularly, get serious about improving the Canada pension plan, we won't pass the enabling legislation. It's right; it's responsible; it's about a better future for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Minister, 60% of Canadians have no workplace pension plan, so your suggestion of enhancing CPP will not affect them. PRPPs are designed to address this gap in the retirement income system by providing an accessible, large-scale and low-cost defined contribution pension option to employers, employees and the self-employed.

Can the minister explain why he is treating Ontarians this way by not providing the opportunity to opt in and instead asking businesses to pay higher CPP premiums?

1130

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have cut business taxes by a third. We have cut the small business tax rate. I say to the CFIB that the people who are going to shop in your stores and go to your restaurants in the coming years are going to be older Canadians. We need modest enhancements to the Canada pension plan. We are quite supportive of these kinds of alternatives. It's only Alberta and the federal government that are refusing to move on Canada pension plan reforms. Our sister provinces have indicated a willingness to look at that.

That member and her party ought to stand up and do what's right instead of advocating for cuts to old age security, which Conservatives want to do, which will impact the treasury and put more seniors on welfare in later years. This is all well documented. Take a balanced, whole approach to the question of pensions and post-retirement income, which will serve all Canadians well in the future if we simply have the strength of mind and courage to take the right steps today.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, you will know that the mayors of northeastern Ontario have been wanting to meet with you in order to discuss the move to privatize the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission. Are you prepared, as Premier, to actually meet with the mayors, as per their request?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I'm very happy to say that I met with the mayors on April 19 and committed to them that they would have a technical briefing from Infrastructure Ontario. They had that technical briefing. We committed to another meeting on June 13. We will live up to our commitment to meet with the mayors. I will meet with the mayors at any time to discuss their ideas with regard to divestment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Premier, it's clear that what the mayors are asking for is not a meeting with your minister, because we know what the minister is up to. He's about divesting the ONTC and moving ahead with that particular initiative.

The mayors of northeastern Ontario, the people who have been elected in cities from North Bay to Hearst, have asked to meet with you because they represent the people of northeastern Ontario and those communities. So I ask you again, Premier: You are the decision-maker in your cabinet. You're the one who makes the decision. Are you prepared to meet with the mayors of northeastern Ontario as Premier? Yes or no?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Let me reinforce that I will meet with the mayors at any time to discuss divestment. That decision has been made. We look forward to their involvement, their ideas. There are opportunities that are presented to them with regard to divestment.

But I do find it passing strange that that member would ask this question, because when he was part of a government that was going through difficult times, what did they do? They slashed operating dollars to the ONTC. They slashed capital dollars to the ONTC. They slashed subsidy dollars to the ONTC. They stopped—shut down—Star Transfer, the transport company of the ONTC, and fired the workers. They cut back on the air service to 15 communities in northern Ontario. I find it very, very strange that this member would stand up and pretend to support the ONTC at this time.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, your ministry does work that affects the everyday lives of employers and employees in this province. Each Ontarian who goes to work every day and holds a job has an investment in your legislation and enforcement activities.

To ensure that both the employers and employees comply with the law and enjoy the full benefits of their rights, they should have access to the latest information on the new developments and initiatives by your ministry. However, communication with such a large audience is a difficult challenge. Minister, what kind of online initiatives has your ministry developed to reach out and educate Ontario workers and employees?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the member for the question. The Ministry of Labour works very hard to

maintain a strong, current online presence, reaching out in a variety of channels.

Our ministry website is a great repository for information, explaining legislation and enforcement activities in plain language. Our employment standards tools have been used over one million times since 2009. Both our website and our YouTube channel visitors can find an ongoing series of interactive videos as well as interactive Web tools. The videos explain how health and safety inspectors conduct various workplace initiatives, and outline employment standards rights and how to file a claim with the ministry as well.

I invite everybody to visit the Ministry of Labour's website and explore how they can stay better informed on labour issues.

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

There are a few points of order at the moment, so I'm going to recognize those who have requested it.

VISITORS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Earlier during question period, students from Ascension of Our Lord Secondary School from Bramalea—Gore—Malton were here. I notice they've left now, but I wanted to introduce them to the House.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'd like to introduce Mr. Larry Palmer, who's the executive director of Camphill Communities Ontario in Angus, and Kevin Greenfield. They won lunch with their MPP at the Community Living Association for South Simcoe golf tournament. Condolences, gentlemen.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to point out that in the west gallery a very good friend of mine and the former MPP for the old riding of Quinte is here, Doug Rollins.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This afternoon at 3 o'clock, I'll have, in the Speaker's gallery, a very remarkable and inspirational young woman I'd like to invite all of you to meet. Her name is Hélène Campbell. She is my constituent from Barrhaven. Of course, many of you have probably heard about her in recent weeks for gaining attention for organ donation and being successful with her organ donation transplant with a double lung transplant. Speaker, she'll be in your gallery at 3 o'clock.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further to that, that also means you'll stay within the one-minute-and-30-second statement.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You're just teasing.

Mr. Bill Walker: Speaker, earlier in the introduction of guests, I announced that the Hanover Holy Family school was here. They're not on the premises yet, and it's in fact not until the 12th. So I would like to withdraw that, and I'll reintroduce them when they are here. I'm a keener.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I actually got a little dizzy on that one. It is the tradition of the Speaker to acknowledge former members, so I too would want to reiterate—Mr. Doug Rollins from Quinte in the 36th Parliament. Welcome, as always.

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

The House recessed from 1137 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bill Walker: I promise they're here today, Speaker. I would like to introduce Bill Herron and Steve Eby from the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, more specifically the Grey and Bruce cattlemen's association. I believe they will be joining us in the gallery momentarily.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd like to introduce a good friend of mine, Nathan Shaw, from Ancaster. Nathan, as some of you may recall, was instrumental in helping us fight together for the presumptive legislation with firefighters. So, Nathan, welcome. I'd like everyone to join in welcoming Nathan here today.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: In mere moments I will be doing a statement on the individual who is in your Speaker's box, but I would like my colleagues across the House to welcome today double lung transplant recipient Hélène Campbell and her brave mother, Manon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. The member from, um, Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thought you would know that by heart by now.

I'd like to introduce to the chamber this afternoon Jim and Drinda Michaud, as well as their lovely daughter, Serina, and their son, Josh. Thank you very much for coming here.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to introduce Georgia Koumantaros, Constantine Ttofas and Manak Mann, our guests today.

REPORT, INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table a report from the Integrity Commissioner entitled Report of the Review of Expense Claims Covering the Period April 1, 2011, to March 31, 2012, Pursuant to the Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expenses Review and Accountability Act, 2002.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HÉLÈNE CAMPBELL

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The name Hélène Campbell has become synonymous with organ donation awareness. After a health setback last year, a double lung transplant for Hélène was necessary. As she waited for a donor, with each breath becoming more difficult, Hélène found her voice, and what an inspirational voice it has become.

Captivating our nation's capital, Hélène, with failing health, rallied Ottawa. Her organ donation campaign hit

the Ottawa Citizen. It then soon became a clarion call by radio host Mauler of Hot 89.9. Soon, Hélène mobilized Justin Bieber and Ellen DeGeneres. I know what you're all going to say: "No big deal," right?

Never once throughout Hélène's ordeal did she ever ask, "Why me?" Instead, she has handled herself with grace and dignity, putting her cause before her own fears. She simply asked, "How can I help?" And she did. The Trillium Gift of Life Network attributes Hélène's campaign to a 2% increase in organ donation registration, growing by 8,000 people in Ottawa alone, creating what has been dubbed the Hélène Campbell effect.

Nepean–Carleton residents are particularly proud of our hometown hero. For her steadfast contribution to organ donation awareness, I nominated Hélène for a Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal. Last week she was presented with this honour by the Prime Minister himself. Later today I'll take her to meet Ontario's Premier, and just moments ago she met with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth's loyal opposition leader.

But above all, I can say this: Hélène has had that double lung transplant, and unlike the day that she first joined me at Queen's Park in January, lugging two very large oxygen tanks, just mere months ago, she's here today, breathing on her own. Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in supporting Be a Donor.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. We obviously all welcome our special guests for being here.

ANNALEISE CARR

Mr. Toby Barrett: You know, we're blessed with special young people who donate their time as legislative pages. One young person hopes to set a world record as the youngest to swim across Lake Ontario, and I speak of Annaleise Rebekah Carr, the page standing by the entrance door, a grade 8 student at Walsh Public School.

Fourteen-year-old Annaleise is a proud member of the Norfolk Hammerheads in Simcoe and the North Shore Runners/Swimmers in Port Dover. Ms. Carr became involved with our local Camp Trillium–Rainbow Lake last summer when she and nine others completed the 10-kilometre open-water swim from Pottahawk Point to Turkey Point, followed by a 10-kilometre run. They raised \$15,000. As she states on her website, "You see, the camp exists for children with cancer and their families—a sort of haven away from what they are going through."

Annaleise then set her sights for this Labour Day weekend and a Lake Ontario crossing following the traditional Marilyn Bell route from Niagara-on-the-Lake to the CNE. She says, "I've been blessed to be able to swim a long way and I want to use that gift to help the kids and their families at Camp Trillium."

Speaker, please join me in recognizing a future world record holder, Annaleise Carr. Congratulations. All the best.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. We do have some very wonderful young people here today.

BOMBARDIER

Mr. Bill Mauro: Today is Wednesday, May 30, but just a few days ago back in Thunder Bay, on Friday, May 25, we had another great announcement at the Bombardier plant in my riding. I was fortunate to have the Premier in Thunder Bay with me, along with my colleague from Thunder Bay—Superior North, and we announced another very, very large contract for the Bombardier plant there. On Friday, we announced a \$200-million contract for 60 more GO Transit bi-level cars here to service southwestern Ontario. Those cars are valued at over \$3 million per unit, and each one of those cars represents about 10,000 hours of work per unit. This is closely connected to the platform commitment we made last year promising two-way, all-day GO Transit service in southern Ontario.

This brings the total contract value, of the total contracts awarded to Bombardier and Thunder Bay, to somewhere around \$3.5 billion. Of that, about \$1.5 billion or \$1.6 billion has come from the provincial government.

When we were elected in 2003, the Bombardier plant there in Thunder Bay had about 250 people working in it. Today there are 1,300 people working in that plant in Thunder Bay. While we were at the announcement, the senior management team told me that they are currently looking to hire 140 more employees, bringing the total employment to over 1,400 people: great news for the workers, great news for the plant, great news for Thunder Bay, and great news for the economy of northwestern Ontario.

COMMERCIAL FILL

Mr. John O'Toole: I rise today with an update on commercial fill in the region of Durham.

In Scugog township, and indeed Uxbridge, Lakeridge Citizens for Clean Water have advocated strongly for protection of the Oak Ridges moraine and our local water resources. Citizens who live near the Morgans Road site in Clarington are equally strong advocates who have offered several suggestions to safeguard communities in Durham region and indeed throughout Ontario.

I'd like to thank Beth Meszaros and Donna Middleton of Clarington Citizens for Clean Water and Soil for keeping me informed. Thanks also to Ian McLaurin of Lakeridge Citizens for Clean Water and Gerri Lynn O'Connor, the mayor of Uxbridge, as well as the council there.

1510

The concern is that conservation authorities and municipalities simply don't have the human or financial resources to properly manage or monitor the placement of commercial fill. Citizens are telling me they want a

central authority, like the Ministry of Natural Resources, to oversee commercial fill permits.

The review of the Aggregate Resources Act is an excellent forum to address commercial fill based on former gravel pits and quarries, pits being the destination of this material, and we want to ensure that it is indeed clean. Changing the Aggregate Resources Act to encompass the future use of commercial fill would provide a comprehensive strategy for a lifetime solution to this question. Commercial fill affects water quality and local environment, traffic, land values, and generally the quality of life of citizens. Let's do the right thing.

ADULT LEARNERS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Last week I attended a graduation ceremony in my riding, London—Fanshawe. While many of us participate in events such as these in our communities, this particular ceremony stood out and touched me on a personal level.

The graduation celebration I attended at G.A. Wheable adult centre is for adult learners who are completing their high school diploma. Seeing the pride of accomplishment on their faces and those of their families filled me with inspiration and hope, and I am pleased to share that experience with everyone here. I was truly moved when I realized how courageous these adult graduates are. It is never easy to admit what you don't know, and to return to school as an adult is a very intimidating concept.

I further want to thank and acknowledge the Thames Valley District School Board alternative education program. The programs offered by the Thames Valley District School Board provide adults with the opportunity to address their academic, social and emotional needs in a non-threatening environment so that education can become a priority in their lives.

I congratulate the graduates and the educators of the Thames Valley District School Board and the G.A. Wheable adult learning centre for their extraordinary efforts towards lifelong learning at any age.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Phil McNeely: I rise today to recognize the fundraising efforts of two groups of students in my riding of Ottawa—Orléans. On May 3, the students of Cairine Wilson Secondary School in Orléans held their ninth annual Relay for Life event, during which they raised \$52,000.

For the second year in a row, student Kelly McGruer was the top fundraiser, with over \$2,980 in contributions, while the Ancient Greeks took home first-place honours in the team competition, with a combined total of \$5,153. The money raised will be used to help fund clinical trials and other cancer research. The event included a lap of honour during which the students were able to pay their respect to 26 cancer survivors who came out to thank the students for their efforts in helping to fight cancer. This year's event was once again dedicated to Hannah

Billings, a local resident who lost her life to cancer in 2007 at the age of nine.

On May 10, the students of St. Peter High School in Fallingbrook capped off their annual food drive by delivering over 32,000 items to the Orléans-Cumberland Community Resource Centre. The resource centre's emergency food program serves nearly 500 clients every month, and the items collected by the students at St. Peter's go a long way to help the centre meet this demand.

Students from Cornwall to Kenora raise millions of dollars every year for a variety of worthy causes, and for that we are tremendously grateful.

REPEAL OF PROHIBITION

Mr. Randy Hillier: Tomorrow will mark the 85th anniversary of the repeal of Prohibition in Ontario. Thomas Reed once opined, "One of the greatest delusions in the world is the hope that the evils in this world are to be cured by legislation." In the difficult years of World War I, members of the temperance movement forgot Mr. Reed's dictum, and Ontario banned the sale of alcohol. For eight years, between 1916 and 1924, the people of Ontario were prohibited from drinking their favourite beers, wines and spirits. For eight years, our traditions of individual liberty were squashed, and criminal activity flourished in the trade and smuggling of spirits. Indeed, in hindsight, Prohibition was an unfortunate error in our history.

In 1924, following a referendum, Prohibition was replaced with our current system of dealing with alcohol. Today, people across Ontario have a lacklustre choice in alcohol for purchase. Today, our citizens pay exorbitant taxes and inflated costs to prop up government-protected monopolies that deny consumers choice.

Though our 1924 referendum was a step in the right direction, for it repealed the failed eight-year experiment with Prohibition by empowering people through referendums, this government has fallen back into the failures of a nanny state once again.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, increasingly, I am encountering a problem in my riding of tenants who are being pressed to pay for air conditioning.

Tenants in my riding living in apartment buildings built 30, 40 years ago, buildings that were not intended to be cooled in the summer, buildings that were built to deal with harsh winters, are now finding that they can't use their units without air conditioning. Many of them are low-income seniors. They are being pressed by landlords to pay 40 bucks a month for use of the hydro for their air conditioning. They don't have it.

Speaker, they need to know that this government will listen to their complaints when they call the Ministry of Housing; that, in fact, they will be backed up.

Beyond that, we are going to have to recognize that as this climate gets hotter, the building stock that we have is not appropriately designed. We are going to have to be making changes so that people won't be driven out of their homes either by the heat or by costs for cooling that they can't afford.

ONTARIO CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I am very pleased to be able to rise today to welcome the members of the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, who are visiting Queen's Park as part of their annual day at the Legislature. The Ontario Cattlemen's Association, or OCA, is a grassroots organization that provides leadership to cattlemen from all sectors of the industry.

I'm sure that many members of this House enjoyed some of their fine Ontario beef today during lunch out on the front lawn. There was a lineup out there that went not quite all the way around the building, but certainly a large part of the way around the front quadrangle out there. I'm sure many of you also had an opportunity to meet with the cattlemen already today—or later in the afternoon.

All of the members of this House would be pleased to acknowledge the work that the cattlemen do so that Ontarians can enjoy delicious, locally produced beef.

To the consumers out there, to the people who like fine dining, if you're thinking of what to put on the barbecue this summer, give yourself a real treat and try Ontario corn-fed beef. It's amazing, folks.

To everyone involved in the OCA and to the 19,000 beef producers who are members of the organization, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the OCA on your 50th anniversary this year and welcome you to Queen's Park today.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

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

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

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 3, 2012, the bill is ordered for third reading.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, as you know, the McGuinty government is committed to supporting people who contribute to Ontario's agri-food industry. We want to help to create new jobs, market opportunities and promote our province's food businesses to the world.

That is why I was pleased to recently attend, along with Quebec's Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Pierre Corbeil, the SIAL Canada trade show in Montreal. The event is one of North America's most important meeting places for the food industry and showcases Canada's great agri-food sector.

1520

SIAL Canada attracted over 13,000 visitors from more than 45 countries to 650-plus booths. It's an opportunity for our agri-food businesses to expand their markets and build relationships with colleagues from around the world.

While I was at SIAL, I was pleased to recognize excellence in the industry by presenting the Ontario Food Exporter Award to Boris Serebryany, president and CEO of Fiera Foods. Fiera Foods began 25 years ago as a two-man bakery. Today, it employs over 1,000 workers in four manufacturing facilities in the GTA and produces two-million-plus croissants and bagels a day. It's probably the largest croissant-maker in the world. It has built its success through innovation and by exporting new products to the United States, Asia, Europe and Australia.

In addition to congratulating Fiera Foods, I also want to recognize the other two award finalists, Pillitteri Estates Winery and Erie Meat Products Ltd., because their achievements are also so outstanding.

Pillitteri Estates is a family-owned winery that has been internationally recognized for its premium wines. It is the world's largest estate ice-wine producer and number one in estate winery exports, now exporting to more than 30 countries worldwide.

Let me tell you about Erie Meat Products. They specialize in the further processing of poultry, beef, and pork products. In the past two years, this company has specifically targeted emerging markets and has increased its export reach to 16 new countries spanning five continents.

Success stories like these helped Ontario's agri-food exports hit a record high of almost \$10 billion in 2011. It's success stories like these that contribute to a stronger economy and create jobs for farmers and families.

Ontario's agriculture and food industry is truly a cornerstone of our economy, and we're working very hard to keep it that way. We will continue to recognize and support innovation and advances in this industry.

Interjection: Really? Really?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: So please join me in congratulating the achievements of these Ontario businesses and

all the fine people who work hard to make our agri-food sector strong. Yes, really.

SUPERVISED ACCESS

Hon. John Gerretsen: I rise in the House today to speak to you about a great, non-partisan program that has literally touched and helped the lives of thousands of Ontario children affected by the divorce and separation of their parents, and that's the Ontario supervised access program.

Anyone who has been through family breakdown knows that it can be incredibly hard on everyone involved—the spouses, the partners, the children. It is an emotional time, a confusing time and a time of great upheaval; a time when an individual's life, particularly a child's life, can change forever. While times like these are difficult for spouses who have shared a part of their lives together, for children, these changes can be particularly devastating.

Thankfully, Ontario's family law system is amongst the best in Canada. Our focus on upfront information and mediation services has meant that questions of child custody and access can often be settled in a fairly quick and straightforward manner. But, Speaker, sometimes that can't happen and it doesn't happen.

As we all know, family matters can be infinitely complex, and every family situation is different and unique. Sometimes the hurt, the anger and the emotional upheaval can get in the way of finding that common ground that is necessary for an equitable solution. And so, when parents can't see eye to eye on the custody and access of their children and there is a risk to either the parent or the child, Ontario's families can turn to the supervised access program.

Speaker, I can tell you from my own experience as a family lawyer back in the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s that this kind of program simply didn't exist, or at best was done on an ad hoc basis. Today, available in every court district across the province, supervised access provides a safe neutral site for visits and exchanges.

It's a program that has kept parents and children connected when family turmoil would otherwise keep them apart. Despite the personal troubles or conflicts between former spouses, non-custodial parents and their children often want to maintain that connection, and supervised access makes this possible.

I'm proud to say that the supervised access program has recently marked a very important milestone. It's been 20 years since the government began funding this valuable service in Ontario. I am proud to say that this government has continued to invest in these services, which has meant more locations available, extended hours of service, improved facilities and better staff training. Today, 103 centres facilitate over 70,000 visits and exchanges each and every year, benefiting more than 2,700 children in this province annually. This is an important collective achievement.

There are many success stories that are truly heart-warming, and I will name just a couple of them:

—the story of a particularly nervous young father from St. Thomas who required some coaching from the local staff before he could summon the courage to meet his two-year-old daughter and was pleasantly surprised when she not only appeared to recognize him but reached out to him with open arms;

—or the dad from Simcoe who, after four years of absence, has been reunited with his son and now uses the local supervised access centre for regular visits.

Of course, for many young people, supervised access provides their only link to non-custodial parents throughout their childhood, and many staff and volunteers have literally watched these children grow up and mature.

Recently, a group of three adult siblings returned to tell staff in Durham region how grateful they were to have had the opportunity to get to know their father better in their formative years, and that would not have been possible without the supervised access program being in place. They credited their experience as one that has positively influenced their lives. As a matter of fact, they have been inspired to pursue careers in family therapy, criminal law and one of them in medicine.

I think we can all take pride in these kinds of stories, because the success of supervised access is one that we share on both sides of the House after two decades of investment and support of this very worthwhile program.

Now, our success here in Ontario has not gone unnoticed. It's a testament to our leadership that the governments of Quebec, Manitoba, Alberta, Yukon, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia have turned to us for advice in establishing their own supervised access programs, as have New Mexico, California and New Hampshire in the United States, and Australia and New Zealand within the Commonwealth.

Moving forward, we have partnered with the University of Toronto and the federal government to develop new tools that will better ensure the safety of children and parents during these supervised exchanges, and we look forward to receiving the results of that research in the near future.

I would like to thank all members of this House and all those individuals who have been involved in these programs for their ongoing support of safe supervised access and visitations in Ontario communities. I encourage you to join me in celebrating this important and collective achievement of 20 years of supervised access here in Ontario.

1530

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to respond to the statement by the Minister of Agriculture, and I want to recognize the recipients of the awards for their hard work. I want to recognize all of Ontario's farmers and food processors for the great products that we sell to the world. It's great to see these products being marketed and the exports growing.

Ontario's food and beverage industry is the largest customer for our farmers, buying 70% of their production. They also employ approximately 110,000 Ontarians. However, we need to ensure that Ontario is a good place for these companies to operate, and many of them have been clear: Right now, government policies are holding them back. When it becomes easier and cheaper for an international company to operate in another jurisdiction, they move and take their jobs with them. We've seen that repeatedly, but the government refuses to acknowledge the impact of their policies.

The Alliance of Ontario Food Processors says, "Without a different approach, Ontario's second largest manufacturing industry will watch its contribution to the economy and society of Ontario erode as international competitors move further ahead in both productivity and innovation." One step they recommended is to provide one-window access for government for the agri-food sector. The government committed to that one-window access in the last election, but so far they've taken no action to implement the one-window approach to fix the red tape problem.

Farmers in agribusiness tell us they can't get a straight answer from the government on all the steps required to expand, so many of them are just choosing not to. We have farmers and businesses that are being buried in red tape, and this government isn't taking any real action to deal with the problem.

The CFIB study released earlier this year found that 67% of their members said that red tape had actually increased over the last three years. Businesses are telling us that the red tape makes it difficult to compete with companies in other jurisdictions.

I want to acknowledge the great work our food and beverage manufacturers do, and I hope that the government will do more to ensure that our companies are competitive and can stay and share great Ontario products with the rest of the world.

SUPERVISED ACCESS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to stand today and recognize safe supervised visitation month on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Progressive Conservative caucus.

The unfortunate reality is that some parents, when they separate or divorce, need to have safe visits with their children because it becomes a problem, for many reasons. Supervised visitation centres provide that safe haven for children and parents during parental visitations.

This past November, I had the pleasure of celebrating the 10-year anniversary of one such centre in my riding of Dufferin–Caledon: the Headwaters Family Visit Centre. They offer, with the help of staff and volunteers, a safe, neutral and child-focused setting for visits that ensures the safety of all participants. Headwaters Family Visit Centre is an excellent example of what safe supervised visitation month is all about.

Coping with parental divorce or separation is difficult enough for a child without the added stress of being

caught in the middle of parental conflict. When there is animosity between parents, difficulties can arise when exchanges or visits occur. In some cases, the child's safety can even be an issue. Supervised visits and supervised exchanges are designed to ensure children have safe contact with a parent without being put in the middle of conflicts. This makes access easier and, most importantly, reduces tension and stress for the child and the parents involved. Initiatives like safe supervised visitation month help raise awareness and ensure people know supervised visitation and exchange services are available to help them through a difficult time.

I urge all my colleagues in the House to recognize and support safe supervised visitation month and the Ontario families these visitations help each and every day.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. John Vanthof: It's my pleasure to respond to the Minister of Agriculture.

On behalf of the Ontario New Democratic Party, I would like to recognize Fiera Foods, the proud winner of the award of excellence for agri-food export in Ontario. This award was presented to Boris Serebryany, president and CEO of Fiera Foods, at the Salon international de l'alimentation, SIAL Canada, in Montreal.

Fiera Foods was founded in 1987 by Mr. Serebryany and Mr. Alex Garber, when they sold their first order of mini Danish bites. Today, they have over 1,000 employees working at their facilities in Toronto. Their main lines include bakery items, from frozen dough to thaw-and-serve products. The reason for their continued success in this very competitive market is best described by their vision statement, which reads: "Our Vision is Clear—Expect Only the Best!"

The annual SIAL international food expo is one of North America's leading food professional meeting places, with over 13,000 visitors from 45 countries annually. The 2013 show will be held right here in Toronto, from April 30 to May 2, 2013, at the Direct Energy Centre.

For companies like Fiera Foods to produce their high-end products, they depend on Ontario's farmers and primary processors to provide them with top-quality ingredients.

From the wheat farmer in New Liskeard to the flour miller in Hanover to the Fiera bakery in Toronto, New Democrats would like to salute all those people who make great Ontario-grown-and-processed food available to be enjoyed by families not only in Ontario but around the world.

SUPERVISED ACCESS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I am pleased to respond to the Attorney General's comments today. On behalf of the Ontario New Democratic Party, we are very happy to join in the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the supervised access program here in Ontario, as well as

joining in the celebration of the supervised visitation awareness month in general.

It's very important to note that this is an essential service, so we must thank all the staff and all the organizers of these facilities which provide a very essential service, which is allowing children who are the innocent victims of domestic disputes, separations or divorces the opportunity to have access to and to spend time with their family: their father, their mother, their loved ones.

It is particularly important for us to recognize that there is a connection between those families from a lower socio-economic background and the families that take part or access these services; 70% to 90% of families that use visitation centres are in the low-income bracket. It's particularly important for us to recognize that those community members who are less well off, who are more vulnerable, are those who often find themselves in these positions, and children are the innocent victims.

For a child to grow up to be a successful member of society, to be a contributing member of society, it is incumbent that they have access to their loved ones, that they receive the guidance and the parental supervision and wisdom from their loved ones. We must ensure that we take more effort and provide more services up front so that children don't end up falling through the cracks and end up falling into a prison industrial complex, which is the wrong direction for our resources. We should put our resources into taking care of children, educating them, caring for them, allowing for them to have opportunities to access their family and ensure that they have a bright future, as opposed to providing for incarceration for juveniles, incarceration for adults, who then fall through the cracks and end up falling into criminal activity.

These types of services and programs are the right types of programs. We need more of this. We need more services and programs that address those individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds to ensure that we have a society that protects those who are vulnerable, so that we can prevent problems before they occur.

Instead of being a reactive society, let's become a proactive society and protect people, protect our children, protect our future. They are our most precious asset, our most precious and valuable resource, and let's give them the attention that they deserve.

PETITIONS

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the horse racing industry employs approximately 60,000 people, creates \$1.5 billion in wages and \$2 billion in recurring expenditures annually; and

"Whereas the partnership that was created between government and the horse breeding and racing industry

has been a model arrangement and is heralded throughout North America, with 75% of revenues going to the provincial government to fund important programs like health care and education, 5% to the municipalities and only 20% goes back to the horse business; and

“Whereas the horse business is a significant source of revenue for the farming community and rural municipalities;

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

“That the Ministry of Finance continue the revenue-sharing partnership with the horse racing industry for the benefit of Ontario’s agricultural and rural economies.”

I support this petition, will sign my name and send it with page Sam.

1540

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: As a part of awareness, I’m presenting 1,000 or more petitions a day. Today I’m presenting 1,081 petitions. The 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 ... 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;

“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 fully agree with this petition and will affix my name to it and present it to page Louis.

RADIATION SAFETY

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

“Whereas subsection 6(2)(g) 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 need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection officers in order to provide their patients and clients with safe and convenient access to a medically necessary procedure, as is already the case in many comparable jurisdictions;

“We, the dental hygienists working in Ontario, 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 clients 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 these petitions and sign them and pass them on to page Hannah.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Bill 13 is unnecessary as an anti-bullying measure because Ontarians already have Bill 157; and

“Whereas Bill 13 promotes radical revisions to school instruction on sex and gender that a majority of parents do not support; and

“Whereas Bill 13 fails to provide any protection for students of faith or students of distinct physical characteristics;

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

“To vote against Bill 13 or to so amend Bill 13 as to equally protect all students, including students of faith.”

I’ll send this with the page.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I have a petition here from Zero Carbon Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

“With the introduction of the Green Energy Act and feed-in-tariff program, Ontario is an example to the rest of the world of the principle of renewable energy development; and

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

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

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

I affix my signature and send it to the table via page Tameem.

SCHOOL CLOSURE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: On behalf of families and parents and students in my riding around the Ruthven Public School area:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Education is proposing the closing of Ruthven Public School; and

“Whereas closing Ruthven Public School is premature at this time due to the improved economic conditions that the Ruthven area is currently experiencing; and

“Whereas Statistics Canada census reveals that the town of Kingsville is one of the few municipalities experiencing a positive growth rate over the last five years; and

“Whereas this school closure will negatively impact the future growth of the rural community of Ruthven and Kingsville; and

“Whereas Ruthven Public School is vital to the future well-being of the Kingsville and Ruthven communities and its students;

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

“As parents, teachers, concerned citizens, we hereby object to the closing of the Ruthven Public School, and appeal to the Minister of Education to keep open and maintain the long-term viability of the Ruthven Public School.”

I approve and support this petition and will affix my name to it.

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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

“Whereas supported-living residents in southwestern and eastern Ontario were subjected to picketing outside their homes during labour strikes in 2007 and 2009; and

“Whereas residents and neighbours had to endure megaphones, picket lines, portable bathrooms and shining lights at all hours of the day and night on their streets; and

“Whereas individuals with intellectual disabilities and the organizations who support them fought for years to

break down barriers and live in inclusive communities; and

“Whereas Bill 23 passed first reading in the Ontario Legislature on December 6, 2011;

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

“That the members of the Legislative Assembly vote in support of Sylvia Jones’s Bill 23—the Protecting Vulnerable People Against Picketing Act.”

I obviously support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Annaleise.

FAMILY CAREGIVER LEAVE

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

“Whereas recovering from injuries or illnesses at home can enhance recovery, reduce the strain on our health care system and provide comfort to patients;

“Whereas family caregivers need to focus on what matters most—providing care and support to their loved one—without the fear of losing their job;

“Whereas Ontarians who need to care for seriously ill or injured loved ones need job protection;

“Whereas the Family Caregiver Leave Act, if passed, would build on existing family medical leave to provide up to eight weeks of unpaid job leave for employees to provide care and support to a sick or injured family member;

“Whereas the PCs have pledged to vote against the bill, and permanently kill the legislation;

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

“That all parties recognize the importance of health, family, and job security by supporting the Family Caregiver Leave Act to protect the jobs of working Ontarians who need to care for seriously ill or injured loved ones.”

I wholly support this petition, affix my signature and send it through page Gopi.

DOG OWNERSHIP

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

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

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

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

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

I couldn’t agree more. We need to save the lives of another 1,000 threatened dogs. I’m going to sign this, and

I'm going to give it to fabulous page Angela to be delivered to the table.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

"Whereas there are an estimated 181,000 Ontarians diagnosed with Alzheimer's and related dementia...;

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

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

1550

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

I support this petition and affix my name to it.

CORNWALL COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

Mr. Jim McDonell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a petition was delivered to my constituency office with over 2,800 names, asking the Ontario government to review the discriminating hiring practices at the Cornwall Community [Hospital];

"Whereas the hospital is one of the largest employers in our region;

"Whereas our community strongly supports the need to service our population in the official language of their choice;

"Whereas the current policies discriminate against approximately 80% of the general population from obtaining employment or seeking an upgrade to full-time employment at the CCH;

"Whereas the current situation has resulted in significant turmoil in the community;

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

"The government of Ontario support the Cornwall Community Hospital board in their effort to work with the community to develop employment policies that meet the linguistic, employment and community needs of the area and which allow the CCH to attract the best-qualified health care professionals available."

PELEE ISLAND FERRY SERVICE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Mr. Speaker, I have a different petition on a different issue. I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of residents of the Pelee Island and Kingsville area.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is a critical issue going on regarding the ferry service to Pelee Island; and

"Whereas both ferries have been in dry dock undergoing maintenance work, leaving Pelee Island and its residents without transportation service, causing severe and undue hardship; and

"Whereas maintenance to the Jiimaan and the Pelee Islander should be done at the end of the season, not in the beginning; and

"Whereas both boats should not be serviced at the same time; as a result, the farmers on the island are losing the valuable spring planting season, and other businesses are losing business daily; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation should be looking into alternate ferry boats to service Pelee Island. There are several options, which include: the ferry from Kelleys Island, McKeil Marine, Dean Construction and Nadro Marine, which have tugs and barges to transport farming equipment;

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

"Direct the Ministry of Transportation to explore all options in order to implement the heavy-transportation needs of the residents and businesses of Pelee Island. Further, to direct the service providers to put together a plan to prevent further disruption to the ferry services of Pelee Island."

I agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and submit it to the Clerk via Tameem.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

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

"Whereas Bill 13 is unnecessary as an anti-bullying measure because Ontarians already have Bill 157; and

"Whereas Bill 13 promotes radical revisions to school instruction on sex and gender that a majority of parents do not support; and

"Whereas legislation is not the way to implement equity education (this should rather be addressed by teacher training, after wider parental consultation, in a way which respects the views of people of faith);

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to vote against Bill 13."

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I have a petition entitled "Escaping Domestic Violence."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas all Ontarians have the right to a safe home environment;

“Whereas the government of Ontario works to reduce all barriers in place that prevent victims of domestic violence from fleeing abusive situations;

“Whereas the Residential Tenancies Act does not take into consideration the special circumstances facing a tenant who is suffering from abuse;

“Whereas those that live in fear for their personal safety and that of their children should not be financially penalized for the early termination of their residential leases;

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

“That Bill 22, the Escaping Domestic Violence Act, 2011 be adopted so that victims of domestic violence be afforded a mechanism for the early termination of their lease to allow them to leave an abusive relationship and find a safe place for themselves and their children to call home.”

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

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Mr. Rod Jackson: I have a petition here from Simcoe County Community Services to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas, since fall 2010, the human rights of students with special needs in Simcoe county schools are

violated by the Simcoe County District School Board decision to tolerate the systematic use of blocker pads to manage these students.

“The systematic use of blocker pads infringes upon the dignity of the students with learning disabilities, the dignity of the education assistants who are using the blocker pads and the dignity of the community members who have to witness this detestable violation of human rights. This practice creates a culture of fear and causes segregation instead of encouraging integration in our community;

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

“Please urge the Minister of Education ... to do the right thing and exercise her ministerial power by issuing a directive to ban the deplorable practice by the Simcoe County District School Board.”

I agree with this wholeheartedly and affix my signature and give it to page Katie to bring to the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The time for petitions is over. Orders of the day.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I’m very pleased to move the adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Attorney General has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carries?

This House stands adjourned until 9 o’clock tomorrow morning. Thank you very much.

The House adjourned at 1555.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

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

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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud-Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margarett R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre de Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Innovation / Ministre du Développement économique et de l'Innovation
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	
Vacant	Kitchener–Waterloo	

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COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Grant Crack, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Michael Harris
Rob Leone, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Teresa Piruzza
Bob Delaney, Victor Fedeli
Cindy Forster, Monte McNaughton
Yasir Naqvi, Teresa Piruzza
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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Joe Dickson, Rosario Marchese
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David Zimmer
Clerks / Greffiers: Tamara Pomanski (pro. tem), Sylwia Przedziecki

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Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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