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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 31 May 2012

Jeudi 31 mai 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Thursday 31 May 2012

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Jeudi 31 mai 2012

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

**FAMILY CAREGIVER LEAVE ACT
(EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
AMENDMENT), 2012**

**LOI DE 2012 SUR LE CONGÉ FAMILIAL
POUR LES AIDANTS NATURELS
(MODIFICATION DES NORMES D'EMPLOI)**

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

Bill 30, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver leave / *Projet de loi 30, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé familial pour les aidants naturels.*

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

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to you. It is a beautiful morning out there in the GTA today, unless you're a motorist. From what I understand, there are several transport trucks that have turned over on the 427 and 401. There's a little traffic report for those of you who may be heading out on the road this morning. You might want to check with 680News first before you do that.

It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 30 today. I think we've all—hopefully not all, but many of us have been in the situation where we have had somebody in our family or a close friend or other relative who has been very, very ill and needs someone to stay home and care for them. That's what this bill is intended to do. However, with this bill, as with many of the bills that come from the other side of the House, there are a lot of questions that need to be answered before this can become legislation.

There are many, many people out of work in the province of Ontario right now. There are 550,000 Ontarians who currently don't have a job. Is this bill a priority for those 550,000 Ontarian men and women? As we heard yesterday in question period, 16.5% of young people under the age of 25 are unemployed in this province right now. This is not the kind of bill that's doing anything to create jobs in the province of Ontario. What it does is, actually, it makes it more difficult for those who are

creating jobs in this economy right now, an economy that's struggling, an economy that's at the bottom of the heap in Canada right now.

What this actually does is, just for a little bit of background, it would give a family member up to eight weeks off the job, but there's no plan to pay for that person to be off the job. Everything coming from the government side is indicating that they're expecting the federal government to pay for this. So it's a Dalton McGuinty Liberal government promise here in Ontario, but they're expecting the feds to pay for it. It's kind of an interesting bill to put forward.

The thing to remember in the province of Ontario is that there is only one taxpayer, right? There's only one taxpayer here. This bill falls unbelievably short of the cost of this program to the economy or to any level of government.

So how many people can afford to be off work for eight weeks? We all met this week with members from the Multiple Sclerosis Society in our offices, and they had a reception here. We were all wearing the nice carnations on our suit jackets and outfits earlier this week in the House to recognize people that are struggling with MS. Many of us have met with members of the Cancer Society and have heard the stories. One of the problems that the people in particular with the MS Society had with the bill—I had a brief chat with them in my office, up on the third floor here, earlier this week—was that under this bill, if you decided that you were going to take one day off to look after your ill relative, or even part of an afternoon, maybe, to help that relative get to a doctor's appointment or an X-ray or go pick up some prescriptions or go buy them some groceries or give them some care that they need, you were burning the whole week.

Mr. Frank Klees: On a point of order, Speaker, I wonder if you could check for a quorum?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is present.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A quorum is present. Member from Prince Edward–Hastings, continue.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you. It's nice to see that everybody decided to show up. They must have seen me on TV in their offices and rushed down here. I know the member from Peterborough likes to be here when I'm speaking. He likes to participate quite often when I'm speaking—

Mr. Jeff Leal: I sent an SOS to round everybody up.

Mr. Todd Smith: I was worried that you might have missed my traffic report that I had on about five minutes

ago about all the overturned transport trucks on the 400 series of highway in the GTA this morning.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I sent an email to say I'm on my way.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's nice to see you.

That is another issue, too. We've got all these traffic accidents out there. We've got all this gridlock out there on the 400 series of highways. People can't get to work, and it's a struggling economy. The member from Barrie is here. He made it in.

Back to the matter at hand, which is Bill 30. Many people who are caring for a loved one with a chronic disease need to make the maximum use of the days they take off. Where I was before we had to check for a quorum was that we were talking about whether or not it was the right thing to do to basically eliminate a whole week of this Caregiver Leave Act for taking just a few hours off in one day, and that's the way it's written. The MS Society had some concerns about that this week.

A lot of people can't afford to take off a whole week of work, and a lot of people don't necessarily need to take off a whole week of work to look after a loved one. So that's something that obviously needs to be adjusted if this does, in fact, get to committee and we do clause-by-clause on this bill to discuss the merits of it. So I guess there are questions about that. This legislation doesn't give family members the option of just taking half a day off or a day off without charging them for the whole week. I believe this is something we could possibly fix when we do get to committee.

You know, it's interesting that this bill comes out and you're almost asking people to adjust their lives to the bill, when the bill should really be there to allow people to run their own lives. It's just another example of how poorly thought out this legislation is. It's all about just gathering headlines, which is what this government is often all about. They run out of ideas and they scramble to put something out there that will get them a headline instead of putting out something that's thoughtful and comprehensive and actually is good policy. We don't see a lot of good policy from this government; we see a lot of good politics, unfortunately.

In addition to something being good politics, it also has got to make sense and be a good law. I guess we can accomplish that if we get to clause-by-clause. If you don't do that, if you don't build a bill on good policy, quite often what you'll end up doing is having to back-track and close down two power plants in Mississauga and Oakville to save seats on your side because your policy is flawed. Unfortunately, that's what we've seen.

There are also many questions about what this bill does for small businesses—and I am the small business critic on this side.

Mr. Rob Leone: And a great one.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much.

Earlier this month, I believe it was our member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, Mr. Yurek, who has a pharmacy in his riding and was talking about the effect of this kind of bill on his business. It really struck me, as the small business critic, how this family caregiver bill could actually create huge problems for small businesses.

He told a story about a few years ago, when his pharmacy only had 12 employees—if this was in place at the time, he could have lost one of his pharmacists for up to eight weeks. In a rural area, that's a huge, huge loss. He told a story about the fact that he did have an employee, a pharmacist, go off on leave for a period of time. When you only have 12 employees, and you have a skilled employee like a pharmacist, which don't grow on trees in rural Ontario—there are lots of them here in the Toronto area—

Interjection: Mr. Yurek.

0910

Mr. Todd Smith: That's who we are talking about here: Mr. Yurek. He and his brother had to work 18-hour days just to keep the pharmacy going. That's the kind of thing that this bill would create, the dilemma that it would create for small businesses. So I think it's something that really needs to be looked at. He talked about the fact that for any small business, and this would affect small businesses under 50 people, they just don't have the manpower, especially when it comes to some of these skilled trades, to make up for the time.

I understand the sensitivity of this bill and why it was brought forward: for compassionate reasons. Unfortunately, many of us, as I said earlier, have had to look after an ailing and failing family member. I recall when we had to look after my grandmother, my mother, fortunately, was a nurse, so she was a professional caregiver and was able to give the proper care at home. This is something that is intended to provide some compassionate leave for family members, but unfortunately this bill is rather flimsy. It needs to have some changes in it that will allow people a little bit more liberty to take the time that they need.

There's no disputing the motives of this bill. We would all like to care for our chronic and terminally ill family members; there's no question about that. Anyone who has ever been in that circumstance knows exactly what those final days and hours are worth. Once they're over, your life changes forever in ways that would never have seemed possible before.

I look forward to potentially discussing this bill further at committee. Thank you for the opportunity this morning to speak on it, Mr. Speaker.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I too was visited by a member of the MS Society this week. It is always a pleasure to welcome them to Queen's Park and support the great work that the MS Society is doing.

I like the comments that were made by the previous speaker, who really spoke to the issue of: Do we need to do more for family caregivers? Absolutely, we do. But then comes, "What are we doing with this bill?" With this bill, we are giving caregivers the opportunity to take a week off at a time in very, very specific circumstances that are very limiting.

When you look at who is doing most of that work, most of that work is done by people looking after aging parents, people looking after some of our family mem-

bers or friends or relatives in the communities who are aging. Well, Mr. Speaker, aging is not a disease. Aging would never qualify for what we have in this legislation.

The spirit of the legislation is good. I had the pleasure to hear the Minister of Labour, who was there and attended the MS Society lunch, talk about what she wants the bill to accomplish. I think we can do a whole lot more while respecting the limited fiscal constraints that Ontario is under, but bring more flexibility to the bill so that not only do we give permission to take a week at a time but we have to build more flexibility as to how family caregivers can be excused from work.

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

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm glad to be offering a few short comments on what I have been hearing this morning. I just wanted to thank the member from Prince Edward–Hastings for his comments. He spoke of the need for the bill, and I think that everybody who stands in this House to talk to this bill has a personal story or reflection where they've understood the need, the gap in legislation that would allow for something as flexible as this piece of legislation.

But I also hear, I think, that both the opposition sides don't appear to know about the personal emergency leave, which is a piece of legislation that provides an unpaid job-protected leave up to 10 days per calendar year. Employees can take that for personal illness, an injury, a medical emergency, a death or an urgent matter.

At the end of the day, there are a number of leaves that are available, but what we're talking about in the family caregiver leave is to fill that gap. We've identified a gap, and so have many of our groups that we spoke of this morning. We talked about the MS Society having come here the other day. They're one of the groups that have indicated an expressed support for the bill. They recognize that there is a gap in legislation, and they appreciate the fact that we put this legislation forward. The Parkinson Society is another group. The Alzheimer Society of Ontario, the Canadian Cancer Society and the caregiver coalition: These are groups that have physical experience, everyday experience, and I trust their advice to be heartfelt. Obviously, they have day-to-day experience that would lend their support having great value to us, so I appreciate that advice.

I appreciate that there are members in this House who offer constructive suggestions on how to make the bill better. I look forward to their advice during committee hearings, and thank them for their constructive advice.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very pleased to respond to the member from Prince Edward–Hastings. I believe what he said is quite an accurate interpretation. All members would, from the very premise of the bill, want to support the idea of families being able to take care of their loved ones. That's an unquestionable sentiment from our leader, Tim Hudak.

However, when you get down to it, it's sort of like much is said about nothing. That's kind of the truth. There

isn't one nickel of support for that individual who has to take time off work, so that's a problem. But they are forcing Stephen Harper to pick up the ball. It is so transparent. It's so upsetting to me that it's always, "Blame someone else."

Here's the other issue. Let's say, for instance, I was the caregiver—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, some of them are interrupting.

Say I was the caregiver and I have to take a day off work from a law firm or something like that, to take my ill child or mother to the hospital or for an appointment. I couldn't just take the day off; I have to take the week. It's seven days at a time. I mean, what for? Maybe I'm only needed there some of the time. Maybe there are other members of the family who want to take part of that time. They should have really given some thought to this.

I commend the Minister of Labour, who is here, and she's responding to things, which is good. But I'll just read it here. It says, "Family medical leave is unpaid, job-protected leave of up to eight weeks" for the employee to provide care or support to an individual who "has a serious medical condition with a significant risk of death." I would have to say, the regulation, "a significant risk of death"—now, if it's deemed that it's not—look, the devil's in the detail. I did speak on this earlier, and I'd refer the listeners to look to Hansard and see my full comments on it. Thank you.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to join the debate today. I am anxious to see this bill head towards committee, because there are some mechanics within the constructs of the bill that need to be worked out, a whole host of different scenarios that could come into play, one being, what happens if a family member is out of province and that caregiver is in a different province and needs to provide the care outside of Ontario? How do we deal with that scenario?

Also, simply the fact that—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I can't hear anything, Mr. Speaker. It's early and we're already doing this? This doesn't bode well for the rest of the day.

We all have a personal story. My brother was injured in a mountain bike accident. He's a quadriplegic; he requires ongoing care. They have a different system in British Columbia. He does receive a great amount of care. The thing is that those caregivers are paid well, and he receives a wonderful service through his community and through the province there.

But this leaves a tremendous gap for those family members who need to take advantage of this type of a program yet would never—could never—financially carry the burden of losing one, two, three days' worth of work. That's putting people further behind than I think the members in this House understand.

0920

You know, we've heard that some members of the official opposition would like the federal government to not play a role, or to play a role, or do you want money attached through the federal government? I don't know. I know the government would like the federal government to take a role in terms of attaching some supplements through EI. Why don't you just do it here? You have the ability to attach a supplement to this program to ensure that people take advantage of it, that you get a good catchment of this program, yet it's a Band-Aid solution. It's a stopgap, and it's such a small measure that we see this in almost every respect when the government is trying to address problems. You can do it right, but the direction that the government is heading is not that direction.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Speaker, very much. It was interesting to hear the comments from the member from Nickel Belt, the Minister of Labour, our good friend here from Durham and our member from Essex as well, who, from what I could hear—and it wasn't much—seemed to ask a lot of questions as well. That's the nature of this bill, right? There are not a lot of answers in this bill; it's all about questions. We heard questions from the member from Durham. We heard more questions from the members from Nickel Belt and Essex as well.

One of the things that the member from Durham touched on is, what is a serious illness or a serious health condition? That's one of the questions I have as well. It's not clearly defined. There is no clear definition of who is eligible to take this caregiver leave.

One of the other things, from a small business point of view—again, I don't know how much thought the government put into how this was going to affect businesses, both big and small. The Minister of Labour touched on the emergency personal leave, that will have a negative effect on large manufacturers as well. But it's going to have, as I detailed earlier, an effect on small businesses.

One of the things that the PC Party wanted to bring in was a small business bill of rights. The main point of that small business bill of rights was to consult with business before any new legislation or regulation is tabled here in the House so that we could understand what kind of an impact it was going to have on job creation, which is arguably the biggest issue facing the province right now. We have 550,000 people out of work in the province of Ontario, and we want to give people eight weeks off? It's going to have a negative impact on business. I think there are a lot of questions that need to be answered when this bill gets to committee. Thank you again, Speaker.

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

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a great pleasure to rise today to speak on behalf of the PC caucus on Bill 30, the Family Caregiver Leave Act. It's actually one that's quite interesting for me, given the fact that I've spent probably about the last 20 years of my life as a human resources

professional and worked in labour relations. So this is something I know a little bit about. I've actually lived the experience of employers and seen what it means to employees to have an employer that actually cares about what they're doing and actually has a conscience about how they manage their employees—which, I might add, is most of the employers in Ontario. Because, let's remember, the biggest employer in Ontario is small business. I'll tell you what: Especially in Barrie, the biggest employer is small business. Over 70% of all the people who work in Barrie are employed by employers who have four or less employees.

Let's talk about what that means to employers when they have to give eight weeks of leave to an employee—who is not getting paid for this leave either, by the way. I'll talk about that in a minute. Let's talk a little bit about how this is really just window dressing. It's just putting a bright, shiny piece onto a bill to try to score some points. Even before we go into the details of the bill, there are suggestions from my PC colleagues, and perhaps members of the third party as well: If you're planning to open a boutique shop or a small business, ask our colleagues across the aisle for window dressing tips, because they're the experts. We see this all the time.

The second thought: Don't do it, unless you want debt, deficit and a credit downgrade. Most certainly, they'll tell you it's not their fault. As the member from Durham mentioned earlier, it's always somebody else's fault, isn't it?

In all seriousness, Bill 13 is political window dressing at its finest. It touches our deepest feelings and our passion for our families and our loved ones, but it does really little to help our loved ones or our small businesses, who are struggling right now, not only to keep their doors open but to keep these very people that this bill pretends to protect employed. It provides eight weeks; this bill provides eight weeks of leave for people who need to take care of their family members who are seriously ill. It sounds great, right?

But there's a catch. As the member from Durham and the member from Prince Edward–Hastings mentioned, you don't get paid for it—small catch.

The best part is that the government is expecting the federal government to provide EI coverage for people on this leave. As my colleague the member from Cambridge pointed out a few weeks ago, the government knows full well what the answer will be. It will be no.

Interjection.

Mr. Rod Jackson: They at least know that they can't afford it. At least they've got enough sense to realize what they can and can't afford.

As a result of eight long years of Liberal mismanagement, our once-great province is now taking welfare cheques from that very government. They're already giving us enough money; they're not about to hand out more. Now the Premier and the government is actually asking for more money.

What is even more mind-blowing is that he hasn't even asked yet—hasn't even asked the federal government yet. So we're just assuming it's going to happen.

So let's face it: The average hard-working Ontarian can't afford to take this leave, especially people who are already incurring large costs, often large costs, for the very family members that they have to take the leave to give care to.

Let's talk about some of the increases that businesses are already incurring and families are incurring with the increases to hydro through the global adjustment. The Auditor General stated that the Premier's green energy experiment alone explains 56% of the increases to people's hydro bills. I don't know about you, but walking around and knocking on 30,000 to 40,000 doors like I did in the past year, that was something that people were talking about. It's hurting them hard, all the time—especially small businesses.

I have a good friend who has a butcher shop; he can barely keep the doors open. He actually went and employed seven people from another butcher shop in Barrie that got shut down purely because of the hydro costs. He can't shut down his freezers in the middle of the day. He can't choose when he turns on and off his power. He can't make that decision. He doesn't have a choice. He has got to keep his meat cold. Yet he still took seven extra employees from that butcher shop when it got shut down and employed them in his place, and he makes nothing from that. That's an employer who cares about his employees and has a good sense of conscience that can be appealed to.

That's what we need to be talking to employers about. We have to be consulting with them about these sorts of things; that's the main point. There is no consultation.

There is no demonstrable need for this. The best practice is for an employer and an employee to negotiate a proposition: "Let's talk." You can't legislate everything. It's just one thing after another, whether you're legislating about what kind of food they can eat in their cafeterias, whether you can talk about how many days—the minister already mentioned they get a 10-day emergency leave.

I tell you, as an HR professional, most people never use it. Part of the reason they never use it is because they don't know it exists in the first place. Most employers don't know it exists, and if they do know it exists, they don't know how to administer it. If they do know how to administer it, they know that the employer has to get a note from the employee saying that they have reasonable cause to believe that they're ill. There are a number of different things that the doctor has to go through to prove that they're actually eligible for the emergency leave. They don't know that. It's either getting abused or it's not getting used. That's what is going to happen to this: It's going to get abused or it's not going to get used. It's not going to benefit anybody. It's just window dressing.

Nobody is trying to deny leave for loved ones. No one wants to deny care for loved ones.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Yes, you are. That's exactly what you're doing.

Mr. Rod Jackson: The government can imply that we don't love our loved ones and we don't want to care for

them and paint this picture that we're awful. But, you know what? The reality of the situation, the pragmatics of it are that we can't afford it, people won't know about it, they won't know how to administer it and the cost is going to be immense for businesses that are already struggling.

My colleague from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington pointed out that during the minister's briefing the minister's own staff provided no data that there is demonstrable need for this bill. There's no reason for the government to table this bill other than to score some political points by playing on people's emotions. We see that a lot from the other side.

0930

Bill 30 is poorly thought out. For one, it doesn't provide a guideline as to what constitutes a serious medical condition. If the government leaves such an important definition free for interpretation, it's highly likely that this intended bill will turn into a dysfunctional disaster, and I will attest to that, having worked for 20 years in the human resources field. This will not work.

For example, a small business owner may be forced to give leave to an employee who should not be qualified for the leave. I've seen that happen so many times, and usually it's because an employer doesn't know the rules around the whole leave.

Especially when we're talking about small employers that employ five or less employees—we just keep piling the regulations on these people so it makes it harder and harder to do business. Anyone who has talked to a small business owner for more than five minutes will tell you that they know there's a burden that makes it so difficult for them to do business that they don't want to do business anymore; they want to get out of it and go work for somebody else. We're losing the biggest employers in our province because we're regulating their businesses to death. It's not fair.

If one of these people go on leave, how does the government expect a small business to carry out its daily operations? They can't. If someone goes for eight weeks, and a small business loses one quarter of its employee workforce, they've got to hire someone else. How do they do that? There are already regulations that make it so difficult to hire someone part-time or for a short time. Imagine trying to find someone who has got a specific skill set to fill that gap for that short period of time. You're going to kill that business in many cases; they're not going to be able to do it.

I go back to the butcher. Try to find a qualified butcher who can actually afford to let one of his people go for up to eight weeks. You can't do it. It doesn't make any sense.

Let's be real about what's happening here. This will not help employers. It won't help employees, certainly ones who need a paycheque, because you're taking more and more and more out of their pockets every single day. They can't afford to have more.

Conversely, an employee who should be qualified for leave isn't given one because the doctor doesn't think there's a serious medical condition.

Good laws should have clear definitions so that we know what they're talking about; this one doesn't. It falls woefully short of the simple and commonsensical expectation.

Furthermore, Bill 30 is unnecessarily rigid in many ways. The bill dictates that an employee may take leave only in periods of entire weeks—a week being a period of seven days starting and ending on Saturday. As a result, this is an unreasonable clause. A caregiver has to either take extra unpaid days off—delaying care and delivery to the following Monday. There's no clear rationale behind this unnecessary and unreasonable restriction. This doesn't make sense.

The bill needs lots more thought. I agree with my colleague from Essex: If this does go to committee, it needs some severe changes to make it work.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's funny how sometimes we disagree as to where we're coming from philosophically, but at the end of the day I tend to agree with what he said: that the bill, as it is written, won't be that useful.

If we look at the definition which is not there, the bill only applies to serious medical conditions. "Serious medical condition," unfortunately, has not been defined in the bill, but it is terminology that has been commonly used by insurance companies. People who have insurance to cover themselves if they get sick have used this terminology of "serious medical condition." The definition already exists elsewhere in the health care system, but it has not been defined in the law.

My guess is that once a health provider, a family physician or a nurse practitioner finds herself in front of a client where it's requested of them that they sign a caregiver leave and they know that the regulation to sign one of those is a serious medical condition, they will be really, really hesitant to sign one of those for the 91-year-old who doesn't hear very good anymore and doesn't see very good anymore and has trouble walking, because he needs a walker. He would certainly benefit from having his caregiver come to a specialist appointment with him because going there by himself may be difficult—sometimes the parking, the transportation. Once he's there, he doesn't always understand what the physician is trying to say. He would very much benefit from having his caregiver come to that appointment with him, but he would not qualify for a serious medical condition. So I agree that the bill is very limited in its usefulness right now.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I just want to follow up on one issue the member for Barrie raised, which—I've always found this very disconcerting about the Conservative Party, Mr. Speaker. They love to beat up on Ontario. Western Conservatives, whom I used to run against in Manitoba, love to tell everyone that Ontario is the problem. Then, our own members love to tell us that we're the problem as well. That's why I'm proud to be a Liberal.

Some \$23 billion goes out of this province. When I was mayor of Winnipeg, if it wasn't for Ontario, they wouldn't have a floodway and a human rights museum, because Ontario taxpayers are paying for that. Ontario taxpayers pay for higher subsidies in Quebec for settlement money and in western Canada, including housing programs. When are you going to stand up for this province? Some \$23 billion. Quite frankly, this is just absurd to me.

Employment insurance covers leave. Why wouldn't it? If you actually, as you so often do on issues like Bill 13 and others, believe in this stuff, vote for it. We have a right to employment insurance like everybody else. We have the lowest level of per capita spending of any provincial government, and we subsidize, with the exception of Alberta and Saskatchewan, public services so they can have lower taxes and have more services. And if you compare us to Quebec, they've got a good deal. Ontarians deserve the same deal from Confederation that Quebecers and Manitobans do. I'm proud to be a Canadian and I'm proud to have lived in three provinces. If you lived in Manitoba or you lived in Quebec for significant parts of your life, you'd know that we don't get the deal other provinces do. This economy, for most of our lifetime, and today, and for most of the next decade, will continue to pay the freight.

I owned and operated a business in this province, Mr. Speaker. We paid low taxes. Taxes on small business are 18% less than they were when you were in power. It is easier to do business in Ontario than it ever has been, and I paid less taxes under a Liberal government, as a corporation and as a small business, than I did under a Tory, so if this is unacceptable to you, maybe you can apologize for your taxation record in government.

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

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I've never been so proud to be a PC, and I'm going to stand here right now and tell you something. I was on the committee for Bill 13, and I want to tell you something: I was never so ashamed to be on that. First and foremost, we had five days of deliberation with 90 people who came in. If all I have is my word, I owed it to them to have a voice in what was said in that. We took one of the 17 amendments that we had, and I was embarrassed that, out of all the things that were said, we didn't come together, first and foremost.

Second of all, we stand here, and I am a conduit and a vessel to my constituents of Burlington—and we all are. This is our job: to educate the people on what is going on in this Legislature so they can go back and they understand. The best part about this is that we are all people from different places, and we all deserve to be here to give the people the information that they need from different eyes, because we're all unique people.

But I want to explain something else. When we stand here today, this is another example of what comes from the government when it's their agenda and not what is everybody else's agenda. They need to listen to what people are saying, because we're not listening. I can't be

the only person in here with our PC caucus who is knocking on doors and listening to people, and they're dumbfounded at what exactly goes on in this House. We are a minority government that all needs to work together, and it amazes me that we do not because it still acts like a majority government over there.

So I'm standing here to say today that I am proud, never prouder, that I am a PC. I will stand here to say that if we ever needed a change, we need it now, and we need to be standing here for the constituents who we all represent, as conduits and vessels, to continue to be the voice for them.

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

M. Michael Mantha: Ça me fait plaisir de tout le temps me lever ici dans la Chambre pour adresser ce qui concerne les Ontariens, spécifiquement pour cette pièce. Et puis, il faut qu'on ait de la discussion. C'est une bonne étape de présenter ce projet de loi par en avant. Je parlerai à mon collègue du Parti conservateur où il indique qu'il y a un attachement, il y a un problème, il y a un obstacle pour les personnes qui trouvent la période de demande—qu'il faut que tu prennes une pleine semaine. Franchement, moi je regarderais ça de l'autre bord. C'est que l'employeur peut maintenant avoir la discussion avec son employé qui dit : « Oui, je prends la pleine semaine. » Maintenant, l'employeur peut se mettre dans une position où, vraiment, il peut regarder toute la pleine période que la personne va être partie de l'ouvrage.

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I hear what my colleague from the Progressive Conservatives had said: that when you're looking at the entire week's period that an individual has to take in regard to this bill—he refers to it as being stringent and being an obstacle for an employer. I look at it another way: that maybe that is of a great benefit to the employer where there will be a set time set aside for an individual to take that period.

But we have to remember also that in these small businesses that are going to be affected—and large businesses as well—you know who your workforce is. You have that ability and you have that flexibility to work with them. When somebody is actually affected by a loved one who is in need of care, not only is the employee being affected, but the employer is also being affected because they are aware of the situation.

You're right: Small businesses are the backbone of many Ontario communities and rural Ontario communities. We do need to have the discussions in order to identify what exactly are the steps that need to be taken by employers and employees so we can make this a benefit.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Barrie, you have two minutes.

Mr. Rod Jackson: I've heard a couple of times from the opposite side that somehow or another they're trying to get people to believe that we over here don't stand up for the people of Ontario, and we're not proud of On-

tario. You know what? Nobody believes that. We didn't work as hard as we did to get here and get these seats because we don't care about our communities and we don't care about Ontario.

It's not Ontario that's the problem; not at all. It's the government of Ontario that's the problem. That's why we need it to change, and we need it to be responsible to the people who elected it.

We also need to remember that we need to help support people who don't have jobs. There are hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people who don't have jobs. In Barrie, we have one of the highest unemployment rates in the country for a city of its size. We bounce off the bottom with Windsor now. When I tell people that, they're surprised. They can't believe it. "What's wrong in Barrie?" What's wrong is that businesses are being regulated so badly it is being made so difficult to do business in Ontario.

I've been a small business owner in Canada, in Ontario, as well. I have lived in other provinces; I lived in other countries for a number of years. I'm proud to be in Ontario. I'm proud to have established a business in Ontario. I'm proud to have worked for employers in Ontario. I'm proud to have been an employee in Ontario, too.

This bill doesn't do anything substantially or tangibly to help the employers or the employees in Ontario—full stop. It is pure window dressing from the government side to build on people's emotions and really does absolutely nothing to help the people who really need the help. It makes tons of assumptions about how it's going to get paid for without actually giving any substantial study or thought to stakeholders.

If I talk to employers in Barrie, large and small, about this—in fact, I have received lots of correspondence from them. They don't want it. They're saying the same thing I am: less regulation and more paying attention to the real employers in the province.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: I am very pleased this morning to have this opportunity to participate in the second reading debate of Bill 30, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver leave. The short title of this bill, as the government has articulated it, is the Family Caregiver Leave Act (Employment Standards Amendment), 2011.

Mr. Speaker, this bill was first introduced in this House on December 8. So it was almost six months ago. It has been called for debate from time to time when the government is uncertain or unsure of what to do to fill this Legislature's time. It would appear to be sort of a place-keeping bill that the government calls from time to time just to kind of fill in time and fill in airtime.

Our caucus has spoken to this bill extensively. This morning, we had participation from the members from Prince Edward–Hastings and Barrie, both of whom come from constituencies that have many concerns about many other issues that are facing the province, obviously, as

well as this one. We have a jobs crisis in the province of Ontario. We have huge issues with respect to energy—and, of course, wind energy is a big issue in many ridings in the province of Ontario.

We have the equine industry. Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity on Tuesday night to attend a big public meeting in Wellington county that was organized by the warden of Wellington county, Chris White, and the county council. There were hundreds of people there who were very, very concerned about the potential devastation of the equine industry because of the government's decision to end the slots-at-racetracks program. Randy Pettapiece, my colleague from Perth–Wellington, was also there. At the end of the meeting we had the chance to address the crowd, to speak to them about what we're going to do. I indicated a willingness to continue to work on their behalf, to advocate their concerns.

Clearly, the government is not listening, but we would urge particularly the members of cabinet, who have an opportunity to speak in the inner sanctum, behind closed doors in the cabinet meetings, to seriously re-evaluate this issue, because I believe it's going to cost taxpayers more than what it will save, if anything. I think in fact it's going to be shown to be one of the big boondoggles of the provincial government at the appropriate time when we see the books after the next government takes office.

I do digress, Mr. Speaker, and I must return to the discussion on Bill 30, and I recognize that. This bill, if we were to listen to the government and believe them, would purport to create a family caregiver leave, added to the Employment Standards Act. "Under section 49.3, an employee is entitled to a leave of absence without pay to provide care or support to a family member who has a serious medical condition. An employee may take up to eight weeks per calendar year with respect to each family member described in the section or prescribed by regulation. Entitlement to family caregiver leave is in addition to any entitlement to family medical leave under section 49.1 and personal emergency leave under section 50."

Our caucus, again—as I said, we've discussed this bill now for 11 hours. It's interesting that the government seems to think this is an important priority, yet six months into it we still haven't concluded the debate. We're down to 10-minute speeches, but at the same time, 11 hours of debate—the government hasn't called it on a consistent basis; just from time to time when it doesn't know what else to call.

Obviously, if this place is to be relevant, we need to be responding to the day-to-day concerns of the people of Ontario. Again, there are all kinds of concerns that are brought to my attention in my constituency office on Fridays. My staff work on them through the week and I get back when I can, obviously, to participate in those discussions with my constituents. I have to say that this doesn't come up very often in my riding office.

From time to time I've heard concerns about this, and I think that most compassionate employers who want to retain staff over time would take a compassionate approach. If staff need time off to deal with urgent family

matters, I think that most employers are probably already doing this sort of thing. But the government seems to feel that it's necessary to make some sort of value statement that it's doing something to ensure that this happens in every case, and I understand that.

I also recognize some of the points that were made by the members for Prince Edward–Hastings and Barrie on the concerns that small businesses have. Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business will tell you that coming out of a recession—we're still in economic difficulty, obviously, with the jobs situation, but coming out of a recession, it's the small business sector that is the most dynamic in terms of job creation, and up to 80% of new jobs tend to be in the small business sector. Surely, that being the case, we want to encourage small business, we want to get behind small business, we want to evaluate the level of regulation, red tape and the level of tax that small business is facing.

That has always been the focus of our caucus, and we've brought forward those concerns for years. Obviously, when we were in government between 1995 and 2003, it was a big focus of ours. Small business contributed to the creation of more than a million jobs in the province of Ontario, encouraged and supported by the Harris and Eves governments.

Under the McGuinty government, I hear consistently from business people that the provincial government is in no way supportive of small business. In fact, the level of regulation, red tape, and the level of tax has never been worse. I even hear comments that it's worse under the McGuinty Liberals than it was under the Bob Rae government, the New Democrats, between 1990 and 1995. At that time, certainly when I was here, we considered the level of tax, red tape and regulation to be killing jobs and small business, and oppressive.

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I think the government needs to obviously listen to the opposition in this regard. We have all kinds of ideas to bring forward, and certainly in a minority Parliament, I would venture to suggest, we have an obligation to bring forward constructive suggestions and ideas. It's not good enough just to be obstructionist and present the opposition. Although we do have an obligation to do that too, I would say we also have a commensurate obligation to bring forward constructive, good ideas from our side of the House. We've tried to do that.

Unfortunately, the McGuinty government has been more or less unwilling to co-operate with us. Of course, they point the finger at us in terms of our perceived unwillingness to work with them, but I would suggest that the latter is actually—we are prepared to work with them. We're certainly making an effort. We're trying to bring forward ideas. We have a considerable number of ideas with respect to elimination of red tape and regulation. Of course, this government is looking to solve the fiscal problem that they face, that they created, largely, with higher taxes and higher regulation on small business. Again, we would encourage the government to consider some of these ideas.

Certainly, our position on this bill has been brought forward, as I said, by a number of our colleagues. We have pointed out the fact that the minister's staff provided an initial briefing on the legislation to our caucus and gave us this information. We were told that this bill is intended to introduce a proposed family caregiver's leave for up to eight unpaid weeks per year. To qualify for the leave, the employee must be caring for an individual whom a physician has deemed to have a critical injury or illness and cannot care for themselves. We are told the leave will mirror the family medical leave significantly, except it will not include the provision of significant risk of death within a 26-week period.

Currently, before this bill was introduced, we were told that there are only two leaves available to workers in Ontario that are protected under the Employment Standards Act. Family medical leave is unpaid, job-protected leave of up to eight weeks in a 26-week period, but for an employee to be eligible, a qualified health practitioner must issue a certificate stating that the individual to be cared for has a serious medical condition with a significant risk of death occurring within a period of 26 weeks.

Under the federal Employment Insurance Act, six weeks of employment insurance benefits may be paid to EI-eligible employees under this leave. That, of course, has been discussed in the context of this debate: whether or not the federal government has been adequately consulted in this regard; offloading the responsibility for this provincial legislation onto the federal government, expecting them to pay for it. Certainly, we would have to call attention to that and question whether or not that's appropriate.

Personal emergency leave: Some employees have the right to take up to 10 days of unpaid, job-protected leave each calendar year, due to illness, injury and certain other emergencies and urgent matters. This leave is only eligible for individuals who work for a company that regularly employs more than 50 employees.

Again, we have concerns about this bill. During the initial briefing, the Ministry of Labour staff could not cite any demand for this proposed leave, nor could they cite any circumstances or instances where employees had asked for leave to care for a family member and were terminated as a result. The Ministry of Labour also has not yet briefed any stakeholder groups whom this bill could significantly affect.

In short, our caucus has concerns. We're not sure that this bill is the right way to go. We do encourage the government to send this bill to committee so that we can have an opportunity to hear from many of the interested groups and individuals. I think that's appropriate and prudent, and I hope that can happen soon.

I know that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has a real interest in this and, I'm sure, would want to participate in those discussions. They are the voice of small business. I think that to the extent that we, as a minority Legislature, can work with small business and work with the people who speak on their behalf through the CFIB, obviously we're going to be acting in the public interest.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your indulgence this morning in listening to my comments, and I encourage all members of this House to consider the comments of the official opposition with respect to Bill 30.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was interesting to listen to the comments that were made by the previous member on a number of issues. The first one is that you have to realize that this bill will only be needed when your employer doesn't co-operate. Right now in Ontario, people who find themselves looking after their loved ones—most of the time, their employers know. Most of the time, their employers are sympathetic and have already put into place as much flexibility as they can.

I mean, let's face it: Whether you are an employer or an employee, everybody has a heart. If you know that you're looking after a dying mother or you're looking after a very disabled person and you're also holding down a job, your employer will know about this. You will have had to have chats with your employer about requesting flexibility etc. This bill will only apply when you have gone to your employer and explained to them that you are the primary caregiver for somebody, usually for years and years, and then your employer does not comply; your employer does not give you the flexibility that you need.

When you look at those people—I remember the Parkinson Society coming to talk to me about this bill and saying, "When our members need to go for cataract surgery, for example, you need to put little drops in your eyes. You need to do this four times a day. So the caregiver would like to sneak back at home four times a day to put the drops in, but the bill does not allow you to do this." The bill says, "You should take a whole week." Everybody loses. The worker doesn't want a full week, the employer doesn't want a full week, but that's all we have to offer. We have to do better.

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

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I just wanted to thank the member from Wellington-Halton Hills for his comments. I think he started out with his comments kind of in a way that was not helpful and that he talked about more pressing issues, and I can't think of anything more pressing when somebody has somebody ill at home.

I guess I heard from the PC caucus a number of comments with regard to the fact that we hadn't consulted and that we hadn't been talking to small business. I just want to remind people—I raised this before when I spoke about the bill—the Human Resources Professionals Association did a survey back in January and they got 616 responses. These respondents worked almost exclusively for large companies which were able to implement these internal policies. Some 95.6% of those 616 responses supported the idea of family caregiver leave. That's a very high incidence.

A majority of those respondents noted that the issue is timely and urgent. They said it had an impact on many Canadians across Canada. The respondents also noted that it was a complicated issue. I think everybody here

has acknowledged that. They said it was difficult to legislate and difficult to administer. I think that's what we've heard this morning. But they also gave the government support and credit for addressing it. They noted that the legislation was progressive and that it was a step in the right direction for Ontario. Many commented that through the sheer force of demographics, their companies have already been forced to address this issue. So you can put your head in the sand, or you can decide to address the issue. That's what this legislation is trying to do.

I guess I would close; I have about 20 seconds left. One of the comments in the response was, "This is an excellent retention initiative. It is costly to recruit, select and train new employees. It is better to allow for family care leave than to go through the process of hiring a new employee. Although small companies may find it difficult to deal with an extended absence, they manage to do so for apprenticeship training and other extended absences."

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

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate the opportunity to comment regarding the member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

I have to tell you, if you look at individual cases, it's something that needs to be addressed. Very specifically, it states in subsection (2), "An employee is entitled to a leave of absence without pay to provide care or support to an individual described in subsection (4) if a qualified health practitioner issues a certificate stating that the individual has a serious medical condition."

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, the concern here is the seven-day provision in regard to that. I'll give you an example. My aunt, Chacha Mary, as she's known, had a knee replacement where she had an epidural that paralyzed her. My mother is the one who is now driving to Toronto to pick her up because of the problems that are taking place with Wheel-Trans. Wheel-Trans would send an individual—they end up sending cabs, and she cannot walk or get into a cab, so my mother ends up driving from Oshawa to Toronto in order to pick her up to get in for some care to try and assist her. We're going through a very difficult time in this particular case. A seven-day provision in order to assist an individual is not something that's going to be functional in this particular case.

What we want to see is the ability to assist these individuals in matters that's going to be functional. In order to take a seven-day leave for an individual in similar situations would be very problematic for a lot of people, where more specific opportunities to target those individuals who are in the care and need that specific assistance, where possible, would be very beneficial to a lot. I think that a lot of provisions that need to be addressed—such as this—through the committee process and other aspects would be far more beneficial to the individuals in doing what the government wants to assist with.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to rise and address the comments made by the member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

The idea of giving leave for people who have to look after parents or relatives who are ill is not, in itself, a bad idea. What concerns us is that the bill is very narrow. The bill is put forward in a context where there is not adequate home care, not adequate support for caregivers in this province. Like many of the bills that we've had to address and debate in this chamber, the bill gives a sense of there being forward motion, with, in fact, the impact being fairly negligible. That's a huge concern, Speaker.

You and I and many of the people in this chamber have gone door to door in our ridings, talked to people at the door. I've talked to people in my riding who have come to the door clearly exhausted, particularly seniors, women, who are looking after husbands who have severe health problems: Alzheimer's, cardiac conditions. They're exhausted. They need much more than this bill. Certainly they need to be in a position where family can come and help them when they have an extreme situation, but they need ongoing support, which they currently can't get. So not only does the primary person who's dealing with the illness have great difficulties, suffering from lack of support, but their caregiver has their health pushed to the limit, their health endangered as well.

I don't see a reason to vote against this bill, but I don't expect a huge improvement in the situation if it does pass.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Wellington–Halton Hills, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to thank the members who offered comments with respect to the remarks that I made this morning. The Minister of Labour intervened as well.

I would invite the government members to participate in this debate this morning. I'm not sure why the government members—there are a number of them here. The ranks are a little thin this morning, I have to say, in the House, but at the same time there appears to be a quorum, and we would certainly invite the Liberal members to participate in this bill. If they feel so strongly about it and believe so passionately that Bill 30 needs to be passed, I encourage them to stand up and talk about Bill 30. We would certainly be interested in their views, and we can continue to debate this issue.

I thought the member for Nickel Belt and the member for Oshawa made constructive suggestions with respect to my comments. Both of them talked about the lack of flexibility for real family situations. You may need a half a day off, but you actually have to take a week off under this legislation, unpaid. That doesn't provide the flexibility that many families would need if they're facing these situations.

The member for Nickel Belt said everybody has a heart—employers and employees—and I certainly agree with that. As I said in my comments, the vast majority of employers and workplaces, when they want to retain good employees, are willing to make compromises in

terms of these kinds of situations. Prudent employers who want to retain their excellent staff keep informed about their family situations to the extent that it's possible, and if an employee is facing a family crisis, they would want to ensure that that employee has the opportunity to address it in a compassionate way. We all have families, we all have hearts, as the member for Nickel Belt said. I have confidence that the vast majority of employers are already prepared to do this without the need for government legislation.

The Minister of Labour said that this is a very pressing issue, but it's interesting that the House has been debating this for almost seven months.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm proud to join the debate on Bill 30, the Family Caregiver Leave Act. I know that our outstanding labour critic, the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, and our deputy critic, the member for Chatham–Kent–Essex, have both previously spoken very eloquently, outlining some very serious concerns with this bill. I have to tell you that I tend to join with them in questioning the purpose of this particular piece of legislation that we're debating this morning.

Of course, I want to start by stressing that I think every member of this House, and indeed every Ontarian, has the utmost respect for family caregivers. If I believed that this bill, as it's currently written, would do anything to extend real help to these families and individuals, I know that the members of our caucus would be supportive.

But certainly, as a representative in Leeds and Grenville, I have to say that I speak from a little bit of experience. Like so many people in my riding and across the province, I have a very personal understanding of the incredible stress and strain that accompanies an illness in the family. It's a difficult, almost heart-wrenching process to care for a loved one who is ill. There's the pain and heartbreak of seeing someone you love, whether it's a parent, a sibling, a spouse or a child, become seriously ill and knowing, in too many cases, that they won't recover.

This heartbreak is compounded when the role of a caregiver is suddenly thrust upon a family. Immediately, grief is compounded with the fear of the unknown. There's no training to prepare for the role of a family caregiver and the physical, financial and emotional toll that it would take on a family. I know that you can't schedule when the call is going to come for help. It could be in the middle of the day, in the middle of the night or anywhere in between. It's a monumental task that can overwhelm even the strongest and most resourceful of individuals and families. So I want to take the first part of my time to applaud every family member in this province who selflessly puts their own lives and those of their families on hold in order to care for someone they love in their most vulnerable state.

My questions about the bill aren't to suggest that I don't have compassion for family caregivers. But I'm

afraid that I'm very disappointed in seeing that this bill fails to deliver really anything meaningful to the table this morning.

On its surface, the bill sounds very well intentioned. Employees will be provided up to eight weeks of unpaid leave to care for a loved one who suffers from a serious illness. But again, I want to go back to the comments from the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, who stated during the earlier debate that this is yet another piece of legislation that the McGuinty Liberals have thrust upon this House without any due diligence. It sounds very promising on the surface, but again, as I think he said or perhaps the member for Chatham–Kent–Essex said, once you shine the light of scrutiny on the bill, you really start to see the flaws that are there.

There are too many examples in this province of what happens when this government rushes through a piece of legislation without consultation. You could even say, Minister, that that's one without proper consultation. The Green Energy Act, as certainly we all acknowledge on this side of the House, has tremendous flaws. We have consistently, over the last several months, tried to put forward some very strong amendments and strong bills to resolve that. I remember, as a relatively new member of this Legislature, being in a committee that debated the Far North Act and all of the changes as this government opposite thrust that through without consultation. Once again, we're seeing that with the Family Caregiver Leave Act.

The minister has simply failed to consult with key stakeholders. She even mentioned this morning in her remarks that she mentioned the bill when speaking to the Human Resources Professionals Association. She even had a chat with some of the members after her remarks. With respect, I must say, Minister, that's a very, very poor way to have consultation on a bill. Personally, I wouldn't be bragging about it here this morning.

Only a government like this one, that has run roughshod over business with increased red tape and regulation, would come and speak to a group and acknowledge that they're consulting with them after they've already tabled a piece of legislation.

The minister also talked about this statistic this morning, which she mentioned that day with HRP, where they did a survey and showed that 95.6% of their respondents looked favourably upon the concept of family caregiver leave. Well, of course they do. Who wouldn't, without having the bill in front of them, agree with that concept? I'm actually surprised it's not 100% rather than 95.6%. But I'm sure that if they had seen Bill 30 at the time, there would be no way that there would be 95.6%. Why? Because these same HRP professionals would be dealing with a vague piece of legislation that foists yet more regulations and red tape onto them.

In fact, if the minister truly wanted to consult HRP, I bet you that some of the questions I would guess they would ask would have been included in this bill, questions like: Why isn't something as basic as serious illness

defined in this act? How do businesses manage to afford replacing workers who are on leave, particularly the small businesses?” Ontario businesses already have had five new leaves of absence created in the past seven years. The question I’m sure some of these professionals would ask is, do we really need a sixth? Real consultation, I think, would have raised those types of questions and allowed them to be incorporated in the act before its presentation, not when it was presented during committee.

I know many of my colleagues have talked about engaging in more discussion with some of the stakeholders during the next phase of this bill. But I guess, when you look at a piece of legislation, as a Legislature, you really have to ask two questions: Does a problem exist? And will this law fix it?

Minister, in this case, I don’t think anyone on this side of the House, on the government side of the House, has indicated a problem exists. In fact, as the member for Wellington–Halton Hills said, we’re getting very little action from the government this morning in this debate. I think they’re missing the opportunity to talk about whether a problem exists. If a problem does exist, then stand up in your place and talk about it.

In fact, I would suggest that the minister can’t demonstrate any meaningful way that Ontario employers are currently denying their employees companionate leave. Yet we’re debating legislation that presumes there’s a problem and that it’s up to a government, this government, to fix it. I have to tell you that businesses are extremely skeptical of that government trying to fix a problem through legislation.

Let’s get back to the assumption of the bill, because certainly, Speaker, the government opposite wouldn’t play any games with this bill. The underlying implication of Bill 30—I have just a few moments left—is that employers large and small aren’t providing this compassion. One of the things that I want to close with is this government’s lack of support for the business sector. I can remember back at the end of February, February 29, the refusal of the government opposite to support the motion of our leader, Tim Hudak, to continue the planned reduction of the business tax. They said during the election that they would support it and then they turned tail and ran from it on February 29.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed till 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I’m delighted to stand on behalf of my colleague Deb Matthews and me and introduce some very special guests here to support Kendra Squire, who is one of the pages. We have Phil Squire and Yolanda Squire, her parents; grandmother Mariane

Vantol; grandfather Peter Vantol; and great-uncle Harry Linstram. I ask everybody to welcome them here to the Legislature.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I would like to welcome Mrs. Dace Phillips, a retired Bell Canada employee who resides in the riding of Richmond Hill. She is joined today by her daughter Alex Phillips, who happens to be a member of my staff. I want to welcome them to Queen’s Park.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: We have a guest in the House who has travelled a long way to see us today, and that is Dr. Charles Mulli from Mully Children’s Family in Kenya. He’s accompanied today by Frank Tilley, the chair of the Mully Children’s foundation in Canada. Many members will remember they helped to raise a bulldozer that was sent over to that country and has done remarkable work. Dr. Mulli is here.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It gives me great pleasure to introduce my wife, Patty Fedeli, who is here in the gallery today.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to welcome to the Legislature today, seated in the east members’ gallery, Gyanendra Badgaiyan, Kahan Singh Pannu, Ajeet Singh Pannu and Nidhi Sharma. They are four members of the 115-member Indian administrative services team on a week-long foreign-study training mission in Toronto. They are in the House today to observe question period and also to take in a tour of our historic Legislative Building.

Mr. Speaker, IAS officers in India perform the same function as our deputy ministers and ADMs in the Ontario public service, and I want to extend them a very warm welcome.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It’s my pleasure to introduce the family of page Hannah Symington in the west members’ gallery: her mom, Rev. Joanne Symington, and her brother Nathan. They’re visiting Queen’s Park. Thank you, and welcome here today.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It’s a pleasure to invite everyone today to join with us in our Tibetan community in room 228 for some fabulous Tibetan food and an experience of Tibetan culture. That’s right after question period, in room 228.

Mr. Kim Craiton: I am pleased to introduce in the members’ gallery two special individuals from the riding of Niagara Falls. I have Peter Conradi, the publisher of Bullet News Niagara, and Bullet News reporter John Robbins. Peter lives in St. Catharines. John lives in Fort Erie. They’re here today specifically to cover the second reading of my private member’s bill for grandparents’ rights under the Children’s Law Reform Act. Welcome, Peter and John to Queen’s Park.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My wife has found where I work, and she has come to watch me work today. Welcome, Jenn.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I am pleased to introduce Ian Leaper of Mississauga, who won a lunch with his MPP and is here to watch question period for the first time.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It must be PC wives' day today at Queen's Park, Speaker. I would like to welcome my wife back to Queen's Park: Kate Bartz.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: It is my pleasure to welcome to the Ontario Legislature the grade 5 students from George B. Little Public School on Orton Park Road in Scarborough–Guildwood today.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I would like to introduce a good young student from Ryerson today visiting myself and Queen's Park: Ash Navabi.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to welcome Elio Riggillo and Louise Lambert, who are here today to collect on lunch with me, and I look forward to visiting with them.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's my privilege to welcome to Queen's Park this morning students from St. Mary's Catholic school of Campbellford, Ontario. Welcome.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted today to welcome Michele Farrugia here with us; he's here with Amy Swanson. Welcome, Michele. We're delighted to have you with us.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's a pleasure to welcome our summer intern from York University, Hasrat Kaur Grewal, and members of my staff—Fozy Ismail, Sharon Kaur and Christine Rettig—who make me look good every day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a delegation from the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, led by the Speaker of the Parliamentary Assembly, His Excellency Milorad Živković. That delegation is accompanied today by Her Excellency Biljana Gutić-Bjelica, ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Canada. Welcome to our Legislature of Ontario.

It is now time for oral questions—I'm sorry, leader. I have another introduction in the gallery today.

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery as well officers from the Rajya Sabha, the upper House or the Senate of the Parliament of India. They are led by Secretary General Dr. V.K. Agnihotri. The delegation is here to meet with their professional counterparts, the senior directors of the Legislative Assembly staff. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature as well.

Now that I've read all my notes, it is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Later on this afternoon, the Ontario PC caucus will be proud to stand in unison with our colleague Jeff Yurek, the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London, in support of Bill 92, a mandatory public sector wage freeze.

Premier, you have dithered and delayed. You've talked about getting public sector pay under control but

have failed to do so for years. As a result, we're plummeting towards a \$30-billion deficit. When you're spending \$1.8 million more every hour, 24 hours a day, seven days a week than you've taken in revenue, the time for action is now. Premier, will you support this good bill by Mr. Yurek and bring in a public sector wage freeze to save us \$2 billion each and every year?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question, but I would recommend to my honourable colleague that he also talk a little bit about the other private member's bill put forward by one of his colleagues, the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, whose bill proposes that we limit compensation to the annual rate of economic growth. That does not constitute a freeze, Speaker.

The fact of the matter is, there are conflicting positions within the official opposition. I find it interesting that the leader of the official opposition has not put forward a bill in his own name. The fact of the matter is, he's choosing among options put forward by his caucus.

I believe we have a shared—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: —which is dealing with compensation issues, Speaker, but they're just going about it the wrong way.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, back to the Premier: The problem is, the Premier is heading in no direction on this. He has dithered; he has delayed now for many years. As a result, we're heading towards a \$30-billion deficit. We have been downgraded by Moody's, put on negative credit watch by DBRS. In fact, Premier, if we don't act today, I worry that we'll get another downgrade.

I met you in your office back on November 8. I suggested this item. You rejected it out of hand. I am not going to give up, because it's the right thing to do. It's a fair thing to do, to say to all of us in the public sector, "No pay increases in the next two years." It will save us \$2 billion a year. I'll be here this afternoon with every member of the PC caucus in one voice, saying, "Bring in a wage freeze. Support Bill 92." Will you do the same, sir?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, Speaker, I say to my honourable colleague that I appreciate the intention behind the proposed private member's bill; I recognize his enthusiasm as well, but I would recommend to him that he take a look at the experience in the other provinces. They've all rejected that approach, Speaker, notwithstanding their varying political stripes. The federal government has also rejected that particular approach.

My colleague makes constant reference to the credit rating agencies. They're not unimportant in all of this, but they're looking for consistency; they're looking for an approach that is designed to be effective. Our approach, Speaker, is thoughtful, it's balanced and it's going to be effective, and that's why we reject the approach being offered by my honourable colleague.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, the bond rating service has put you on negative watch. They've downgraded you. This is clearly an indication that they gave your recent budget a failing grade. The only thing holding that's holding this ship together currently, the only thing that's keeping us afloat, is low interest rates. We all know that interest rates are going to rise and we're going to pay higher interest as a result of the downgrades caused by your failed budget that increases spending and increases taxes. A 1% increase in interest rates will cost us \$500 million a year in new payments—that could be 250,000 MRIs.

Premier, enough with the excuses. Stop kicking this can down the road, because it is some can: a \$30-billion deficit. The time for decisive action is now. Will you support Bill 92 to bring in an across-the-board wage freeze and save us \$2 billion each and every year?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We're not going to do it because it's not going to work. It's as simple as that.

Again, I say to my honourable colleague, we do have, in fact, some common ground here. We both understand that more than one half of the money that we spend on behalf of taxpayers goes into compensation. We both understand that there is a need to come to grips with that. I think that we have a much more thoughtful, a much more responsible approach, and it's guaranteed to be a much more effective approach when it comes to dealing with compensation in the province of Ontario.

I say to my honourable colleague, I commend him at least for putting forward a specific proposal. He was missing in action at the time of discussing the budget, Speaker, but at least he's making an effort today. It's just that he's going in the wrong direction.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Premier, you had an opportunity. I sat down with you; we were about two feet apart at your desk. I put this package on the table. I said it will save us \$2 billion a year, and I said, "Premier, if we don't act, I worry we'll get downgraded." The Premier ignored my advice, and we got downgraded. We got a failing grade by the credit agencies, and I'm worried it's going to happen again.

So, Premier, no more delays. We've heard all of your excuses. For some time, you said, "Well, we'll count on the goodwill of the union leaders." For some time, the Premier said, "Well, we don't like a pay freeze because of the catch-up pay." Then he said, "Well, Don Drummond is against it," which wasn't true, but that was one of their excuses. Now they're hiding behind other methods of delay. We can't afford it, Speaker, when we're hitting \$1.8 million an hour, digging a deeper hole.

Premier, no more delays. The time for action is now. Will you bring in a public sector wage freeze to save us \$2 billion a year and get our books back in order?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We will achieve those savings, Speaker, but we'll just achieve them in a way that's effective, in a way that works.

My honourable colleague says he's interested in saving, but he opposes our corporate tax freeze. He says he's interested in saving, but he opposes our business education tax freeze. He wants to proceed with corporate tax cuts, business tax cuts, at this point in history when clearly we can't afford to do so.

Instead, our priority is to protect health care, to protect education and to hit the pause button when it comes to compensation. I think that's balanced; I think it's thoughtful; I think it's responsible. It's exactly what Ontarians want us to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, the evidence is clear. Your plan has been a dramatic failure. Look at the 50 agreements that were negotiated last fall and winter: 49 had wage increases, some of which were way above what's happening in the private sector. So the notion that he wants to continue down this path is going to dig us into an even deeper and deeper hole.

Let me ask the Premier about his approach, which seems to be waiting for one-offs and negotiating contracts when they expire.

Premier, our bill is for the whole broader public sector. You don't negotiate directly with colleges, you don't negotiate directly with universities, you don't negotiate directly with hospitals or municipalities. Our bill, Bill 92, is across the board in the broader public sector.

Premier, does your approach include a wage freeze for the sectors you don't negotiate with directly—colleges, universities, hospitals and municipalities—or will you let sleeping dogs lie?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would recommend to my honourable colleague that he take a look at a Supreme Court of Canada decision that dealt with—

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Well, that body may not be of importance to them, Speaker, but I think it is to most Ontarians and Canadians.

I would recommend to them that they take a look at a particular decision that dealt with a measure adopted by the British Columbia government. They went ahead in the approach being recommended by my colleague. That matter was taken to court. It involved 9,000 employees. It ended up costing BC taxpayers \$85 million because of a mistake made by the BC government.

We have 1.2 million public sector employees, and I hesitate to think of the cost that would flow from this mistake were we to adopt this particular approach. So we're going to do something that is tried—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: —and designed to be effective on behalf of Ontario taxpayers.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Now, Speaker, we're at Liberal excuse number four. You had the Drummond, you had the catch-up pay, you had the goodwill of unions, and now a misinterpretation of a court case from 2001.

They say, “Well, we need to consult.” I have in my hand a document that says, “Finance Minister to Launch Consultations with Employers and Labour Leaders on Compensation.” They announced their consultation on July 19, 2010—more than two years of consultation, more than two years of delay. The time for action is now. And in British Columbia, they brought in a public sector wage freeze across the board. They’re getting their books back in balance. It’s time for action in Ontario.

You’ve had two years to act. You refuse to do so. The time is now. Support Bill 92. Rein in runaway spending. Balance the books in the province of Ontario. Get our economy moving again. Support a good bill that will help us get our financial house back in order. The time for decisive action—

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

Interjections.

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think Ontarians know the difference between sound bites and sound public policy.

I think Ontarians are asking what happened to the leader of the official opposition who said, on December 15, 2009, “Where collective bargaining agreements exist, I think you need to respect the collective bargaining process.” Then, in 2010, a year later, he said, “The approach that I think is the preferable approach, always, is the collective bargaining approach.” Then, he said about a year later, “We’ll consider all options on the table as a last resort...” Our first resort: open negotiations; bring their ideas to the table; we’ll look for responsible leadership.

I think Ontarians are entitled to ask what happened to that leader of the official opposition. If they’re going to be optimistic about the future, I want to them to consider that we’re on the job. We know what we’re doing. We’re putting forward a thoughtful, responsible, effective approach.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier told this House that legislating wages at this point in time “is simplistic. It has been rejected by all the other provinces and the federal government, notwithstanding varying political stripes.”

Can the Premier give us his opinion, then, Speaker, at what point it stops being simplistic to override collective bargaining?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I hope there are at least a few people watching the channel today, because they’ll get a sense—the official opposition says that we’re not going fast enough and the third party’s telling us that we’re going too fast. We’re right in the middle. We find ourselves in the extreme centre, or, as I like to call it, the far middle. That’s where we are as a party.

I say to my honourable colleague, we’ve set out our approach clearly in the budget. We will work as hard as

we can, in earnest and in all sincerity, with our public sector partners. We will sit down to the table. We’ll do everything that we can to negotiate an agreement. But at the end of the day, we must ensure that we live up to a fiscal plan that we put in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This week, the Premier is saying that legislated wages will backfire, yet just a few weeks ago, he was insisting that he was more than ready to do exactly that. He actually called on the leader of the official opposition to help him with that job.

If the Premier knows that these schemes that we’re talking about here are simplistic and that they are certain to fail, why, then, does he plan to use them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: What I’m saying is, first we talk—first we talk. My honourable colleague the leader of the official opposition renounces the talking approach. I think it’s very important that we sit down and enter into discussions with our teachers, with our doctors, with our broader public sector partners, through their direct employers. That’s an important process which we uphold, and I think my colleague the leader of the third party does as well.

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But we have to say something else on behalf of Ontario taxpayers. At the end of the day, if those discussions do not prove to be fruitful, if they don’t secure the agreement that we need to live up to our fiscal plan, then we will have to resort to other measures. We’ve been clear about that from day one.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, with each passing day, it gets less clear where the Premier actually stands. In fact, people are wondering if he actually knows where he stands anymore.

Just yesterday, the Premier noted that legislated wage schemes have actually failed in BC, failed in Ottawa, and they’re going to fail if they’re tried in the context here in Ontario. They’ve created pointless conflict and higher cost. If these simplistic schemes won’t work, why does the Premier keep saying that he’s willing to try them? If he has some secret plan, when is he going to share it with the people of Ontario and the other leaders across the country who haven’t yet been able to crack the code?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: So, again, for the benefit of those watching, what we have here in the official opposition—this would be the iron fist, this would be the velvet glove, and I think we’re probably a combination of the two. We’re trying to go about this with a velvet fist, Speaker.

We feel a sense of responsibility. We think that we owe it to our public sector partners, with whom we have worked so hard and so well and so effectively on behalf of Ontarians, whether it’s in our schools, in our health care system, in our colleges, in our universities and so many other sectors around the province—we owe it to them and we owe it to ourselves to sit down and work as hard as we can to come to terms.

But what we're saying as well, on behalf of all Ontario taxpayers, is, we've got to hit the pause button for a couple of years, given our fiscal circumstances. I think most people understand that.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier also stated: "We're into difficult discussions with our teachers, our partners there." In fact, today I think he actually used the word "sincerity" when he talked about those discussions. Yet most teacher representatives have actually walked away from bargaining in total frustration with the government. So can the Premier clarify exactly who it is that he's talking to these days?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I can say—
Interjection.

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty:—that discussions in fact do continue with our teachers. It would be our preference that more be represented there, but the fact of the matter is, the table is up and running. We continue to have discussions, and we always welcome the return of all of our federation partners.

I say as well, on the doctor front, that the Minister of Health had a very good meeting yesterday with representatives of Ontario doctors, and we look forward to fruitful discussions as we move forward into the future.

I think my honourable colleague recognizes these are not easy things, these are not easy discussions, but I believe there is a repository, a residue, of goodwill to be found in all of our public sector partners. They understand how far we've come together, they understand our fiscal reality, and they want to be part of the solution.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I've heard a lot from the people who teach our kids, who clean the schools and keep them safe, and they understand very well that times are tough and that money is tight. In fact, many have already said that they're ready to accept a wage freeze. But when they look to the Premier for a respectful discussion, they see him peddling simplistic schemes that he knows are not going to work—in fact, schemes that he plans to vote against this afternoon. Is the Premier really ready to roll up his sleeves and do the hard work that's necessary in collective bargaining?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would recommend to my honourable colleague, as I would to our public sector partners, that they take a look at our eight-year history and our previous two mandates as a government.

Let's take a look at our schools. We've had no strikes, we have smaller classes, we have higher test scores, we have higher graduation rates—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, come to order, for the second time.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We have a much higher rate of participation in our colleges and universities. I think we've made some tremendous progress. The fact of the matter is, while we can put in place some policy directions, while we can provide additional funding, at the end of the day we count on those people who work in our education system to deliver for us. They have delivered in a most remarkable way. We're considered to have the best schools now in the English-speaking world, and the credit for that lies with those people who work on the front lines. That's the record that we have with education in the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There's no doubt that it isn't always easy to reach across those divisions and find the solutions that work, but it beats the simplistic schemes that are destined to fail every single time.

Is the Premier prepared to make it clear today that he really does reject those simplistic schemes, and is he ready to actually roll up his sleeves and bargain appropriately and meaningfully, with a mind to getting negotiated collective agreements in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I think the leader of the third party has, in that last question, come very close to accurately representing what we've been doing for a long, long time now. The fact of the matter is that we have rejected simplistic solutions. We have, in fact, embraced a sincere discussion process with our public sector partners. It is not easy. These are difficult and challenging discussions that we are having. But again, we approached this in a respectful manner.

We believe that there is a tremendous amount of goodwill, based on the record that we've established with our teachers and doctors, for example, during the course of the past eight years. We think there's an understanding of our fiscal reality. We think there's a determination to come to grips with this by working together. We think that there is an honest belief on the part of all of our public sector partners that they've got to be part of the solution. We think that is to be found in hitting the pause button for a couple of years so that, together, we can inform our plans and live up to the fiscal reality of our day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'd like to make a point. Just in case you missed it, I've already started identifying individual members.

New question.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Premier. Premier, since 2003, public sector compensation has grown over 46%. Now, 55 cents of every dollar spent by the government goes to wages and benefits. These habits have led us down a path where we face a \$30-billion deficit by 2017. This prognosis erodes confidence in our province's finances and kills jobs. Moody's has told you this is a problem, S&P has told you this is a problem, and

the 600,000 unemployed Ontarians should show you that this is a problem. We need immediate and decisive action, and yet you've brought forward a budget that increases spending and makes it harder to do business in Ontario. Why, Mr. Premier, at a time when we need strong leadership, are you so intent on killing jobs by not taking necessary action to control the size and cost of government?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, in fact, the government is taking that action. As the Premier indicated earlier in question period, he is doing it in what I would call a responsible fashion that has a reasonable probability of passing and withstanding court challenge.

I would remind the member opposite: Over the course of the last three years we have in fact brought down the average rate of settlement below private sector agreements, below the federal government and below municipalities. There is in fact more to do. We have laid out a plan that takes \$6 billion out of compensation over the next three years. We need to achieve that in order to get back to balance.

Our current budget deficit is in the order of \$15 billion, and it is going down. We made important investments in hiring teachers and bringing on more doctors, and we're glad we did that because that's what Ontarians needed.

Our plan is responsible; it's balanced. It will be successful, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the Premier: Mr. Premier, our high deficits are killing jobs. Our province is the greatest province, yet nobody is investing here. Just last week, Timken in my riding announced it's closing its doors—another 150 jobs to the 6,000 jobs that have been lost due to your negligence. Your neglect and weak leadership will ensure that our 64-month streak of unemployment remains the highest in Canada. Further, your 2010 promise to negotiate a wage freeze was a failure.

This afternoon, we debate my private member's bill, which will save our province \$2 billion annually by mandating a public sector wage freeze. This bill will send a strong message to the credit rating agencies, businesses and investors, making Ontario strong again, and they will create jobs here and we will be the economic engine of Confederation.

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Because you've proven you can't do this yourself, will you at least stand up with the PC Party this afternoon and commit to reducing the deficit and—

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

Interjections.

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

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: No. In fact, the very day you introduced your bill, your colleague over there introduced another bill that ties wage increases to GDP—the

very, very same day. And on February 26 of this year, the member from Frontenac—I apologize if I've got the wrong riding; Lanark-Frontenac—wrote a piece in the National Post saying that Ontario should tie government wages to economic performance.

Mr. Speaker, you've got three different positions from three different members. They are, again, absent without leadership. Their plan would fail miserably, just like British Columbia's did. That's why Ottawa didn't do it. That's why Alberta didn't do it. That's why Saskatchewan didn't do it. That's why Manitoba didn't do it. That's why Quebec didn't do it. That's why Newfoundland didn't do it. That's why Nova Scotia didn't do it.

We have a responsible plan that will get the budget back to balance as we move to protect health and education from the kind of cuts that that party would impose on them.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre.

Yesterday in public accounts, former Ornge chief operating officer Tom Lepine said that when he presented Ornge's corporate structure to the Ministry of Health, well, the ministry official looked worried, but they only asked a single question. They asked, "Had Alford Apps"—the president of the Liberal Party—"signed off on it?"

I would like to know, Mr. Speaker: Is the approval of a well-connected Liberal insider all it takes for this government to rubber-stamp a hare-brained scheme like Ornge's corporate structure?

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

Hon. John Milloy: As members know, the public accounts committee is seized with this matter, and they're basing it upon a very thorough report which was done by the Auditor General.

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General came forward with recommendations which the Minister of Health has implemented, with the sole exception of the missing piece, which is Bill 50, a piece of legislation in front of this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, this is about taking action to correct problems at Ornge. We certainly acknowledge on this side of the House that there were weaknesses. The Minister of Health has moved forward.

But, again, Mr. Speaker, if the honourable member wants to hold hearings here on the floor of the House, then perhaps she wants to explain about correspondence that was received by the NDP in December 2010 and why they did not raise concerns at that point. Let's talk about the very, very close ties, increasingly close ties, between Ornge and the Progressive Conservative—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Back to the Premier: Last week, memos came to light from ministry staff saying that legal

counsel had serious concerns about the performance agreement for Ornge. Now we are learning that in this government, as long as the scheme passes the nod test of a well-connected Liberal insider, it doesn't matter if there are red flags; it doesn't matter if there are alarm bells from advisers and staff; it doesn't matter if there is testimony from whistleblowers or if there are questions from MPPs. It is all ignored.

Does the Premier seriously think that his minister is doing her job when well-connected Liberal insiders have greater say than her ministry staff?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, Mr. Speaker, if the member wishes to hold hearings during question period, let's talk about the fact that a very senior Ornge executive, a senior aviation expert, said he opposed the move to Oshawa for a variety of reasons. Despite that, we saw a barrage of lobbying coming from very well-connected Progressive Conservatives. In fact, according to the Toronto Star, they received an email sent by a prominent Conservative, a former Conservative, Matthew Ellis. He's the agency's director of government relations, and he said, "Jim Flaherty is eagerly waiting a decision on whether or not we'll be going to Oshawa." Ellis sent another email 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."

If the honourable member wants to raise concerns about influence, let's talk about—

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

PESTICIDES

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Our government is committed to protecting families and children through tough environmental laws that shield Ontarians from toxic chemicals. One such enforcement measure is the cosmetic pesticides ban. It has been nearly three years since this ban came into effect in Ontario. Speaker, through you, would the Minister of the Environment please provide the House with an update on the implementation of the cosmetic pesticides ban since it was introduced?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much for an excellent question. As the member would know, to protect Ontario families and improve our environment, our government brought in the cosmetic pesticides ban. This ban provides for the most comprehensive restrictions on cosmetic pesticide use in all of North America. It reduces the unnecessary risks of harmful, cancer-causing pesticides being used for cosmetic purposes. More than 90 pesticide ingredients are banned for cosmetic uses in Ontario.

Since the ban came in to effect, concentrations of pesticides in urban waterways have decreased by 80%. We continue to focus on outreach and education, helping Ontarians to learn how to care for their lawns and gardens using greener products and practices.

I was disappointed that both the Conservatives and the NDP voted against—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. James J. Bradley: —that cosmetic use of pesticides on our lawns and gardens. I expected that of the Conservatives, not of the NDP—

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: I would like to thank the minister for his answer.

Reducing the use, creation and release of toxic substances, such as pesticides, into the environment is crucial to protecting the health of Ontarians. I understand that several health organizations, such as the Ontario family physicians' association and the Ontario Public Health Association, have come out in support of our government's ban on cosmetic pesticide use.

Through you, Speaker, I am wondering if the minister could share with the House what these two organizations have to say about the ban and the strong action we have taken to protect Ontario children and families.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I just happen to have two quotes that would answer this question. First: "The Ontario College of Family Physicians solidly supports a province-wide ban on the use of cosmetic pesticides. Our research demonstrates the many health effects associated with pesticides. On behalf of our most vulnerable patients, the children of this province, we are pleased to hear that government has moved so quickly to develop this important legislation." That's Jan Kasperski, who is the chief executive officer, Ontario College of Family Physicians.

Then Connie Utrecht, executive director, Ontario Public Health Association, says the following: "The Ontario Public Health Association is pleased to see a ban on the use and sale of pesticides for cosmetic purposes. This enabling legislation is another positive step the McGuinty government is taking to protect the health of our children and our environment."

I hope that the NDP this time will join with the government instead of the Conservatives—

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

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, given your past statements, and in fact your statements here in the House today, I think it's important for all of us that you clarify your position with respect to a legislated public sector wage freeze.

On the one hand, you say there are legal impediments to imposing a freeze, and you're citing continuously the 2007 Supreme Court case involving British Columbia as your justification. But on the other side, you say you will legislate a public sector wage freeze if necessary. You can't have it both ways, Minister. Which one is it?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Actually, it—

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Actually, you have to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, who is not in his seat, will not heckle.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Actually, Mr. Speaker, it seems evident—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean–Carleton will not take his place.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —that the Conservatives have not read the Supreme Court decision and, of course, they didn't read the budget either.

But first of all, the Supreme Court decision calls for consultation and negotiation. It threw out a legislated freeze. It cost, I think, \$85 million to the government of British Columbia. Last year, the government of British Columbia moved in a very different direction, which the Leader of the Opposition failed to point out. In fact, they brought forward a policy that was very similar to our previous one. That's why the federal government did not move to freeze wages until after they had—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —extensive negotiations. I have a great deal of respect for the finance minister of the federal government; I only wish his colleagues here in the provincial Legislature did, Mr. Speaker.

1110

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the minister that I have read all of the cases on this subject and not just the few selected ones that he's relying on. You should know that the BC case has been found to be overly broad in its application, and other more recent cases have established that "the courts cannot close their eyes to the periodic occurrence of financial emergencies when measures must be taken to juggle priorities to see a government through the crisis." And I would note that this decision was supported again in 2011 by our own courts here in Ontario.

Minister, we're in a dismal financial situation here in Ontario. You need to take urgent action to avoid a fourth credit downgrade, and you cannot hide behind your selective legal rulings. You know that there is no legal barrier to prevent a legislated public sector wage freeze, so will you stop the political posturing and vote for our motion for a legislated public sector wage freeze?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, there's a reason why every province and the federal government have rejected what they are suggesting. There is a reason why her colleagues from Lanark-Frontenac and Mr. Barrett have also rejected that approach: because it won't work. It won't survive a court challenge.

The member is going in the same direction. The official opposition is moving in the same direction. We just have a different approach. We have laid out our approach, Mr. Speaker. We have laid out bargaining man-

dates as contracts come available. We are going through the consultation, the negotiation that the courts call upon us to do. We are acting with the benefit of very good legal advice, both from within the government and outside the government. We're confident this is the right approach. This will help us achieve the balanced budget plan that we've laid out in the budget, and we believe it's the responsible approach to take to collective bargaining and working with all of our partners in the public—

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

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Premier. The community start-up and maintenance benefit provides emergency financial support to help families on social assistance to avoid homelessness. Your government cancelled this benefit in the recent budget. During Niagara Week discussions this week, we learned that this cancellation will in fact increase homelessness and it will increase the demand for homelessness and housing services. We already knew that in the Niagara region they are severely underfunded by this government with respect to meeting their current needs. Why is the government making cuts that will increase homelessness in Niagara and failing to give them enough money to deal with the people that need it?

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

Hon. John Milloy: I appreciate the question. I also appreciated the opportunity to meet with representatives from the region of Niagara during the week that they were here and to have a very good discussion about many of the innovative activities and actions that they're taking to reduce poverty and in fact to address the issue of homelessness.

The honourable member may be aware that we are in fact moving forward with the first phase of consolidation of a number of housing programs, most under my ministry, that are actually being transferred to MMAH as part of a long-term affordable housing strategy. It will give communities the opportunity to address issues of homelessness and those that are at risk of homelessness by giving them the flexibility to work outside the rules. As part of that, we are in the process of winding up the community start-up and maintenance benefit and transferring a portion of that money over as part of this new program.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Back to the Premier: In the recent budget, the government also put a \$10 cap on the so-called discretionary benefits for social assistance recipients. These benefits help people with funerals, hearing aids, prosthetics, assistive devices, glasses, dentures, wheelchair batteries. The city of Hamilton has been forced to step forward to protect these benefits by investing 1.8 million of local taxpayer dollars to meet the needs of this program, and a \$4-million cost for 2013. Why is

the government cutting essential supports for people on social assistance and leaving our municipalities, which are cash-strapped already, with an impossible task of trying to meet the needs of these people?

Hon. John Milloy: There were some tough choices that we had to make in this budget, but the fact of the matter is, no party has a monopoly when it comes to compassion for those who are poor or those who are facing homelessness in this province.

I am proud of our record when it comes to poverty reduction. I've said in the House before that, during the recent election campaign, I went out for a debate on poverty, and it took me four tries to find the three sentences that the NDP had buried in their platform when it came to poverty.

The fact of the matter is, I am proud of the investments we have made in terms of affordable housing—the hundreds of millions of dollars. We have built more affordable housing than any other government. I correct myself, Mr. Speaker: the billions we've put into affordable housing.

I am proud of the efforts we have made in terms of the Ontario child benefit—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: —in terms of the increases to social assistance, OW and ODSP—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: —to initiatives like full-day learning, creating the Healthy Smiles Ontario program and raising the minimum wage, and we are right now anxiously awaiting one of the most comprehensive reviews of social assistance in the history of this province.

TOBACCO CONTROL

Mr. Kim Craitor: My question is directed to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The World Health Organization uses May 31 each year to underscore the health risks associated with tobacco use and to advocate for effective government policies to reduce consumption.

Ontario has come a long way since we have been in power, making consistent strides to make the province smoke-free. However, tobacco remains the leading cause of preventable death and disease in Ontario. The urgency of this situation is undeniable.

Through you, Speaker, to the minister: What is the government doing to continue to make Ontario a tobacco-free province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It was six years ago today, May 31, 2006, that I stood with my colleagues in this House. I was proud to have been part of a government that passed the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

Since then, Ontario has become known around the world as a leader in tobacco control. We have done far more than any previous Ontario government to address

the harm caused by tobacco use. We established a province-wide law for smoke-free bars, restaurants and other enclosed workplaces; we launched the tobacco industry cost-recovery litigation; and we've introduced legislation against contraband tobacco, to restrict industry from lowering their prices to attract customers, especially youth.

We have come a long way in the past six years, but there is definitely more to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kim Craitor: My supplementary question is directed to the Minister of Health. The costs associated with smoking in Ontario are huge. The cost for the Ontario health care system because of smoking is pegged at \$1.93 billion in direct health care costs and \$5.8 billion each year in productivity loss, and on top of that, the loss of life.

What's most frustrating is that they are entirely preventable. Let's not lull ourselves into thinking tobacco use is simply a lifestyle choice or a habit; it is truly an addiction. I remember, when I worked in the tobacco fields, priming tobacco and picking tobacco leaves, that at the end of the day I was covered in nicotine. From that day forward, I never smoked, because I wasn't going to have what was on the outside of me in the inside of me.

Through you, Speaker, to the minister: How, specifically, will Ontarians be assisted to combat this addiction that we have in this province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What a wonderful, wonderful question. I do want to take this opportunity, though, to acknowledge that the member from Ottawa West–Nepean, when he was mayor of Ottawa, led the country in bringing in legislation to restrict smoking. Congratulations to Bob Chiarelli on that.

We do need to be taking a cross-government approach to support our efforts. We are working with our partners and other ministries to help prevent young people from becoming addicted to tobacco, and we're making it easier for smokers to get the help they need to quit, and reducing the demand for all tobacco products, both legal and illegal. We're helping smokers quit by funding nicotine replacement therapy, and that includes gum and patches and counselling provided by family health teams, community health centres and addiction agencies.

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This renewed strategy is all part of our action plan for health care, which aims to make Ontario the healthiest place to grow up and grow old.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. On Tuesday of this week, I advised the House that the new CEO of Ornge, Mr. Ron McKerlie, has admitted to the Ministry of Health that it's becoming increasingly more difficult for Ornge to properly staff its response teams with qualified paramedics. The solution proposed by Mr. McKerlie is to water down the regulations to allow Ornge to staff their

medic crews with a single paramedic rather than the two paramedics that are required by regulation now.

Based on the minister's response on Tuesday, she was apparently not aware of this request. I trust that the minister has had sufficient time to inform herself. Will she commit today to take the advice of her emergency health services branch and deny Ornge the request to water down those regulations?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, there is absolutely no change in requirements for paramedics. Once again, the member opposite has got a little bit of information and fails to tell the whole story.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Well, Speaker, this leaked cabinet document dated May 23, 2012, which is fairly recent, has the following note: "In April 2012, Ornge indicated that it intends to prepare a business case, seeking regulatory changes to support single medic staffing...." Since then, we know that Mr. McKerlie has had a meeting with the Ministry of Health. Why is it that the minister doesn't know about that?

If, in fact, she understands that there are no changes to regulations about paramedic staffing, will she stand in her place now and commit to this House that she will not approve any request by Ornge to water down the regulations for paramedic staffing?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as I say, the member opposite sometimes gets a little bit of the story right but does not get the whole story right. This is yet another example. There is no request made, and no approval will be given, Speaker.

But as the member opposite continues to attack the front-line staff at Ornge, continues to criticize the people who are delivering care, I want you to know that I stand firmly with the people who just yesterday, Speaker, transferred 65 patients to the care that they needed.

I can assure you that I am absolutely committed to finishing the job of getting Ornge back on track. That final piece is Bill 50. I challenge the member opposite to stand up and say he'll quit obstructing the passage of Bill 50.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, before the 2007 election, this government promised the people of Windsor that they would redevelop the Windsor Grace hospital into a long-term-care facility. After breaking that promise, they then promised a fund to clean up the site. Not only has the province left the city bogged down with the work, they have imposed an arbitrary deadline, leaving some at the city to raise concerns that the province will once again renege on their promise to clean up that site.

Will this government set the record straight on their funding commitment to clean up the former Grace hospital without any arbitrary deadlines?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'm very—oh, sorry.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Interjection.

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

The Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am just so eager to answer this question that—I apologize—I did not wait for the referral.

Speaker, I can absolutely tell the member opposite that, thanks to the excellent work of the members from Windsor West and Windsor–Tecumseh, we remain committed to supporting the cleanup of the old site. We know that there has not been the speedy construction of this most-needed—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —long-term-care home, but we are committed to get this building built and people moved in as quickly as possible—

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Members of the community in Windsor are not all that confident in the ministry's ability to clean up the site. There's a monument that exists to the failure, and that is the Grace Hospital site. In a blistering editorial published yesterday in the Windsor Star, they wrote about the situation: "Finance Minister Dwight Duncan and Health Minister Deb Matthews don't just have short memories on that front. After squeaking through the last election, they appear to have developed amnesia. We can assure them the citizens of Windsor have not," and neither have New Democrats.

Again, I will ask: Will the government assure the people of Windsor that they will provide the full funding needed to rehabilitate this site without any arbitrary deadlines?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, our commitment in Windsor I think is quite extraordinary. This new long-term-care home builds on a very strong record: a new cancer centre, a new medical school in Windsor, new hospital redevelopment. We know that we've already invested significantly in long-term care in Windsor. We are determined to do what's right for the people of Windsor. Windsor has very, very strong advocates in our caucus. We will continue to build health care in Windsor.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. It sounds like May 31 is going to be a very busy day because May 31 is also the fifth anniversary of the release of the report of the Ipperwash inquiry and Justice Linden's 100 recommendations.

We all know that the tragic events of 1995 led to Premier McGuinty calling the Ipperwash inquiry after we were elected to government in 2003. This was one of the first actions we took as a government, and it signalled a shift in Ontario's relationship with aboriginal people.

Can the minister please tell us what progress we have made in our province's relationship with aboriginal

people since the release of the Ipperwash recommendations five years ago?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm very pleased to be able to talk about the progress that we've made as a province when it comes to working with our aboriginal partners, not only since the release of the report but since we formed government.

Our government has made it a priority to work with aboriginal partners to ensure that all in Ontario have the best quality of life possible. We've used the Ipperwash inquiry as our guide. We've made real progress in establishing positive relationships with aboriginal people and communities.

I want to talk about one tangible example of this new relationship. Premier McGuinty started a tradition here at Queen's Park to have an annual meeting with aboriginal leaders to talk about opportunities and shared responsibilities, moving forward. We had this year's meeting just a couple of weeks ago, and we had productive and respectful conversations with First Nations and Métis leadership, along with representatives from the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres and the Ontario Native Women's Association.

We know that there's a lot more work to do, Mr. Speaker, but that relationship and that foundation is what is going to allow us to move together forward—

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Minister, it's encouraging to know that we are moving forward in partnership with aboriginal communities in Ontario. Having a positive relationship allows us to work together to maximize all of the opportunities that are available.

But Minister, although it's important to have a positive relationship, Justice Linden made 100 recommendations in his report on the Ipperwash inquiry, and we committed to addressing those.

Speaker, through you to the minister, what progress have we made in addressing the Ipperwash recommendations?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the member from Guelph raising this question because I think it's really important to track what we've been doing, because we're committed to implementing the Ipperwash recommendations.

The majority of the recommendations have either been addressed or are currently being addressed, but more importantly, we've established a new relationship with our aboriginal communities, and we used the Ipperwash recommendations as a framework to guide us.

1130

Let me highlight a couple of the recommendations that demonstrate what we've already done. We're the government that created a stand-alone Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs with a dedicated deputy minister and minister. Under previous governments, this important ministry didn't even exist.

We created the new relationship fund to help First Nations and Métis communities more effectively engage

with government and the private sector on important land resource and other development initiatives, with a total funding commitment of \$85 million to date.

So not only have we built on the relationship and created mechanisms, we've also funded those mechanisms so that the relationship can be built.

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, you have maintained on a number of occasions that the personal information of Ontario residents who have purchased licences through your ministry is safe and secure. You failed to comprehend the scope of security legislation in the United States. As far back as August 2004, an assessment of the US Patriot Act by the Privacy Commissioner of Canada states, "Once personal information about Canadians is transferred outside Canada ... the laws of the country to which the information has been transferred will apply. Those laws will determine when government agencies such as the police, security and tax authorities can obtain access to that personal information."

Minister, do you now admit that what you told this House about the protection of this information was incorrect?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I appreciate the question very much. Certainly, as I have stated on more than one occasion, we take the privacy issue very, very seriously. We've actually had an opportunity, as well, to speak recently with the company that was awarded the contract. They understand and continue to stand by the requirements that, indeed, they protect the privacy of people. They do not disclose indirectly or directly any information or collect any information that could lead to the loss of privacy for the people of the province of Ontario. They're respecting the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

What I can tell you is that this is an issue we take very seriously, one that we have had an opportunity to speak about with the company. That, of course, was built into the contract with the company at the very beginning of this process, once they were awarded the contract. We continue to feel confident that, indeed, the privacy of Ontarians is safe—

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: Well, Minister, I know that you've talked to the company, as you've said, but, really, have you talked to the government of the United States? That is where the problem lies.

Minister, when MNR awarded this contract to an American company, your ministry officials were either very sloppy in their research on this subject or you and your staff made the conscious decision that you didn't care about protecting the personal information of Ontario citizens. Which was it: incompetence or indifference?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, again, the contract was awarded after a fair, competitive process.

Active Outdoors was awarded the contract based on that fair, competitive process. We were very, very clear at the very beginning of the process, in the building of the contract with the company, how important the issue of privacy was. It was built in to make sure that we protected the privacy of Ontarians. It was built in to make sure that the company recognized that the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act in Ontario should prevail. Indeed, the company has acknowledged and more than accepted that. They've made it clear to us that they will continue do that.

Again, there will be no opportunity for the company—and they will not be directly or indirectly collecting or gathering data related to Ontarians. They certainly cannot use that information without in any way contacting our ministry, and there has been no—

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

Hon. Michael Gravelle:—request made so far. We are confident that, indeed, the protection—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member is reminded that when I say thank you, you are finished.

New question.

CASINOS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Finance. This morning, the member for Eglinton–Lawrence spoke out against his government's plans for a casino in Toronto. He said, "I don't want one ... I don't want a big casino in Toronto." But not only is his government ignoring his concerns around the caucus table, they won't even let him cast a ballot in a municipal referendum on casinos.

Why is the minister ignoring the member from Eglinton–Lawrence and the thousands of other people who want a say and a referendum on a casino in their community?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite knows well that the government is offering the opportunity to the municipality of Toronto and other GTA municipalities to invite a casino or a gaming destination into their jurisdictions. It will be up to the local municipalities, Mr. Speaker, as to whether or not they wish to host one. The municipality now, under the Municipal Act, does have the ability to have a referendum. I invite all members to participate in this very vigorous debate about how we best optimize the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., the proceeds of which we use to build better hospitals and better schools all across Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is never too late to warn someone—never.

Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: The Harris government had many faults, probably too many for all of us to remember, but even they allowed people like the member from Eglinton–Lawrence to cast a vote on a casino. By the way, the vote in Toronto back in those days went two to

one against having a casino in Toronto. How can the minister think that a council resolution or some flimsy consultation process can overturn a decision made directly by the people?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The regulations governing this leave it to the choice of municipalities, Mr. Speaker. They have a variety of tools available to them with which they can make a decision. They can in fact conduct a referendum based on existing legislation, and we look forward to a number of municipalities that have expressed an interest in hosting gaming sites, having an adequate and comprehensive consultation with their citizens. We invite that, and we invite the views of all members of this Legislature, indeed of all citizens of Ontario, as we move forward to make the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. stronger so it provides more revenue to support our health care and education.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The time for questions is over.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: When they get here, I'd like to introduce Jonathan Klassen and members of the Morningstar Christian School of Millbank, which is in my riding of Perth–Wellington.

Miss Monique Taylor: Today I'd like to stand to welcome to the House—unfortunately, they are not here at the moment, but they were here earlier—the grade 5 students from École Monseigneur-de-Laval, who were here from Hamilton, so welcome to the House today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WATERLOO AIR SHOW

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to take this opportunity to encourage members of this House and people across the province to attend the fourth annual Waterloo Air Show this weekend at the Waterloo region international airport. I've had the pleasure, in fact, of going to this event in the past, and I can tell you there's something to do for every member of the family. The world-famous Snowbirds will be back this year, as well as a Kitchener–Waterloo favourite, Captain Paco, who flies the CF-18 Demo Hornet. But there will also be some new performers, like Pete McLeod, the only Canadian pilot in the Red Bull Air Race Challenge, and Otto the Helicopter, a unique and versatile chopper that can chew gum, blow bubbles and fly at the same time.

Over the years, support for this exceptional event has grown steadily among fans and the Canadian military. The Royal Canadian Air Force has continually worked to make this air show the success it is today, showcasing

some of its most impressive planes to more than 40,000 spectators. It's this dedication, along with the hard work and commitment of more than 150 volunteers, that makes the Waterloo Air Show bigger and better each and every year.

I hope many of you will be able to come out to Waterloo region, either on June 2 or 3, to experience this memorable event.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for his statement about me. I can do four things at the same time—tap-dance as well.

ALAN KING

Ms. Cindy Forster: I rise today to recognize a good friend, community activist and coordinator of Canal View Homes in Welland, where my constituency office is located. Alan King, who celebrated his 65th birthday in May, is retiring June 1. He has held this position since Canal View, operated by Open Door Concepts, a non-profit housing corporation, opened its doors in 1991.

Alan has a rich history of helping those in need going back to the early 1970s when he worked for the Toronto Distress Centre, and also with civil rights activist Cesar Chavez, who fought for the rights of farm workers. He was an ordained priest working with the Scarborough mission society in Amazonas, Brazil. He left the society in 1990 and married Rosina Bisci, who worked in Peru, and they had a daughter, Sara.

Alan is also a volunteer firefighter with the Port Robinson Fire Hall and has been there for nearly 20 years.

Alan King is one of the most down-to-earth, committed people I have ever met. His work day in and day out was aimed at the tenants, many with special needs, to ensure they had the best services possible. He created a family atmosphere, with many events for tenants and the community to get involved. He always went that extra mile. He will be greatly missed.

On behalf of my office staff, the community, and everyone at Canal View, thanks, Alan.

DOUG FIELD

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to take this opportunity today to recognize the extraordinary passion and the dedication exhibited by a member of the Oakville community. For decades, Doug Field has championed the preservation and the celebration of traditional brass band music. As the general manager of Intrada Brass, Doug worked with his ensemble to revitalize the presence of brass music in Canadian society.

Like the neighbourhood and workplace bands that established this genre as a cultural foothold in Britain more than 100 years ago, Intrada Brass is also defined by a sense of community. The ensemble's performers travel from towns across southern Ontario and rehearse in my community of Oakville before then performing across the province, bringing together audiences for the purpose of

enjoying and appreciating both the band's music and one another's company.

Intrada's diverse repertoire includes a vast selection of compositions by Canadian composers. Doug has been keen to showcase these in an effort to celebrate the British brass tradition, but in a distinctly Canadian way.

His lifetime of passion and commitment has led him to enrich our national music community by introducing a new generation of Canadians to the long-standing and ever-evolving brass band tradition.

On behalf of the members of the Oakville community, Speaker, I'd like to wish Doug all the best as he retires from a career that's brought nothing but great things to the people of my community.

STRATFORD HOUSE OF BLESSING

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Earlier this month, I saw firsthand the way that the Stratford House of Blessing is strengthening our community. The House of Blessing is just that, a house of blessing. It's a blessing to those who are struggling in our area.

Florence Kehl founded the House of Blessing in 1983. Florence is a tireless volunteer, a Stratford Citizen of the Year and recipient of the Queen's Jubilee Award. The House of Blessing provides a safe place of comfort and practical help for those in need socially, spiritually, physically and economically. They provide backpacks to children. They provide education on healthy cooking and financial management. They provide food and clothes for families in need.

But the House of Blessing needs our support. They're seeing more mouths to feed and they need more food on the shelves. This is a challenging time.

I want to thank the volunteers, staff members and generous donors who make it possible for the House of Blessing to do its good work. I also want to thank Theresa McMurray, executive director of the House of Blessing, as well as Laura Devries, operations coordinator, for their leadership.

I support their work, and I urge all MPPs to support our local food banks and other agencies that help those who need it most. Let's do our part.

CONCESSION STREETFEST

Miss Monique Taylor: Today, I'm happy to stand in the House and welcome back a community event in my riding of Hamilton Mountain. This Saturday marks the 16th occasion of the Concession Street BIA annual Streetfest. This terrific family event starts at 11 a.m. and goes right through to 6 p.m., with the farmers' market starting a wee bit earlier, at 7 a.m. Concession Streetfest will once again close down the street to vehicles and open it up to food vendors, buskers, local arts and crafts, live music and so much more.

One of the highlights of Saturday's event will be the challenge of breaking a Guinness world record for kazoo players. The current record is held by the BBC Radio 3

Big Red Nose Show, who brought 5,190 kazoo players together at the Royal Albert Hall in London, England. Concession BIA is hoping to have 5,200 players to break this record. Kazoos will be provided. Registration begins at 10:30, and the challenge begins at 2 p.m.

I'm hoping that all Hamilton and beyond will come out to support this challenge and our local BIA. It will definitely be fun for the entire family.

JOHN HOWARD SOCIETY OF OTTAWA

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm very pleased to rise today to share a significant milestone for an important organization in my community of Ottawa. I'm sure all members are familiar with the work of the John Howard Society and the vital services and assistance they offer individuals in our communities who have had or are at risk of interactions with our criminal justice system.

On June 20 this year, the John Howard Society of Ottawa is celebrating 60 years of community service. I want to take this opportunity to commend the really important work they do, day in and day out. They truly deserve our appreciation and support.

The mission of the John Howard Society is to offer effective, just and humane responses to crime, its causes and its consequences. They strive to help their clients make positive choices and reintegrate into society, which benefits all members of our community. Through services for adults, youth, families, and in employment, they work tirelessly to help people in what can often be hours of their greatest need.

And in doing this work, their values speak to the values that we hold up as a progressive and thoughtful society, in how we treat those who have found themselves involved in the justice or corrections system. They believe that all individuals have intrinsic worth, are to be treated with dignity, equality, confidentiality, fairness and compassion, have a right to self-determination without infringing on the rights of others, have the capacity for change and have the right to be informed.

Speaker, I want to wish the John Howard Society of Ottawa a happy 60th birthday. I again commend them for the important work they do on all our behalf in making Ontario and Canada a better place for all our citizens.

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RON SMITH

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise today to pay tribute to Ron Smith, a sports reporter who's been putting Leeds-Grenville athletes in the spotlight for more than three decades.

Smith recently announced his retirement from the Brockville Recorder and Times newspaper after 37 years with the daily, including the last 33 as its sports editor. Fittingly, he'll hit the final keystroke in his legendary career after the city of Brockville hosts its biggest-ever sports event next month, the all-Ontario high school track and field championships.

For generations of athletes, Smith was a familiar face on the sidelines. His professional coverage made them feel like they were pros and no doubt helped propel many of those young athletes to greater glories. His stories and photographs captured forever some of the best moments of their lives. I'm sure that there are scrapbooks stuffed with his clippings and that they are deeply cherished possessions in countless homes in Leeds and Grenville.

Smith's passion for local sports wasn't limited to documenting what was happening at the games. He was also very involved in organizing, coaching and officiating. For the past 19 years, he's been coordinating the Brockville and Area Sports Hall of Fame induction ceremony with broadcaster Bruce Wylie. They've inducted 100 sports figures, and I expect some day soon Ron will have his plaque hanging beside them.

On a personal note, my wife, Deanna, and I had the pleasure of being former colleagues. We both worked at the Brockville Recorder and Times with Ron. We affectionately called the newspaper the Rip and Tear.

Ron, you've had an amazing career, and for your unwavering commitment, our community thanks you.

COMPUTER EDUCATION

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Last week I had the pleasure of visiting SATEC, a part of Porter Collegiate Institute, a local high school in my riding, where students presented a 24-core/6 research supercomputer that they had built and programmed.

This project was accomplished mostly by grade 11 students, who took part in a joint initiative with SciNet and the Canadian Young Scientist Journal.

Under the teaching and supervision of Dr. Jonathan Dursi from the University of Toronto's SciNet and Dr. Sacha Noukhovitch from Porter Collegiate, the students expanded their knowledge of both building and programming supercomputers.

These students were able to build a comparable version of the world-known IBM Blue Gene and began the project by running software models of the big bang theory and Conway's Game of Life.

The supercomputer is the first of its kind here in Ontario. Never before has such technologically advanced academic research taken place in a high school setting. The success I witnessed first-hand at Porter Collegiate was made possible by our government's commitment towards education and innovation.

Mr. Speaker, Porter Collegiate is a testament to how schools should be empowering our children to reach higher levels of critical thinking.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Principal George Mavraganis at Porter Collegiate for allowing new and innovative ways to teach and inspire his students. He inspired me as well.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Randy Hillier: For the past nine years, Carleton Place and District Memorial Hospital has been appealing

to the Ministry of Health for redevelopment funding and approval. The population growth in Carleton Place in this time has been significant and demand for services and beds has increased well beyond the hospital's ability to serve under its current conditions.

Unfortunately, the Carleton Place hospital board has had to weave its way through a maze of bureaucratic nonsense to get any action whatsoever. The hospital board has had to deal with countless arms of the Ministry of Health, yet neither the LHIN nor the capital funding branch will commit to the board that the redevelopment will move forward.

Ministry of Health staff have presented the proposal to cabinet with a recommendation to move forward, yet this government has stalled and it's not proceeding. This government has demonstrated that hospital proposals are promises, and promises are nothing but a political football that can be punted about at a whim in an attempt to score political gain.

It is disappointing because the people of my riding expect that a redeveloped hospital in Carleton Place is essential to their health care. They believe that political and electoral gain ought not to be the determining factors in hospital funding.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Moridi assumes ballot item number 49 and Mr. Flynn assumes ballot item number 57.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ONTARIO JUSTICES OF THE PEACE MODERNIZATION ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA MODERNISATION DE LA LOI SUR LES JUGES DE PAIX DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Oraziotti moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 97, An Act to amend the Justices of the Peace Act with respect to categories and qualifications of justices of the peace / Projet de loi 97, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les juges de paix en ce qui concerne les catégories de juges de paix et les qualités requises.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. David Oraziotti: The Justices of the Peace Act currently provides that every justice of the peace is a presiding justice of the peace. The bill amends the act to provide for two categories of justices of the peace,

presiding and administrative, and sets out the powers that may be exercised by each. The bill also provides that a person shall not be considered for appointment as a presiding justice of the peace unless he or she has at least five years of experience as a practising lawyer.

CONSUMER PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT (MONEY TRANSFERS), 2012 LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR (TRANSFERTS DE FONDS)

Mr. Singh moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 98, An Act to amend the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 with respect to money transfers / Projet de loi 98, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2002 sur la protection du consommateur en ce qui concerne les transferts de fonds.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: This bill amends the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, and essentially there are two purposes: The first purpose is to place a cap or a limit on the fees that a money transfer can charge consumers—that cap would be 5%; and it would require that the money transfer agency disclose information about exactly what the charges will be and what fees a consumer would have to pay. That's the purpose of this bill.

PETITIONS

WATER QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to be first in reading a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

"Whereas these home-based businesses are facing high costs to comply with the new requirements of regulation 319/08;

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

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

"Furthermore we, the undersigned, ask that bed and breakfasts operated within a private home with a drinking water supply meeting all the requirements of a private home not be subject to regulation 319/08."

I'm pleased to sign, endorse this and present it to Anthonie, one of the pages here at Queen's Park.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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

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

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

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

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

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

I wholeheartedly agree, attach my signature and send it down with page Stavroula.

SERVICES DE LABORATOIRE

M. Grant Crack: « Pétition à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que nous demandons au gouvernement provincial une licence pour un laboratoire pour faire les prélèvements sanguins dans le canton de Russell;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Dans notre région, il n'y a aucun service de laboratoire sanguin disponible au public. Les gens doivent se déplacer vers l'hôpital le plus près pour obtenir ce service essentiel. »

I agree with this petition, and I will sign it and hand it to page Hannah.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

As I am in agreement, I have affixed my signature to give it to page Dana.

TOURISM

Ms. Sarah Campbell: My petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

FAMILY CAREGIVER LEAVE

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

"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 fully support the petition, affix my signature and give it to page Sherry.

TAXATION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition presented to me from the vice-president of the CAW, Mr. Ron Svajlenko, which reads:

“Whereas the Ontario budget tabled on March 26 continues to give billions of dollars to already profitable corporations through corporate tax cuts implemented in 2004 and 2009; and

“Whereas the Ontario budget freezes social assistance, ignores the child care crisis, dramatically underfunds health care and education, and threatens thousands of jobs in communities across Ontario, in both the public and private sectors; and

“Whereas all Ontarians are being asked to pay for corporate handouts;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to restore the corporate tax rate to at least 14% and add additional tax brackets for those receiving \$250,000 or more in income and redirect this funding to:

“—increase social assistance for Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program recipients to restore lost purchasing power;

“—address the child care crisis for children under four years of age;

“—increase funding for health care, education, and other social programs; and

“—reverse public staffing cuts to ensure Ontarians receive high-quality services; and finally

“We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to introduce labour law reform that will improve workers’ ability to exercise their right to improve their working conditions through free collective bargaining.”

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present 1,005 signatures regarding “Auto insurance reform

needed: Protect consumers.” This represents 4,374 petitions presented this week. The petition reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

I strongly support this petition, will affix my signature, and hand it to Angela and have her present it to you.

RADIATION SAFETY

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

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

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

“We, the dental hygienists in independent practice, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

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

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

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HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Robert Bailey: My petition today is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government has announced that the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. will end its Hiawatha racetrack slots operations in Sarnia on March 31, 2013, even though the current agreement does not expire until 2018; and

“Whereas the end of this program will cost the city of Sarnia 140 jobs immediately and” over “\$1.5 million a year in gaming revenues, not to mention potentially 60,000 jobs across the province if the program is scrapped entirely; and

“Whereas there has been absolutely no consultation with the community, employees, or owner/operator of the local facility; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government continues to put more and more Ontarians out of work due to its ill-conceived, ad hoc decisions, including, in Sarnia, the loss of 80 jobs at the local jail, 100 jobs at Lambton generating station, and numerous others due to high energy costs on businesses;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the McGuinty government stop risking thousands of jobs in Ontario and \$1.5 billion in potential revenue by mismanaging the racetrack slots program and focus on finding solutions to the real problems that Ontario is facing.”

I agree with this petition, affix my signature to the same and send it down with Anthonie.

CYCLING

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

“Whereas 25% of Ontario adults regularly cycle and over 50% of children cycle either daily or weekly;

“Whereas a cycling fatality occurs every month in Ontario and thousands of cyclists are injured each month;

“Whereas Ontario is lagging behind provinces like British Columbia and Quebec that have invested \$31 million and \$200 million respectively in cycling infrastructure;

“Whereas investing in cycling infrastructure in Ontario will create jobs and benefit the economy, reduce traffic congestion and pollution, protect those sharing the road, and encourage active transportation;

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

“That the province of Ontario release a comprehensive cycling strategy for Ontario that includes dedicated funding to match municipal investments in cycling infrastructure, education initiatives to raise awareness about the rights and responsibilities of all road users, and a review and update of provincial legislation including the Highway Traffic Act and the Planning Act to ensure roadways are safe for all users;

“That the strategy set provincial targets and timelines for increasing the number of people who commute by bike and cycle recreationally.”

I support this petition. I will sign my name to it and give it to page Colin.

LABORATORY SERVICES

Mr. Grant Crack: It’s a privilege to be able to table this petition in both official languages.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we are asking the provincial government for a licence to operate a blood laboratory in the township of Russell;

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

“In our area, we do not have a blood laboratory service available to the public. The people of this township have to travel to the nearest hospital to get this service.”

I agree with this, and I will sign it and give it to page Mateo.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I can’t let a day go by without an Ornge petition.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

COMPREHENSIVE PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION FREEZE ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE GEL GLOBAL DE LA RÉMUNÉRATION DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC

Mr. Yurek moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 92, An Act to freeze compensation for two years in the public sector / *Projet de loi 92, Loi visant à geler la rémunération pendant deux ans dans le secteur public.*

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

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Speaker. I'm pleased to rise as a member of the Legislature and a representative of my riding, Elgin–Middlesex–London, to debate the important piece of legislation, Bill 92, the Comprehensive Public Sector Compensation Freeze Act.

Since last summer, the PC Party has been out in front of this issue. Although I was not a member of the caucus at the time, many of my colleagues here spent their eight last years in opposition of a Liberal majority government. In that time, my colleagues watched as the McGuinty Liberals increased government spending by 77% and doubled a provincial debt that took 23 Premiers over 100 years to accumulate. I'd also point out that at the same time, Ontario lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs.

This pattern of spending, with complete disregard for the economic consequences, has saddled us with a \$15-billion deficit in this upcoming year. More alarming still is the fact that this year's budget continues on the same path that has brought us to this point. Instead of reducing spending, the McGuinty government has increased spending by \$2 billion. And we have been warned that if this pattern persists, by 2017, Ontario's expenditures will exceed our revenues by \$30 billion and our debt will have grown to \$411 billion. In a McGuinty not-too-distant future, a baby born in 2017 will, before it even opens its eyes, be responsible for \$30,000 of provincial debt. That, my friends, will be the share for every man, woman and child in this province if we do not take immediate action today.

As I said, it's not like this problem has surprised us. My colleagues here in the PC caucus have been critical of the McGuinty Liberals' dangerous spending habits for the last nine years. Certainly since last summer, we have been calling on the government to put a freeze on the single biggest driver of costs in our budget: public sector wages and benefits. The PC Party has been out in front of this issue because we know that high deficits and debt are detrimental to this province.

Last summer, I can somewhat understand the Liberals ignoring our warnings. They were in election mode; they didn't want advice, however good, from another party. But now I firmly believe this issue is more important than the partisan games. That is why we continued to push forward our wage freeze policy after the election. And at the end of the day, it is good policy. It will save \$2 billion a year for a province that finds itself at the edge of a fiscal cliff. By reducing the deficit, this bill will take a decisive step towards getting Ontario's economic fundamentals right.

After the election, our leader, Tim Hudak, met with the Premier and warned him that the path he was putting us on would inevitably lead us to a credit downgrade. Maybe the Premier just didn't believe him—because this

is Ontario and, after all, Ontario has been the economic engine of Confederation and one of the most prosperous provinces. However, our Premier's tenure, his feeble leadership, has brought about a number of records that no self-respecting Ontarian could be proud of.

Our once-vibrant manufacturing sector has been decimated, with over 300,000 jobs lost since 2003. We experienced the unprecedented reclassification from a have to a have-not province. Our unemployment rate has been above the national average for 64 months. If our provincial unemployment rate were indeed a baseball hit streak, we'd be putting Joe DiMaggio to shame. Unfortunately, it's not a hit streak; it's a reflection of drastic underperformance—underperformance that stems from the government's complete oblivion to the economic realities in which we live.

While the Premier may not have believed our leader when he was told that we'd face a credit downgrade, surely the Premier can't ignore it now, because we've experienced a downgrade from various rating agencies on four separate occasions. And yet, despite all the warning flags that prompt a good, studious leader into action, our Premier has stalled. What I do have to marvel at, though, is that the Premier does not seem the least bit concerned about the half-million people unemployed or the fact that our debt is becoming riskier by the day. He continues, with unabated vigour, spending taxpayers' money and driving us further to the brink.

The Liberal government seems content with avoiding action and with the rest of the platitudes of how their values in education and health care are at risk. The problem with this picture is, if you're not committed to reining in government spending and reducing the deficit, you don't value health care and education. I can say that unabashedly because, if we experience a 1% rise in our interest rate, that will add another \$500 million to the already \$11 billion we spend annually servicing our debt. The \$500 million could be used to pay for 12,000 first-year elementary teachers, 8,700 first-year nurses or 250,000 MRI exams. Instead of investing in these essential services, under the Premier's leadership we seem destined to funnel that money into interest charges. That is why this bill is so important.

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Public sector wages account for 55 cents of every dollar of government money spent each year. It is the single largest cost driver, although if we let the Premier continue, perhaps interest charges will one day be the single largest cost driver. Therefore, the first step to rein in our behemoth of a deficit, which towers over all the other provinces, is to freeze public sector compensation for two years. This is a fair approach and one that will allow us to pump the brakes and save \$2 billion a year.

But consider the following. From 2004 to 2010, the growth in public sector compensation averaged 4.99%. This compares to an inflation rate that averaged 1.94%. In total, public compensation increased by 46%. These statistics show it is clear that the Premier's affinity for spending and nothing else is the reason we are in the

precarious fiscal state we now face. This is an untenable situation. And the worst part about it is that the Premier does not seem to understand that private sector job creation is inexorably linked to the province's fiscal health.

Businesses look at the health of a location's government because they know a heavily indebted province will not be able to afford the things that make the province attractive for doing business. Things like infrastructure, a skilled workforce and hospitals: all of these are important for a business. Further, a high debt indicates that government will have to raise taxes in the future and add to the cost of them doing business.

Ontario deserves better than this. We are now at a point where public sector compensation exceeds private sector compensation by 27%. This creates a major imbalance in our labour market. In healthy economies, the private sector receives a higher wage level than the public sector. The reason for this: Working in the private sector carries less job security, and therefore people need to be compensated appropriately. Paying the public sector substantially more creates an imbalance that can have devastating effects.

I say "devastating effects" because if you take a look at Greece, Spain or Portugal, some of the least admired economies in the world, the European Central Bank found that public sector workers in those countries earned substantially more than their private sector counterparts. This imbalance, no doubt, played a significant role in those countries' slide into economic chaos.

On the other hand, productive countries like France and Germany have wage ratios less than one. If you're a businessman, where would you like to invest: Germany or Greece? I think the answer is pretty clear. I would never, ever say that Ontario is Greece, but the economic fundamentals that the Premier seems intent on abiding by are heading us down that path. That is why the PC Party is taking action to set the fundamentals right. My colleagues have taken steps to ensure that Ontario will be the place to do business in the future.

My colleague from Chatham-Kent-Essex has proposed legislation to reduce the regulatory burden that costs businesses \$11 billion a year. The member from Nipissing introduced a white paper that treats the province's energy policy the way it should be: a cornerstone of economic development and prosperity. And my colleague from Simcoe North has been travelling around the province to consult with and take action on behalf of Ontario's tradespeople, who are the backbone of our economy and who have been thrown under the bus by the current government in order to erect their union-friendly College of Trades.

Unfortunately, our fears have continually been realized. We feared becoming a have-not province, and we have. We feared a credit downgrade, and it happened. These blemishes are completely the responsibility of the Premier, and yet he still fails to take the decisive and noble action we expect of our leaders.

Today my colleagues and I stand up for fiscal responsibility. We stand up for job creation. We ask that

people in this Legislature put aside their partisanship and support this bill for the sake of Ontario. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thanks very much, Speaker. What I want to do is make sure that we allow the leader of the NDP to speak first, and then I will do my turn after that, if you don't mind.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your indulgence and, of course, that of the members in the House as well.

It's interesting, because this debate is about a bill that really follows up on the conversation that we were having this morning in question period. It's an interesting conversation and one that is described, I guess, by both the Liberals and the Conservatives as a conversation about a wage freeze. But really what we're talking about is a legislated solution to a problem that the government has in its inability to negotiate respectfully with the bargaining units of many, many people in this province.

It's interesting because it's very, very clear that these kinds of legislated wage schemes don't work. They don't work here; they haven't worked in other jurisdictions. It's very, very clear that this entire bill, as well as the government's proposals in terms of how they're going to get over this impasse, don't hold water. Yet we continue to spend time in the House both on a bill like this and on the government's intentions, as they keep restating them.

They are basically abandoning the bargaining process, notwithstanding the fact that they are talking about how they're still at the table. It's really, really clear that there are very few people left at that table, Speaker. I think that's a sad commentary on the ability or the willingness of the government to engage in a really respectful and serious conversation about how to overcome some of the issues.

I think everybody realizes that the problems have to be solved. Everybody realizes that the economy is a tough one, that the budget of the province, the deficit of the province, is a major concern. But I think what everybody else really should be up front and honest about is that legislated wage freezes, legislated wage-freeze schemes, simply are not the solution. They don't work. They have been roundly criticized by the Supreme Court of Canada. In fact, we talked about this again this morning as well, that there was a serious situation in BC where this exact kind of measure was undertaken, and the Supreme Court of Canada found that it was not a legal thing to do in Canada. It ended up costing the British Columbia government a significant amount of money, some \$85 million, because they did the wrong thing by their employees, by the bargaining units that they were supposed to be negotiating collective agreements with.

So I find it a little bit frustrating that we have a bill here that's obviously not something that can be done in Ontario. It's not legal to be done. We have a government that claims that they don't support this bill, and yet on the

other side of their mouth, they are saying that they're going to do the exact same thing.

I think what really needs to happen here is that we have to be sure that the people who do the work of Ontario, the people who make Ontario work, are actually engaged in a respectful process around their collective agreements. I think it's really, really clear that the attitude that the government has taken, notwithstanding what they say—the actions that they take, what they're doing at the bargaining table—is basically telling these folks, “It's my way or the highway. You do what we say; otherwise, we're going to legislate it.”

In fact, when they raised this spectre in their budget, in their throne speech, it was very, very clear that they were intending on taking this action in terms of legislating a solution. Well, I really don't understand, Speaker, how you can go into something called a “collective bargaining process” with integrity while you've already put the hammer down at the end of the process. You've already said quite clearly, “We're here to negotiate, but, really, we're only going to negotiate insofar as you agree to everything we say.” That's really not negotiating, Speaker. It's definitely not good-faith negotiating or good-faith bargaining.

I think it's pretty interesting that the table is very small now. Many, many people have walked away from that table where the bargaining should be happening, where the conversation should be taking place, because they have felt insulted by the process. I think it's clear that they have felt that the process has not been one of integrity, and that's why there are very few people left having the conversation. It seems like the government is confused about that, but I don't think it's confusing at all.

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I don't think the government even knows, I don't think the Liberals even know, where they stand anymore on these things. One day they say that this kind of initiative that the Conservatives have brought forward in their bill is something that doesn't work, and then the next day they say the very opposite, that in fact if they don't get their way at the bargaining table, they're going to do exactly what this bill purports to do. So the Liberals don't even know where they stand anymore on this kind of an issue. It's pretty confusing, not only for me, but for Ontarians as well. I think people in the province want to see the parties actually have a productive conversation about how we get over where we are right now.

Speaker, there are a number of details and facts that I'm not going to go through, but I have to say there's something that's very, very clear, and that is that the government does not have a good record of working with others and of co-operating, of figuring things out. But we've been able to show them how to do that through the budget process. We've been able to work with them on a number of things. I would only ask that they actually take that more open attitude over to the bargaining table when they're having this conversation with, in this case, the teachers—but there are the doctors, and there are a number of others as well.

One of the things that the government needs to understand is that the “my way or the highway” approach is one that's going to fail them every single time. What works is a collaborative approach. What works is a serious, respectful conversation. I would hope that the government actually gets to that place, whether it's with doctors, whether it's with teachers or whether it's with anybody else in terms of the bargaining, and quite frankly, whether it's with the opposition parties when it comes to how we make this minority Parliament work, because I think that it's clear that that can be done. We've shown that it can be done. They know that it can be done. I think that they need to take seriously their responsibility here, because I think that's what Ontarians expect of us, Speaker.

There's no doubt that it's a tough conversation. There's no doubt that it's a conversation that's going to mean give-and-take. But it's certainly not a conversation that should start with, “Do things exactly how I want them done or else we're just going to legislate your wage freeze.”

I want to end by saying I don't understand why there has been no productive outcome so far. It seems to me the government said, “We want a wage freeze.” Most of the teachers' unions came back, in the case of the teachers, and said, “We'll offer a wage freeze.” Well, holy smokes, it seems like if they ask for a wage freeze and they were offered a wage freeze, there's got to be a solution that's pretty much achievable, you would think. I would just ask the government, as they go through this debate on the Conservative bill, what exactly is the holdup? When you're asking for a freeze and they're offering a freeze, it sounds to me like the makings of the plan are afoot. It's about time you get down to the brass tacks and get this solved.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member from Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on Bill 92, which talks about a comprehensive public sector compensation freeze.

I'll just say at the outset that I will not be voting for this bill, and I'll tell you a very simple reason: because the scheme that is outlined in the bill is illegal, and I don't think this Legislature can vote for something that is not permissible under the law. That, I think, is a very important and simple principle that we all need to apply. The most supreme law of the land here in Canada is the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We need to abide by the obligations that are outlined in the charter, and one of the key obligations that's outlined in the charter is the right to association and right to collective bargaining. What this particular bill, Bill 92, is professing to do is rip collective bargaining agreements. That goes contrary to what's outlined in the charter.

So, Speaker, that's a very straightforward, simple reason. All governments—not just the government of Ontario—across the country, including the federal government, are under a duty to respect the collective

bargaining process, have the duty to work hard around the table and engage in good-faith negotiations with the unions, and that's the approach that is outlined and that needs to be followed. Legislating a wage freeze, as outlined in Bill 92, is only going to result in a higher cost for Ontarians because it will be deemed illegal, because there will be a situation in which it will be challenged in courts and can be thrown out.

I think the case in point is the Supreme Court decision from 2007 on health services in British Columbia, where the British Columbia government brought in similar legislation, which was challenged in court and went all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada, and the Supreme Court of Canada found the legislation of British Columbia to be unconstitutional. In fact, that decision of the British Columbia government, in the end, resulted in a cost of about \$85 million to the taxpayers of British Columbia because they had to reverse that decision and had to pay the 9,000 workers who were affected by the decision.

In that particular decision, the Supreme Court was very categorical in articulating the application of the charter to the collective bargaining process. I want to take the time—because I think it's important and we've all talked about this, we've heard about this discussion in question period. There's obviously quite a bit of colourful rhetoric that's associated with it, but I think it's important at the end of the day to actually go to the decision and see what the Supreme Court justices have said, because their written word is tantamount to law, and it's important that we pay attention to that. That's why I want to read some key paragraphs from their decision, which speaks to this very specific issue, and it's important that we have that in Hansard.

In paragraph 90 of that Supreme Court decision, this is what the judgment reads: "It follows that the state must not substantially interfere with the ability of a union to exert meaningful influence over working conditions through a process of collective bargaining conducted in accordance with the duty to bargain in good faith. Thus the employees' right to collective bargaining imposes corresponding duties on the employer. It requires both employer and employees to meet and to bargain in good faith, in the pursuit of a common goal of peaceful and productive accommodation."

It's clearly articulated that both employer and employees are required to meet and bargain in good faith. Passing legislation of this nature does not meet that standard. It does not meet that test, because there is no meeting and bargaining in good faith if you just legislate a freeze, as has been suggested by the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London and supported by his party.

In another paragraph, paragraph 96, the justices go further and state: "Laws or state actions that prevent or deny meaningful discussion and consultation about working conditions between employees and their employer may substantially interfere with the activity of collective bargaining, as may laws that unilaterally nullify significant negotiated terms in existing collective agreements."

Again, it's clearly speaking to a situation like this, as has been contemplated by this particular proposed legislation. Undermining collective agreements by not sitting down around the table and engaging in good-faith bargaining is illegal under the Constitution, under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I'll read one more citation, Speaker, from paragraph 103, where the justices state: "The duty to bargain in good faith does not impose on the parties an obligation to conclude a collective agreement, nor does it include a duty to accept any particular contractual provisions. Nor does the duty to bargain in good faith preclude hard bargaining. The parties are free to adopt a 'tough position in the hope and expectation of being able to force the other side to agree to one's terms.'"

In other words, it's bargaining. Both parties need to come to the table. Both parties need to put their positions in front of each other. Both parties should engage in hard, tough bargaining in good faith, and that, Speaker, is a process that must be followed in order for it to be legal. Bill 92 is an illegal scheme. It's only going to cost taxpayers of Ontario more money, and therefore I will not be voting in favour of this particular bill.

1400

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

Mr. Jack MacLaren: This afternoon, it is my pleasure to speak in favour of Bill 92, an act to freeze public sector compensation for two years. This bill would freeze all public salaried and hourly employees' wages and benefits. If passed in a timely manner, this bill will save the province \$4 billion: \$2 billion in the first year and \$2 billion in the second year.

Why do we need this bill? Because this government has squandered our money and we are in a deep financial crisis right now. We have a budget deficit of \$15 billion and a debt of \$240 billion. This bill would reduce our deficit by over 13%. We need to put this in place now so we can work on the other 87% of our annual unfunded liabilities.

Since 2003, this government has allowed the province's public sector wage costs to increase by 50%, to almost \$60 billion. On average, this government has increased public sector pay by 5% every year. Even during the recession years of 2008, 2009 and 2010, when everyone was experiencing economic hardship, the pay of Ontario's public sector employees continued to grow. Compared to the private sector, our public sector salaries are 35% higher. Fifty-five cents of every dollar this irresponsible government spends go to paying the employees.

The Liberals' mismanagement and unbridled spending binges of the last nine years have dug a hole in the province's financial future so deep that both Moody's and Standard and Poor's have lost confidence in Ontario. These credit rating agencies are watching us closely.

A public sector wage freeze is absolutely necessary. A public sector wage freeze would be a major step in the right direction toward restoring confidence in Ontario. A

public sector wage freeze would lessen the unfortunate and unfair burden that this government has placed on future generations of Ontarians.

Part of the genius of this proposal is that it would freeze wages across the board. It does not single out one group of employees and pit them against another. Everyone will share the load. Everyone will be asked to pay for this government's mistakes, just like all the taxpayers of Ontario have been doing for years.

So I ask you: Support this important proposal. We need to do it. We must reduce our spending. We must pass this bill.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I have to say that it's very difficult for people like me to support a bill like this.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Unreasonable.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Because it is totally unreasonable, I think; absolutely. There's got to be a better way to do it.

I understand what the Tories are saying. We do have deficits and we do have debt, to which they have contributed in the past in a big way. We're all trying to deal with it. That's something that is a reasonable request to make.

We, in our friendly relations with the Liberals, have negotiated two things that bring in a little more revenue, which we think is good. Having government revenues is a good thing, because when you have money as a government, it means that you are able to, yes, in big part, reduce your deficit and, in big part, deal with the social deficit that we have created over the last 15 years.

Part of our negotiation with the Liberals was to introduce a surtax on—God bless—those who earn over \$500,000. I would contribute that today and yesterday if I had that kind of money. I'm even willing to give up a little more, even though I earn over \$100,000. People like me, yes, are willing to give a little more. We also said that we feel that the corporate sector needs to make a contribution to society; that they have social obligations—not just corporate obligations but social obligations; and that we have a right to ask of them that they give up a little something too, and that they give a little more. That is why freezing the corporate tax rate is a good thing, because eventually that will bring in 800 million or 900 million bucks. This is a good thing that we should be celebrating.

We have the lowest tax rate in the country: 27%. When you compare it to the states. Our combined federal and provincial rate is 27%, lower than most states. How much lower do you want it to go, and where is the evidence that these people have created jobs? There is none. Let's make sure that corporations give a little to society, and let's make sure that those who have money—big amounts of money—contribute just a little to make it better for us.

I tell you: As far as I know, teachers put on the table a zero sum, a zero increase, meaning no increase for the next two years. It's a funny thing that the teachers are

voluntarily saying, "We want zero," and the Conservatives seem to say—and the Liberals as well—no, it can't be voluntary; it has to be mandatory. We have to mandate a wage freeze for Tories to be happy.

It isn't good enough that teachers are saying, "We'll do it voluntarily." And the Liberals are quite happily saying, "Oh, no, we're trying to negotiate," even though they're getting that agreement from the teachers. But the Liberals seem to want more than that. It's not enough. They want to go after the grid; they want to go after pensions. And when they disagree with that, they'll say, "We're going to have to legislate a little more against the teachers."

You two parties are not too far from each other, I tell you, and I think you should work it out.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: This is such a fun debate. It began with the member on whom I almost called a point of order pursuant to standing order 23(b)(i), because the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London wouldn't even talk about his own bill. However, as he seems to have opened the door, let's have a little bit of fun with it.

You know, this is just the usual disjointed, self-serving, right-wing sloganeering nonsense that's imported from the US Republican Party. Really, if you like George W. Bush and his hard right-wing republican politics, at least have the courtesy to tell Ontarians that the fiscally bankrupt politics of the United States right wing is what you want to bring to Ontario.

Now, let's actually talk a little bit about the bill. No provincial jurisdiction has tried to impose a wage freeze on its bargaining public sector workforce at 0% since 2007, when the Supreme Court decided BC health services was in violation and, in fact, nullified it.

Now, here's the interesting part: This also represents yet another flip-flop by the Progressive Conservatives. Let me quote their leader. On December 15, 2009, "Where collective bargaining agreements exist, I think you need to respect the collective bargaining process." On November 9, 2010, "The approach that I think is the preferable approach, always, is the collective bargaining approach." On September 30, 2011, "We'll consider all options on the table as a last resort..." "Our first resort ... open negotiations, bring their ideas to the table, we'll look for responsible leadership."

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Who said that?

Mr. Bob Delaney: That's the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party. However, just seven weeks later, the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party says the PC caucus will be calling for a "legislated, mandatory wage freeze for public servants." Flip and flop.

We know that it won't stand up in court. We know that it will be struck down. We know that it's illegal. We know that it's going to cost Ontario taxpayers money. We also need to respect the collective bargaining process while balancing the budget.

The Supreme Court of Canada has provided a very clear road map to governments. They've said, "Consult

and bargain hard,” and that’s precisely what Ontario’s government is doing now with all of our bargaining units. We respect the collective bargaining process, but we will introduce legislation to achieve savings, if necessary. Our government respects public services, and we also respect the hard-working Ontarians who deliver those services to our families on the front lines.

1410

The PCs, of course, talk about a hypothetical \$2 billion in additional savings from a wage freeze, which is complete nonsense. However, they should stop playing games and support the only plan before this Legislature, which is this government’s 2012-13 budget, which actually will get us back to a balanced budget in 2017 and not to that \$30-billion mess the PC policies would take us toward. This is madness, and so is this legislated wage freeze.

We’ve seen it before. The last time we saw it is when our government was first elected in 2003, and it was, “Surprise, you’ve got a \$5.5-billion structural deficit.” Not only did this government eliminate that deficit, not only did we do it without gutting public services, but we also balanced the budget, ran into surplus three years in a row, paid down long-term debt and managed this province in a responsible fiscal manner.

When the recession hit, our government chose to lessen the impact on Ontarians by investing in our economy and in our key services, and that member and his party voted against each and every one of them. We were responsible for saving the auto sector, and that member and his party voted against it. They said, “Throw ’em out the boat.” Support for the auto sector saved 400,000 direct and indirect jobs. The Conference Board of Canada estimates that the municipal infrastructure partnership saved 70,000 jobs in 2009 alone, and they voted against it. Shame.

Since the recessionary low, employment in Ontario has grown by nearly 300,000 net jobs. More people are working in Ontario now than were at the top of the last growth period.

For all of these reasons, Speaker, this bill is, to be polite, nonsense and I cannot support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: I’m pleased to take this opportunity to speak to what I think is the most important piece of legislation tabled this session to rein in runaway public spending in the province of Ontario. I’d like to thank the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London for introducing this very important bill.

The Premier has talked about getting government spending under control, but he has failed to do anything to take Ontario off its collision course with a \$30-billion deficit. The PC Party, however, understands that the first real step towards reducing the size and cost of government is implementing a mandatory, across-the-board public sector wage freeze, which will help Ontario save more than \$2 billion. Unlike the governing Liberals, we know a pay freeze isn’t about picking winners and losers

or about targeting doctors and teachers. Instead, it’s about treating all public sector workers equally. We on this side of the House believe that everyone must do their part to ensure that Ontario returns to a more sound financial footing.

Let’s be clear, Mr. Speaker. Action is required now. Ontario faces an unparalleled fiscal crisis. Moody’s has already downgraded Ontario’s debt, and Standard and Poor’s has put us on a negative outlook, meaning there’s a one-in-three chance they will downgrade us in their next review. This lack of confidence in the province’s finances hurts private sector job creation because many businesses are starting to doubt that Ontario can get its fiscal house in order.

We have to start reducing debt now to ensure we have sustained investment and job creation in the future. But to do that, as someone recently pointed out, we need to remember that we “can’t manage the deficit without addressing what is the single biggest line in our budget—public sector compensation.” You know who said that?

Mr. Todd Smith: Who?

Mr. Michael Harris: The finance minister.

Still, the Premier continues to show a lack of leadership. The Liberals would rather pick fights with teachers and doctors in a hopeless battle to negotiate pay freezes in the public sector, even though the Liberal government said it would legislate a wage freeze if necessary.

Here’s the reality: With roughly 2,600 collective agreements set to expire over the next three years, affecting nearly 700,000 public sector workers, there’s no way the Liberals’ one-off approach to wage restraint will work. Only a mandatory, across-the-board public sector wage freeze will do the job. That’s why I will be voting in favour of this bill.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It’s a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 92. I applaud my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London for taking the action this government has refused to take, time and time again. They have refused to take action, Speaker, despite the pressing and obvious need for doing so.

Just prior to last year’s election, the Auditor General released his pre-election report, which indicated that this government’s attempt at a voluntary wage freeze was a complete and utter failure. Not only were wages founded on collective agreements not frozen; they increased. According to this government’s own Ministry of Labour, wages rose 1.8% since 2010 alone.

Then, to add insult to injury, this government has chosen to vilify certain working groups over others. The current strife between the Premier and our province’s doctors springs to mind. Caught in the middle of all this are the services that our families rely on, including our seniors, which this government doesn’t seem to care much about. They’re caught in the middle because government cannot—indeed, it refuses to—get its spending under control. The services that families depend on are now in jeopardy because Ontario’s finances have turned

into a black hole after eight years of this government spending its problems away.

What happens when members like my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London stand up to offer good ideas, the tough ideas, to help rescue the province from the brink of disaster? This government turns up its collective nose and says, “Ignore the fact that the finance minister has driven us into debt. Ignore the fact that the Premier has alienated our doctors. We have everything well in hand, and there’s nothing more here to see.” And do they do it all without proper consultations with stakeholders? They continue to act as though they have a majority government.

As my colleagues have pointed out, there is much to see here. It’s worth repeating, Speaker, that the numbers support our position today. Growth in public sector wages has time and time again gone beyond the rate of inflation. In fact, since this government has taken office, pay for public sector employees has been above the per capita income in Ontario. That’s more than eight years that they have been unable or unwilling to tackle the problems head-on. I support every effort made by this side of the House to steer us away from a looming \$30-billion deficit, because families are not seeing that action from their government.

Let’s be clear about the challenge we face: 55 cents of every dollar the government spends is funnelled towards public sector compensation. Perhaps that’s a problem that could have been avoided if the government had successfully implemented the wage freeze they claimed so triumphantly in 2010. Instead, wages kept going up. Even after the freeze, Ontario’s ability to recover from the effects of a fiscally irresponsible government were further diminished.

Let’s remember, Speaker, that it’s the private sector that pays the public sector. It’s the private sector that has driven our economy for years. They are the ones that have been hit the hardest with job loss after job loss while public sector jobs continue to grow. It’s time the public sector, which has contributed to government overspending with pay increases and fat benefits and pensions, do their share to now reduce government overspending and agree to a public sector wage freeze. After all, it’s their children’s future that this government is mortgaging.

With that, Speaker, I stand firm in supporting my colleague’s bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It’s great to participate in this discussion on a very common-sense bill from our good friend from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

We’ve talked a lot about numbers. I don’t have a lot of numbers left on the clock, so I’ll go through them rather quickly: \$15.3 billion is the deficit; we’re heading for a \$400-billion debt in the province of Ontario—a tripling of the debt from when this government took office.

The finance minister stood in the House and said that his government had only increased the debt by 32%. He

was almost immediately contradicted by several independent analysts, who showed that the number was actually over 70%. So clearly the finance minister doesn’t quite understand the gravity of the situation. Neither does the member from Mississauga–Streetsville and apparently the other members from the government side who have spoken today. They’re living in a fantasy land over there. I often wondered what the population of fantasy land was, and I think it’s 52. I’ve come to that determination that maybe it’s 52.

1420

But I’m here to talk about Bill 92, okay? It represents exactly what the province needs at this time. The current budget has been called “Duncan’s missed opportunity.” S&P stated that Ontario’s outlook downgrade was due to its continuing weak budgetary and debt metrics. So this is the perfect opportunity to bring this in.

I spoke about it yesterday here in the House during question period. One in six young Ontarians are out of work. One in six—it’s completely unacceptable. It’s far higher than all parts of the globe. It’s unbelievable how high that number is. So we owe the kids a future in the province of Ontario. The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London said that \$30,000 is what they’re being born with in debt. It’s just not fair. I have two young daughters. We need to do what’s right. We need to get this right now and bring in a mandatory public sector wage freeze.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Speaker. I’d like to thank the leader of the third party, the member from Ottawa Centre, the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, the member for Trinity–Spadina and the members for Mississauga–Streetsville, Kitchener–Conestoga, Chatham–Kent–Essex and Prince Edward–Hastings for all their comments today. I appreciate that.

What I’ve got coming from the government side is that if you say enough misinformation enough times, you might think it might become truth. I’d like to point out that they keep taking sections of the Ontario Supreme Court recommendations or—

Interjection: Ruling.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Ruling, thank you. But there have actually been three or four cases out there that say we can implement a mandatory wage freeze. As Christine Elliott, from Whitby–Oshawa, said today, the courts cannot close their eyes to the periodic occurrence of financial emergencies when measures must be taken to juggle priorities to see a government through a crisis.

“While the courts have recognized that substantial fiscal emergencies are cause for infringing on section 2(d) of the charter, three criteria must be met....” The criteria:

“(1) The circumstances must be pressing and substantial.” I think that facing a \$30-billion deficit and \$400-billion debt considers this pressing and substantial.

“(2) The measures adopted must be carefully designed to meet the objective.” This measure does: \$2 billion savings a year heading towards balancing our budget.

“(3) The constitutional impairment must be modest—or as minimal—as it can reasonably be.” The teachers’ unions and the doctors have said that two years is fair. That’s all this bill calls upon: for everybody across the board to be fair to Ontarians. We each take a little bit of hurt due to this mismanagement from this government, and fairly, across the board. Two years: We have a little bit of hardship, but for the future of Ontario, it is better.

I appreciate you listening to my speech today. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. We’ll take the vote on this at the end of regular business.

PESTICIDES AMENDMENT ACT
(LICENCE FOR COSMETIC
PURPOSES), 2012
LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES PESTICIDES
(LICENCE À DES FINS ESTHÉTIQUES)

Mr. Chudleigh moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 88, An Act to amend the Pesticides Act to provide for the use of pesticides for cosmetic purposes with a licence / Projet de loi 88, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les pesticides afin de prévoir l’utilisation de pesticides à des fins esthétiques en vertu d’une licence.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Welcome to Ontario. Welcome to Ontario, the province of dandelions, the province of the ragweed, the province of hay fever and allergy sufferers. Welcome to Ontario.

Bill 88, the Pesticides Amendment Act, amends the Pesticides Act to allow trained, licensed applicators to apply pesticides currently banned under section 7.1 of the Pesticides Act.

The Pesticides Act currently allows agriculture, forestry, golf courses, and public health and safety to use pesticides that are banned under section 7.1 of the Pesticides Act. Bill 88 will allow trained and licensed applicators to apply pesticides at safe levels as approved by Health Canada via the Pest Management Regulatory Agency.

The issue of safety is one everyone is concerned about, and I appreciate that concern; believe me, I understand it. As we look around at our very complex world, we see things that might harm others, that might harm our loved ones, that might harm ourselves. I’ll just use a couple of examples. Sugar, something that’s found in every home, properly used in coffee, ice cream, cake, icing—what’s a birthday party without sugar? A tablespoon here, a teaspoon there; it’s an excellent product. But are you aware that if you consume a cup of sugar in

one sitting that it would kill you? You would literally burn yourself to death with excess energy. Used improperly, sugar is a very dangerous product, but used properly it gives a taste that many people like—some of us too much.

Benzoate of soda: It’s found naturally in fruit, such as cranberries, and is used as a food preservative common in ketchup and other room-temperature-stable products. At a level of one tenth of 1%, it is a good, safe, effective preserver of food. At higher quantities, over 1%, it turns into a deadly poison. Again, used properly, benzoate is a safe, effective food preservative; used improperly, it’s a dangerous poison.

Pesticides can fall under these same parameters. Weed killer, for instance, may require 50 millilitres of product to be mixed with four litres of water. Now, 50 millilitres is a very small amount. It barely covers the bottom of a Tim Hortons coffee cup. It’s rather hard to measure. Human nature might say that if a little is good, more is better. When dealing with pesticides—or sugar, or benzoate of soda—this is not true. If you’re measuring pesticides by the glug—one glug, two glugs—you’re doing it wrong.

A licensed applicator has the proper equipment to mix the product at the approved rates for safe application. That is why Bill 88 puts pesticides in the hands of trained applicators to ensure pesticides are applied at safe, appropriate rates—rates that have been tested and approved by Health Canada and regulated by the Pest Management Regulatory Agency.

Many people have told me that they’re concerned, when walking on a spring evening in their neighbourhood, that they can smell weed killer that has been applied to a lawn. Well, indeed, they should be concerned. If you can smell it at a distance, it has been applied at much too high a rate; 10 times the safe level by home gardeners is not unusual. That is why it should be put in the hands of only licensed applicators.

A number of studies have been done dealing with residue levels of pesticides in lakes and streams in Ontario. Keep in mind, homeowners’ use of pesticides amounts to less than 5% of the total amount used; farms, forestry and golf courses, all exempt from section 7.1 of the Pesticides Act, use the rest. An example of an MOE—Ministry of the Environment—study that was done to measure residue levels found that residue levels in urban waterways were higher than in rural streams. Yet the vast majority of pesticides are applied in rural areas. Again, I point out the use of pesticides in rural parts of Ontario, where the vast majority are applied by licensed, trained applicators, don’t produce high residue rates because they are properly applied.

In an MOE baseline study, the Humber River was tested in an area where a golf course was on both sides of the river. A sample was taken upstream of the golf course and a second sample was taken downstream of the golf course. The samples were taken after a significant rainfall event. This rainfall would ensure that some erosion or drainage from the surrounding land would wash into the

stream. One would expect the downstream sample would have a higher residue level because of the runoff from the golf course, which is a legal user of pesticides. That is not the case. In fact, the upstream sample had significantly higher residue levels than the downstream sample. Only one reason could explain these results: The upstream sample measured residue from residential application done by homeowners. The sample taken downstream from the golf course measured the residue from the golf course, which was applied by trained applicators using appropriate rates of application as approved by Health Canada. Homeowners did not; they overdosed their lawns, causing excessive product to be washed into the stream.

Another type of example: Acelethyon is an active ingredient found in products that kill dog and cat fleas. In these products, Acelethyon is present at about 18% by volume. It is also an active ingredient in a product called Merit, which gardeners use to treat grubs in lawns. In Merit, it is present at about one half of 1%. Fleas, 18%; grubs, one half of 1%. The dog or cat that has been treated is in the house playing with your children, yet Merit at one half of 1% is banned. It just doesn't make any sense.

1430

The ban of pesticides in Ontario is not working, and their inappropriate application is dangerous and harmful to the environment. Via the Internet, Ontarians can order banned products from Saskatchewan or other places in Canada that allow these pesticides and have them delivered to their homes in a matter of a few days. They can get pesticides in the United States by simply driving across the border. In other words, there's no shortage of pesticides if you really want to have them. These products are generally applied improperly by homeowners at rates that far exceed the recommended safe rates approved by Health Canada.

My bill places pesticides in the hands of trained, responsible applicators. These applicators will ensure the pesticides will be applied in a responsible manner, properly posted and in compliance with regulations, tested and developed by Health Canada and the Pest Management Regulatory Agency. These pesticides are registered for use only after a stringent science-based evaluation that proves the safety of the product if used as directed.

During committee hearings of Bill 64, Lindsay Hanson of the Pest Management Regulatory Agency noted, "Health Canada's priorities are the health and safety of Canadians and their food supply. This primary mandate is applied when approving pesticides for use in Canada. The primary objective under the Pest Control Products Act is to prevent unacceptable risk to people and the environment from the use of pest control products. We also enable users to access pest management tools, namely, those pest control products and sustainable pest management strategies."

He went on to say, "Under the federal responsibilities, we regulate all pest control products imported into, sold

or used in Canada under the Pest Control Products Act. This includes the pre-market review, which is the scientific assessment that we do; post-registration compliance and monitoring; and the re-evaluation process, which is a scientific assessment every 15 years" of existing products.

"The pre-market assessment is an area that includes over 200 studies that are required to register a new product in Canada" and can cost upwards of tens of millions of dollars. "The particular areas we examine look at health assessment, those being the toxicological evaluation; the occupational and bystander exposure assessments; and food residue and exposure assessments.

"We also do similar work under the environmental assessment banner, in terms of looking at the environmental toxicology and the environmental chemistry and fate. We also look at the value assessment, efficacy, competitiveness and sustainability of the use of that product.

"There is a strong reliance on a comprehensive body of scientific evidence and scientific methods. It reflects approaches of other regulatory bodies around the world. It's a systematic application of science to support regulatory decisions. We have a large number of in-house qualified scientists with a wide range of expertise." Mr. Hanson works "with approximately 350 scientists back in Ottawa. The entire agency has a staff of about 500 people.

"The data requirements to register a product in Canada are extensive. These are the scientific studies that are required in order to assess hazards and risks to health and the environment. These are conducted according to OECD guidelines for study protocols."

He concluded, "Health Canada is confident that the pesticides approved for use in Canada, including lawn and garden products, can be used safely when label directions are followed."

In BC just this month, an all-party committee rejected an outright ban, saying the scientific evidence doesn't support such a move.

This list of organizations—including the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, Canadian Environmental Law Association, Ecojustice, Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, Ontario College of Family Physicians, Ontario Medical Association pediatric section, Pesticide Free Ontario, Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario and the Toronto Environmental Alliance—are all opposed to Bill 88. I say to them all, if you have scientific evidence that any approved pesticide is harmful if applied according to the instructions, get that evidence to Health Canada, and the product will be removed from use immediately. All the organizations know this, yet none of them have done it. My point is, inappropriate use and application is a dangerous thing, and it is ongoing, and is going to continue to be ongoing in Ontario.

A ban is not working to protect our environment. Pesticides must be put into the hands of licensed, trained applicators for their safe application. This bill will make for a safer Ontario with greatly reduced risk of residue

buildup in our soils, our lakes and our streams. I urge all members of the House to vote in favour of this bill to protect our environment and our future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Davenport.

Mr. Jonah Schein: As always, it's my pleasure and honour to rise on behalf of the people of Davenport and the great city of Toronto. However, it's with some discouragement that I find myself spending my afternoon talking about this issue, because this feels like moving backward, not moving forward.

I want to talk to the young people up in the balcony here today, because I think young people understand this.

Interjection.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Lots and lots. Young people understand the future.

Did you know that "progressive" actually means "moving forward"? What we have here is something that really moves us backward. So we're actually doing much better on pesticide use in Ontario. We don't have as much pesticide use, and it means that people are much healthier. The argument people are having here today is basically whether you should have a perfectly green lawn but you might get sick or you might get asthma, or is it okay to have a dandelion in your lawn but be healthier? That's sort of what we're debating here.

I think the disappointing thing is that I come into this House to represent the people of Davenport because we have real, real concerns in our community and across this province. We know—we all agree—that we need to get this province working again. We need to be talking about jobs. We need supports for people who are struggling. We need child care. We need all these things. Instead we're talking about something that takes us backward here.

To talk a little bit more about Bill 88, what this bill does, which I cannot support, is that Bill 88 seeks to reverse the ban on cosmetic use of pesticides. Bill 88 would destroy Ontario's cosmetic pesticide ban by allowing non-essential pesticide use to return to the province. In fact, Ontario's pesticide ban is currently the most health-protective legislation of its kind in North America, and we all know that our health is priceless. It's the one thing we cannot sacrifice, and that's exactly what allowing more pesticide use in our cities and our communities will do. It has already helped us to substantially reduce pesticide concentrations in urban streams, because the pesticides we put on our lawn go into our sewers, go into our water, end up in our water system and then we have to drink those chemicals and we don't want to do that.

The provisions in this bill: Bill 88 introduces an amendment to section 7.1 of the Pesticides Act, 2009, to exempt people from the ban on cosmetic pesticide use when contracting with a licensed company. It does not affect the current exemptions for golf courses, for farms and for forest companies. Those folks already have an exemption. You can have pesticide use where appropriate, but just cosmetic use, to make something a little

bit prettier on a front lawn, is what we're talking about here.

We know that each month more scientific research comes out connecting pesticide exposure to human illness. Just this spring the Ontario College of Family Physicians, representing over 10,000 doctors, released a new study showing pesticide exposure is linked to birth defects, reduced IQ and childhood asthma. The review, released in May, reconfirms that pesticides are of course harmful to reproductive and respiratory systems and to the neuro-development of behaviour—that means brain development. Earlier science showed that people exposed to these chemicals are at greater risk for neurological illness and for cancer. This hardly seems worth it to me.

I can't wait till you guys turn 18 and can vote and you bring just some reasonableness back to this province, because we desperately need it. We desperately need a reasonable conversation. Adults in this province need to know what's really important, and I'm counting on you guys to grow up fast and to have a say here.

The science was strong when the ban was passed in 2008, and we keep on researching it and we know it's stronger today. All the science shows that this is hazardous. The landmark Supreme Court of Canada ruling on *Spraytech v. Hudson* in Quebec in 2001 upheld the concept of governments being able to apply precautionary principles as trustees of the environment. That's our job when we're here in the Legislature. We're supposed to protect Ontarians. We're supposed to make sure that people's health is protected. We're supposed to make sure that the environment is protected, and across the country, Canadians living in communities with pesticides bans have healthy, chemical-free lawns and gardens that are as beautiful as ever.

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Since this legislation came into effect in 2009, it's working. Concentrations in urban streams of lawn chemicals such as 2,4-D and Dicamba and MCPP have been reduced by 97%; they're almost all gone. Numerous respected health and environmental organizations—actually, you mentioned some of them—such as the Canadian Cancer Society, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, the Ontario College of Family Physicians, they've all stated their support for the current Pesticides Act and their opposition to this bill, to Bill 88, or other attempts to weaken the act.

What we see here, whether it's the Conservatives over here or the government, is actually weakening of environmental laws across this province. It's deregulating. It's taking control out of the hands of government and people and saying that one person can put pesticides, they can hunt endangered species, they can do any of those things, and the rest of us have no control over that. That's what government's role is, right? Government's role is to act on all of our behalf and make sure that we keep things fair, we keep things healthy, we keep the environment healthy.

All of us—you know, very smart people get elected here in this Legislature, but not all of us are doctors. But

when we're talking about health, we should listen to the doctors.

Interjection.

Mr. Jonah Schein: My friend here has a Ph.D. but he's not a medical doctor, I don't think.

So what do the doctors say about this? There's a group called the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment and they say, "Our doctors are appalled at Bill 88's proposal to weaken the most health-protective pesticide legislation in North America. Ontario's Cosmetic Pesticides Ban Act in 2008 was based on a solid body of scientific data detailing the health impacts of pesticides, but today we know even more. The latest science from the Ontario College of Family Physicians links pesticide exposure to low birth weight, behavioural problems, lowered IQ, and lung disease. If any amount of spraying is permitted, it will risk the health of ... Ontarians"—if any amount is permitted, it will risk the health of Ontarians.

This is why we do science in school, right? We need scientists. We need doctors to make sure that we're doing things in the best interests of the people of Ontario. They're saying that this is going to make people sick and we need to listen to them.

All of us want to make sure that we're using our tax dollars wisely, and we know that one of the most growing budget lines is always paying for health costs. Now, you guys would agree that it makes sense to stop people from getting sick in the first place rather than treating the disease later, right? So that's what I think we should be doing. And if we know we can stop people from getting sick by not dumping chemicals on our front lawns, we should do that, right? It costs money, but also it's terribly sad when somebody in our family gets sick, when they get cancer; as kids, when you have asthma and you can't play sports, it's terribly sad. It's something we can avoid, but we need adults in this province to act responsibly here.

This is what the Canadian Cancer Society says. The Canadian Cancer Society—we've spent millions and millions and billions of dollars on cancer research, trying to make people better when they get cancer. We could spend almost no money just to help not as many people get cancer, to stop people from getting cancer in the first place. The Ontario Cosmetic Pesticides Ban Act—this is what the Canadian Cancer Society says: "The Ontario Cosmetic Pesticides Ban Act is a significant way of engaging in the fight against cancer and we support it in its current form. Because of the act, parents no longer worry about their children being exposed to cosmetic pesticides while playing in backyards, parks and school yards. We need to remember that the body of evidence suggests a positive association between exposure to certain pesticides and cancer. The act has been successful." So let's leave it. This is what the cancer society says.

In my riding, in my community in Toronto, we don't have so much green space. Some of you folks are lucky; you live in the country and you've got lots of green space

to go for a walk or a bike ride. In my community in Davenport, we have a few parks and they're great, and everybody in my riding goes out and plays in them, but nobody's going to want to play baseball or soccer, nobody's going to want to run around, nobody's going to want to go cycling or play tag if when you're doing that you're getting sick because you're breathing in all these pesticides. The people who use Dufferin Grove Park in my riding or Earls Court Park or Dovercourt Park or folks who just want to walk their dogs, they all deserve to have safe, healthy parks to play and exercise in.

The sad thing is that we're actually using valuable time here in this Legislature to debate something that I thought we had settled a long time ago. In fact, we're going backwards here. We're going back in time, and it's not a good thing.

This is what the Canadian Environmental Law Association says: "Ontario's approach to banning the cosmetic use of pesticides is the culmination of over 20 years of effort that began with local pesticide bylaws that withstood multiple legal challenges up to and including the Supreme Court of Canada. That court noted approval of the concepts of governments as 'trustees of the environment' and applying the precautionary principle. Given the multiple challenges we face of ongoing pollution emissions, and a wide range of toxic substances in our air, food, water and in multiple consumer products, we should take every opportunity to minimize or eliminate exposures to toxic substances that are unnecessary and easily eliminated. The cosmetic use of pesticides falls squarely into this category and banning the use and sale of needless pesticides is an exemplary way to apply a precautionary approach."

This is not a controversial thing. In fact, 70% of Ontarians support the existing ban on pesticides that we have. So this is representing a very, very small group of people, and once you folks get older and are part of this overwhelming majority in support of banning pesticides, there will be fewer people who would support this bill.

From an economic standpoint as well, when you talk to folks who are trying to invest in green technology, the one thing that they say is that they're okay with regulations as long as they can count on what's happening. If they know that they need to be able to support gardeners in ways that don't make people sick, they're cool with that. They'll do that. They'll work towards making healthier ways to support plant life. But they don't like it when things get changed around. So this messes up an entire industry when you start changing the regulations.

Most of all, I'm hoping that we'll have the support of the government on this. I'm listening right now; my phone is ringing off the hook from the environmental community, which is just distraught with what the government is doing in this budget bill. I urge the backbench on the government side to look at what's happening in the budget bill. It's absolutely gutting all the environmental regulations we have in this province. It goes absolutely against the Environmental Bill of Rights. You need to go to bed feeling good about yourself, and you

can't do it if you know what the budget bill is doing to the environment in this province.

Thanks, folks out there, for coming out today.

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: Mr. Speaker, it's my opinion that Bill 88 should be called the Neanderthals Use More Pesticides Act. Trust the Conservatives to take a step backwards when it comes to protecting the environment and our children.

Let's start off with the Conservatives getting rid of the National Round Table on the environment and the economy. This was done in the federal budget recently. It was a great organization that was recommending to Canada what they should do. These were all appointees of Mr. Harper. They were telling the truth about the environment, climate change, what's happening with the CO₂ going into the air. They were telling the truth, so he got rid of it. These were his appointees. I think that's where the Conservatives come from on most of these environmental things that have taken so long—20 years. I worked on this in 2001 and 2002 in Ottawa. We lost banning the cosmetic use of pesticides then. We were beaten back, but we had all the doctors from CHEO on our side, and they were saying we must go ahead with this. No, the pushers of these pesticides were able to convince the council. We got a compromise bylaw that didn't work, and so we're here today. So this follows the federal Conservatives' line: increase greenhouse gases, destroy the Fisheries Act, fire the scientists and push dirty coal. This bill wants to take us backwards relative to protecting our environment and our children.

We heard that it doesn't work. Well, it does work: a 90% reduction in these terrible chemicals in our urban streams. That's how effective it is. So there are grubs, so there are difficulties making that lawn look great. But what about our children? That's where our arguments have to be coming from.

Let's not forget that cigarette research paid for by the tobacco companies once proved there was no connection between smoking and cancer, and this deadly opinion continued for 50 years. That's what this is about.

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The science is there. Here's what a few organizations have said about pesticides.

"The Ontario College of Family Physicians solidly supports a province-wide ban on the use of cosmetic pesticides. Our research demonstrates the many health effects associated with pesticides. On behalf of our most vulnerable patients, the children of this province, we are pleased to hear that the government has moved so quickly to develop this important legislation." And it has worked. It has worked. So many people put so much effort into protecting our children. That was Jan Kasperski, chief executive officer, Ontario College of Family Physicians.

"The Ontario Public Health Association is pleased to see a ban on the use and sale of pesticides for cosmetic purposes. This enabling legislation is another positive

step the McGuinty government is taking to protect the health of our children and our environment." That was Connie Uetrecht, executive director of the Ontario Public Health Association.

This is what these people said when this legislation was proposed, and it's great legislation.

In order to protect Ontario families and improve our environment, this government brought in the cosmetic pesticides ban. The ban, which came into effect on April 22, 2009, reduces the unnecessary risks of pesticides used for cosmetic purposes. It's one of the toughest cosmetic pesticide bans in the world, and it is working.

So now we have a member who brings in this neanderthal bill, Bill 88. I'm surprised it is not a bill to bring back smoking on airplanes. It's about the same level of effort. I wonder how many of you have been in the children's cancer clinics. I attended many cancer clinics over three years, about 40 years ago. Those CHEO doctors wanted us to get rid of these chemicals then, and they want us to keep that ban in effect now. Just go into those oncology clinics and see the kids.

When I was elected to Ottawa's council in 2000, plans were under way to bring in this ban on the cosmetic use of pesticides. As I said, we lost it. We lost that vote. There was too much pressure from big chemicals, and we got a compromised bill that didn't work. This provincial bill is working. It's a great bill, and it shouldn't be played with.

Cosmetic pesticides are chemical or biological sprays, liquids, powders or substances combined with chemical fertilizers used to destroy living things such as insects, plants and fungi for the purpose of enhancing the aesthetics of an area.

Pesticides can enter the body through skin contact, by ingestion or by breathing them in, and can enter the home through people, pets, objects and toys contaminated with chemicals.

The really important thing that I saw with this was—this is back in the 1990s. When they'd come to spray your lawn, they'd say, "Okay, put the dog in the garage. Keep him there all day." That was the type of thing that was happening in our province. We got beautiful grass, but what was happening with the kids who played on those lawns?

In the short term, people with lung diseases who are sensitive to chemicals are the most affected and can have an immediate physical reaction, such as an asthma attack. Exposure may lead to fertility problems in both men and women, and exposure in women during pregnancy can lead to early pregnancy loss, birth defects and altered fetal growth.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer and the US National Toxicology Program state that some pesticides and the by-products of the use of pesticides, such as chlorendic acid, can cause cancer. So it's that thing—it can cause cancer. The research has not tied a great deal of this stuff in, but just because that possibility is there, and it's a big possibility, and there are relationships that have to be dealt with, we have to have that precautionary principle and say, "Yes, ban it."

Long-term health effects of chronic exposure in infancy may include cancer, damage to the central nervous system, respiratory illnesses and damage to the immune system.

When it comes to the environment, pesticides have been identified as a potential cause of amphibian declines and deformities such as missing or additional body parts. Two independent studies completed by British and French researchers found that some pesticides could be behind the worldwide decline of honeybees and bumblebees.

But sadly, Bill 88 is expected of the Conservative Party. Whether it's banning smoking in cars with children, whether it's opening new coal plants out west, whether it's about green energy, Conservatives can be counted on in doing the wrong thing for the environment.

I have a few pages left here, but I just wanted to end up and leave some time for my friend.

So now we have this member introducing a bill that wants to go backwards on very important legislation that's doing its job to protect the health and environment of Ontarians. This bill is wrong. Anyone with children or grandchildren—vote against it. Vote for the health of your children and not for that perfect lawn. Thank you.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: I'm pleased to support the bill. I worked extensively on the pesticides file, back during the Bill 64 fiasco.

Here we are a few years out, and people are coming back from Buffalo or Quebec with a stockpile of spray. Now we're seeing people, just like the old days, back to spraying burdock with diesel. I understand that people boil rhubarb juice to kill spiders. I don't know how that works out. Vacant lots are overrun with weeds. We heard reference to an attack—the allergy issues, again, are clearly related to a lot of the weeds that were mentioned earlier by the sponsor of this bill.

You may think this bill is about cosmetics and aesthetics, and you're wrong. This is a policy and legislation based on emotion rather than science.

For the past number of years, we've been questioning why the government would wade into a matter that's already managed by the federal government. The federal Pest Control Products Act controls the sale and use of products in Canada. The Food and Drugs Act allows for the setting of maximum limits for residue in food. The Environmental Protection Act includes numerous provisions to protect the environment and human health from pesticides. The Fertilizers Act requires registration of fertilizer-pesticide mixtures; and the Feeds Act with respect to contamination of livestock feed. And in Ontario, when this bill was introduced we had the Ontario Pesticides Act, the Municipal Act, the weeds act and the forest sustainability act. Mr. McGuinty ignored his own Pesticides Advisory Committee when this legislation was first brought in.

We're paying for it. We're paying for it as taxpayers—the duplication, provincial and federal dupli-

cation, and the squabbling. Never did this government consult with PMRA, the federal Pest Management Regulatory Agency. They waded in with a ban, suggesting there's something inherently wrong with the plethora of insecticides, herbicides, algacides, fungicides, and rodenticides, products that are used by those of us who own farmland. There was a lot wrong with Bill 64, and it all was driven by the fact that it didn't even come close to anything at all with respect to a consensus with respect to the neutral, objective research and science that was present.

When you have legislation that's anti-science and anti-innovation, it really puts the development of future products in a tough way. What company is going to invest the time and money to stay on top of new infestations, new diseases? Why jeopardize millions of dollars?

Grubs are taking over Ontario—I'm not referring to anybody in this Legislature. The Minister of the Environment knows about this infestation. He's looking for a miracle product to get rid of them. You cannot have it both ways.

So it came in, with virtually no consultation, and no one willing to review the regulation. I'm very concerned about the path we're now on. For that reason, I support this bill.

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. This is a great opportunity for me to speak about a very important bill—not this particular bill, not Bill 88, but the bill it's trying to amend. It's not going to come as a surprise to any members who have heard my views about environmental issues that I will not be supporting Bill 88.

I will tell you a very precise reason for me not supporting: because my community does not support Bill 88. The member from Ottawa-Orléans very clearly articulated the work that has been done in Ottawa, in our community, in terms of having a ban on cosmetic use of pesticides.

Our city council had tried at times before in the past and they were not successful. The community was outraged. The community wanted to ensure that we protect the health and safety of our children, that we ensure that we do not spray our lawns with harmful chemicals just because we want them to look pretty.

1500

In the 2007 campaign, when I ran for the first time to be a member of this Legislature, that was one of the key issues that was raised again and again from my constituents: They wanted a ban on the cosmetic use of pesticides. In fact, some of the neighbourhoods in my community, in my riding, and particularly in Glebe, brought in a voluntary ban as a community association. I salute them for that, because they showed strong leadership in getting that message across.

Now we've got this ban across the province since 2009. It's the right direction. We are making sure that we are not putting chemicals in our water streams, that we are cleaning up.

I'm not surprised that the member from Halton has brought in this amendment to the ban. His party supports it because they did not support the ban in the first place.

I'm really heartened to hear the arguments that were presented by the member from Davenport. I'm glad to see that his party's position, hopefully, has changed on this issue, because back in 2009, his party voted against this ban as well, which surprised me and many across the province: that the NDP, who champions environmental issues, were not in support of this. But I'm glad to see that they see that this is a strong ban, that this is a ban in the right direction, because it ensures that our communities, our neighbourhoods, where our children play—that we are not spraying chemicals on our front lawns.

I've never used pesticides. I've got a fairly big front yard and a backyard where I live in Ottawa. I've never used pesticides because I've never understood why somebody would want to do that. I think the member from Ottawa—Orléans raised a very good example. When you're warning, "Oh, don't put your dogs away in the garage," obviously, there's something wrong with the product. That's why you're trying to do it at all. When you put those little stickers saying, "Don't walk on the grass for another 24 hours because it has been sprayed by pesticide," obviously there are some harmful effects to it. That's why you're preventing people from crossing on it. Why would you then want to use it?

Cut your grass often. It's good exercise. You are out in the outdoors, getting some sun and getting some fresh air. These things are unnecessary. I think, in many ways, we've used it in the past because there's a certain life-style, as North Americans, we've gotten accustomed to. Some aspects, I think, we can live without.

I think the ban was a step in the right direction, the same thing as our efforts around conservation of electricity; the same thing as our efforts around conservation of water. These are simple things that we can do to ensure that we are helping to clean up our environment. These are simple things that we can do to ensure that we are leaving a brighter future, a healthier future, for our children.

If you speak to experts—the member from Davenport quoted some. I would like to quote Jan Kasperski, who is the chief executive officer of the Ontario College of Family Physicians. This is what she said: "The Ontario College of Family Physicians solidly supports a province-wide ban on the use of cosmetic pesticides. Our research demonstrates the many health effects associated with pesticides. On behalf of our most vulnerable patients, the children of this province, we are pleased to hear that government has moved so quickly to develop this important legislation."

The same thing from Connie Uetrecht, who is the executive director of the Ontario Public Health Association: "The Ontario Public Health Association is pleased to see a ban on the use and sale of pesticides for cosmetic purposes."

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

Mr. Todd Smith: I'm glad to participate in the debate on Bill 88 today, brought forward by my colleague from Halton. I thought he was fairly eloquent in the way he brought it forward and the fact that there hasn't been the science needed to bring in the initial bill when it was brought in by this government.

We do have a couple of people here from Prince Edward county that I wanted to introduce, from my riding. Reg and Paula Kelly are here from the Weed Man and Atlantis Irrigation. I was a little worried about the member from Davenport sitting so close to them while he was bringing his remarks here this afternoon.

One of the funny things that the member from Davenport said was that we should be debating jobs in the province of Ontario as well. The interesting connection is the fact that this bill has eliminated hundreds and probably thousands of jobs in the province of Ontario.

I can tell you, my friends the Kellys from Prince Edward county had three full-time staff. They were a growing business. They were looking to expand to four or five full-time staff. And now they have one full-time and one part-time staff at their business. They had 450 customers when they started out who required weed control. That's now down to 175.

The thing is that this bill hasn't eliminated harmful cosmetic pesticides from coming into the province. As the member from Halton and the member from Haldimand—Norfolk explained, they're coming in in the trunks of cars and in the backs of pickup trucks from neighbouring jurisdictions, whether it be the United States or other provinces, where Health Canada already has rules in place.

It only makes sense to me—and it was a very thoughtful presentation by the member from Halton—that licensed technicians be able to apply these pesticides in communities, because they are the ones who have been trained to do it properly. But in the meantime, this bill has allowed anyone who wants to go into Canadian Tire and get a bottle of Roundup to pour it on their lawn, and that's the dangerous part of this. We should let the licensed applicators, the licensed technicians—

Mr. Bob Delaney: They don't sell it anymore.

Mr. Todd Smith: Yes, they do sell it at Canadian Tire, my friend; they do in this province.

There used to be competition in this industry, and it seems now the only competition in this industry is the homeowner who is bringing the pesticides in.

So I support my friend from Halton for Bill 88. Not only is it having an impact on people's lawns, but it's having an impact on people's businesses as well. It's reducing the number of jobs in the province of Ontario and, as the small business critic for the PC Party, I think that's a problem.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure, again, to rise today in support of the legislation brought forward by my colleague from Halton and in support of the businesses in my community.

I was speaking with one of the business owners, a Mr. Al Pinsonneault, the proprietor of Al's Lawn Care in Chatham-Kent. Al told me very simply that there is a problem with the management of pesticide use in Ontario. He told me that his colleagues in the lawn care industry, some as far as Windsor, were facing bankruptcy following the 2008 pesticide ban. Despite having trained and licensed technicians on staff, men and women who were the experts in the handling of these materials, it wasn't good enough for this government, despite the fact that it was this government that licensed them in the first place.

On the other hand, by supporting this legislation, we could give our small businesses a valuable hand up instead of throwing handouts at them.

Al told me that if he were able to use these technologies once more, he could double or even triple his business by tackling common weeds like broadleaf, clover, dandelion, crab grass and even creeping Charlie. As it stands, replacement pesticides are far less effective than the real thing. Al told me while costs for the organic material are triple that of the original, they are up as high as 75% less effective. Materials like acetic acid and corn gluten meal have to be used in much larger amounts if they have any chance of being effective.

Speaker, I think it's clear from Al's story and from the support we've seen on this side of the House, that Bill 88 addresses a glaring hole in Ontario's management of pesticide use. Further to that, it undermines the hard work that has been done by Health Canada and the federal government through the Pest Management Regulatory Agency. This agency has done the legwork, put in the hours and come to us to say that these products are perfectly safe if handled properly, and there are safeguards.

Anybody who has ever worked for a golf course—where these original products are still being permitted, by the way—can tell you that professionals are more capable of handling these products with the utmost care. A series of studies and reports have been superseded by this government's agenda. That sounds somewhat familiar, if you ask me. But, you know what? We'll leave that subject to the Drummond report for another time.

Just think of the opportunities that will become available to small businesses like Al's Lawn Care. The range of services they'll be able to provide will grow, as well as their ability to deliver those services on time and within budget.

We need a science-based approach to a serious issue for homeowners and business. For that reason, I stand strong in supporting my colleague's Bill 88 with regard to pesticides.

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

1510

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a real privilege today to stand and pay some respect to the comments made by the member from Halton, Mr. Chudleigh.

I want to start by saying that his long and distinguished association with rural Ontario, and agriculture

specifically, has to be part of understanding why he moved this. All it does is amend the previous bill—I think it was Bill 64—that was passed I believe in 2008. I looked up my notes from the past, and that bill was basically one page. In it, section 7.1 allowed the minister, by regulation, to ban or prohibit the use of certain agents. It also, in sections, exempted golf courses, agriculture and some other applications. But what he is saying, more specifically, is let's focus on urban gardeners and allow appropriate use of the appropriate products. I think he did allude in his remarks to a couple. Merit was one, and I heard recently that even Roundup Ready is in fact being used.

In my riding of Durham, much like Halton, agriculture is very important, and they do use, as scarcely as possible, products that allow us to grow high-quality food to feed Ontario. What he's putting in place is more appropriate measures to allow the appropriate product in the appropriate place, and in that respect, also banning—I think that's what he is implying in his summary statement; he'll probably refer to that—other products that aren't appropriate in the gardens of urban households.

He wants trained, licensed applicators. That's what they have in agriculture in Ontario. They have pesticide management advisers who tell them when it's appropriate to apply certain products to have optimum results for high-quality outcomes. In that respect, I think it's the right move at the right time for a bill that was like a broadaxe when in fact they should have been more specific about the appropriate products and how they should be used. I think he demonstrated that in his remarks.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Halton, you have two minutes for reply.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Thank you very much. I appreciate all the comments made, even though the member for Davenport, I think in a roundabout way, called me an old man. Perhaps I am older than you are, and a lot of that comes from experience, so I would listen to that. The member from Ottawa-Orléans didn't call me an old man; he called me neanderthal, and of course they died out thousands of years ago, so I'm really, really old.

But I don't take exception to that, because when people call you names it's because they don't have a very good argument, do they? These members came into this House with prepared statements and made their remarks. They didn't listen to my presentation.

This bill is about safety. Illegal pesticides are flying into this province, being used inappropriately. And as long as they're being used inappropriately, they're a threat, they're a danger to people walking past or walking through the grass or handling them improperly. They're a danger to the applicant as well. This bill is about regulating that. It's about making safe use of those chemicals, put in the hands of people who are licensed and trained and who know how to handle very dangerous chemicals.

Lord, I grew up on a farm. I've been associated with farmers all my life. I understand pesticides. I know they

are dangerous; you don't have to convince me they're dangerous. This bill is about safety, about applying these chemicals in a safe, appropriate manner.

I'll let you redeem yourselves by voting for this bill. Thank you.

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

CHILDREN'S LAW REFORM
AMENDMENT ACT (RELATIONSHIP
WITH GRANDPARENTS), 2012
LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI
PORTANT RÉFORME DU DROIT
DE L'ENFANCE (RELATION
AVEC LES GRANDS-PARENTS)

Mr. Craitor moved second of the following bill:

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

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

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this bill. I rise today in the Legislature to talk about second reading of Bill 67. First, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank my co-sponsors of the bill, the member from Whitby-Oshawa and the member from Parkdale-High Park. Thank you very much.

I also want to recognize many of the grandparents who have travelled from across Ontario and are here in the gallery today. I thank you for taking the time to come and visit us at Queen's Park. I want to say to the grandparents that their support for this bill has been unwavering, and I thank them for taking the time to come here today. Some of them, in fact, have travelled a great distance.

I want to talk about the bill. The bill amends the Children's Law Reform Act to enable the formation and the continuation of personal relationships between children and their grandparents, something I think we just take for granted will always exist. It also sets out the needs and circumstances of a child that the court must consider in determining the best interest of the child. It adds to the list of needs and circumstances the emotional ties between a child and the child's grandparents and the willingness of each person applying for custody of the child to facilitate contact with the child's parents and grandparents.

It is far too often—and it's certainly far too often for me since I've been working on this bill for the last eight years—that a couple separates or gets a divorce and subsequently the relationship between the grandparent and the grandchild diminishes. In fact, sadly, Mr. Speaker, it may also be severed altogether as a result of extenuating circumstances or negative feelings as a result of the breakup.

I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, and everyone in the House and the people that are watching across Ontario, grandparents are more than just relatives. They can be the mainstay. They can provide the guidance and security that children lack sometimes at home with or without a parent. They can provide support. Grandparents provide stability. They provide a sense of self to children seeking love and understanding. Grandparents are in fact the heart and soul of grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, it is so sad to tell you that more than 75,000 Ontario grandparents are denied—that's just in Ontario—access to visiting with one or more of their grandchildren. Approximately 112,500 grandchildren in Ontario suffer from the known benefits of having a relationship between the grandchild and their grandparent. This can only damage future generations of our children.

I want to talk a bit about the background of the bill and why I have been so passionate about this bill, which is now numbered 67. When I was first elected as an MPP, one of the first groups that ever came in to see me in 2003 from my riding was a group of 12 grandparents. They came from Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie. During my two-and-a-half-hour meeting with them, I realized the problems that these grandparents were facing when they tried to gain access or visitation rights or even, in one case, custody of their grandchildren. I was personally touched by their stories. Thanks to their help and the help from grandparents across Ontario, we sat down and felt the best way to bring attention to this growing problem was to bring forward a bill to this House. And I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, I introduced it as Bill 8, I reintroduced it as Bill 22, then I reintroduced it as Bill 33, and today I am hoping that this will be the last time that I ever have to introduce this bill again, that it will be passed, and it's now Bill 67.

I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, Bill 67 has been considered in its own form in Yukon and in six other provinces, including Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia concluded, like the current Ontario legislation, that there is nothing in the legislation now that prevented access and custody from a child by their grandparents, but they said that there was a real, practical need to put it into legislation now to highlight the benefits of maintaining positive relationships with grandparents where their lives have been disrupted.

I want to tell you some personal stories—and I have spoken with these people. I will tell you that in eight years, I have probably talked to 4,000 or 5,000 people, at a minimum, and I've heard some of the saddest stories that would—if I had the chance to share them with you for the next 30 hours, you would break down and cry when you hear what has happened to some of these grandparents and their children.

1520

As many members are aware, this is the fourth time, so I'm going to share a couple of stories, with their permission.

Jackie from Trenton sent me an email talking about the last time she saw her great-grandson: the summer of 2010. Imagine, we're entering the summer of 2012, and Jackie has not seen her great-grandson since the summer of 2010. He lost his mother to a violent murder when he was six months old. He lives only 30 minutes away from Jackie. She missed seeing so many firsts a baby goes through. She will shortly be 75 years old and cannot understand why it has been almost a year of fighting in the courts just to visit her grandson who lives half an hour away. There is something wrong with this picture.

Terri-Lynn is a grandparent who took her granddaughter's mother to court for access to her granddaughter. It took a year in the court, and she was granted two hours of access every other week. Her granddaughter's mother suddenly packed up and moved to Whitehorse. There was nothing Terri-Lynn could do. Her granddaughter's mother continues to move back and forth from Whitehorse. Terri-Lynn spoke to her lawyer and asked if there's anything, as a grandmother, that she could do. The lawyer said, "You'd have to go up to Whitehorse." That's financially impossible, so she doesn't see her grandchildren.

Finally, Donna from Grimsby told me about her experience with Madison, her first granddaughter, who was born in 2000. She was, in fact, in the delivery room to assist with Madison's birth and was allowed to cut the umbilical cord and was the first to hold Madison in her arms. Madison and her mom lived with Donna and her husband, Terry, for two and a half years. Her second granddaughter, Kaitlyne, was born in March 2005, and her grandson, Dylan, was born in 2011. Donna's daughter became angry with her mother and her husband and made it clear that she does not want them to see the grandchildren any more. So she has been fighting ever since to have access and the opportunity to see her grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, this is just a selection of the stories that I'm sharing with you.

I need to tell you there's huge support for this bill. Grandparents in this gallery have taken the time to show their support. I want to tell you that not only do I have support from each of the other two parties—and I thank them again for that—but I have support from the Canadian Association of Retired Persons; the Steelworkers union; the Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society; Cangrands kinship support, particularly from Betty Cornelius, who has been with me since the beginning of the time when we worked on this bill; the Canadian Auto Workers; and the list goes on. In addition, municipalities—towns and cities—in Ontario have passed resolutions endorsing this bill, from Mississauga to Waterloo to Owen Sound to North Kawartha to Rainy River to Kingston.

I want to conclude, Mr. Speaker, with a few closing comments. First, to my fellow colleagues who are here and those who are watching on TV, and to the guests: Not only is there widespread support for this bill, but the passage of Bill 67 is crucial to help families across

Ontario and to support the young lives of our children. Our children need and deserve to have family ties and bonds that grow stronger with them as they grow day by day. In fact, our children are our future, Ontario's future. We are investing in children, and we have invested in different ways, such as full-day kindergarten or children's mental health, and we must continue to invest in our children and our families by supporting this bill.

I believe families are the cornerstone and backbone of our society. We must ensure, particularly when a parental relationship breaks down, that the relationship between the grandparent and their grandchildren has to remain strong and continue to flourish. That's what Bill 67 will do.

I want to emphasize that the bill does not automatically give a grandparent the right. A grandparent will still have to make the application to the courts. But I do want to tell you that I have actually seen court cases where grandparents, under the existing legislation, went to the courts and the judge ruled that the grandparent had put together a very reasonable case and that it did make sense for them to have a relationship or the right to visit their grandchildren. But what the judge said was, "There's nothing in the current legislation that directs that I should do that, so I'm not going to give you that opportunity." I want to share that with you, because that's the importance of changing this legislation—why it has to be done.

Children need a bond between themselves and an adult. The mentorship is invaluable. The unconditional love and fulfilment ever after that a grandparent can provide to a grandchild is something that is priceless. So I'm pleased to stand here today and ask for support. You never like to presume in this place, but I am confident that the bill will pass second reading. The challenge is to get it into third and then get it passed. This will be the last time that I will stand up in this House, because I am confident that this bill is going to get royal assent at the end of this term, whenever it does occur.

I want to say thanks to everyone for having the opportunity to say a few words.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's again my pleasure to follow my colleagues from Whitby–Oshawa, Niagara Falls, Parkdale–High Park and others supporting Bill 67. I know that the member from Niagara Falls has been trying get this legislation passed for a number of years now, and waiting behind him have been legions of grandparents whose only hope is for a closer, more loving family.

There's an old cliché that once your children grow up, leave home and begin lives of their own, many parents look forward to the arrival of grandchildren. While we may chuckle at the notion that our grandkids are like a cheerier version of our own children, open to spoiling with gifts and treats yet without the 24/7 job of parenting, the truth is, it takes a lot of work, time and effort to be a loving grandparent. Yet it's a privilege that too many grandmothers and grandfathers go without in our society.

I know that if I couldn't see my two grandchildren, Calvin and Nathan Nicholls, I would be devastated.

What this bill accomplishes in addition to preventing unreasonable barriers to a grandparent's access to their grandchildren is a mandate for family courts to consider the emotional ties of a grandchild to his or her grandparents. This is crucial, and it's often overlooked as part of the conversation when we discuss grandparents' rights. Certainly, the emotional well-being of the grandparents in question is important, not to mention the strife that is introduced to their relationships with their own children when those barriers are thrown up. But we must always keep in mind the love that a grandchild would be missing from their lives—the imparting of guidance and wisdom, the family meals, the holidays that would be a little less bright, a little less whole.

When my esteemed colleague quotes statistics—nearly 75,000 grandparents have been denied access, or over 100,000 grandchildren cannot see Grandma and Grandpa—it begs us to find a solution. So I'm pleased to have a constituent of mine here today for whom this issue is deeply personal: Ms. Deanna Sherman.

The story of Deanna's family is like so many others. As her son and his partner went their separate ways, Deanna's access to her grandson was limited. An already emotional situation grew worse with each passing year.

The efforts of the grandparents in cases such as these are exceedingly difficult, and it's always a shock when it happens. Through the early years of her grandson's life, Deanna and her husband made every effort to be present for the wonderful little boy they loved. Yet as time dragged on and the family situation grew more volatile, it got to the point where they couldn't even bring their grandson to a Maple Leafs game as a Christmas present. Eventually, they were forced to cut off contact altogether. I ask: Where's the justice?

As emotional as these situations can get, we must remember that nobody wants them to escalate. Deanna has told me that she was unsure what to do for so long; that as much as she loved her grandson, she understood that she couldn't interfere with the rights of the parents. But what about the rights of the grandparents? Too often, family members experiencing these difficulties are labelled as unreasonable. But I don't believe that's the case. It's simply a sad situation that preys on our greatest fears: that our loved ones may be taken away.

I believe this bill hits the right marks. It gives our courts the power to consider the broader consequences in cases that are often fraught with destructive, immediate emotions. It protects the well-being of our children and the integrity of our families. For that reason, I applaud the sponsors of this bill and particularly the member from Niagara Falls. I support it wholeheartedly. Thank you.

1530

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure and a privilege to rise as one of those who co-authored this bill. I'm

honoured to have been asked to co-author this bill for the member from Niagara Falls.

Interruption.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: And that's one of the reasons we are doing it—that sound right up there. It's kind of sad that it's taken four tablings of this bill, and really, prior passages of this bill at second reading, to be able to get it in and out of committee. Now, in a minority government, it's our privilege as members of the New Democratic Party to support this bill and to assist the member to get it in and out.

The sad reality is that we are doing, I would hope, what his own cabinet that would do this time, so really a plea to his own cabinet they support their own member in getting this through so that finally it can become law. Four times is three times too many for this bill. Over those years, those sad stories that we've already heard are multiplied. That's what it means in this place: What it means in this place to do our jobs or not to do them is the impacts on real families and real people out there. When we hesitate to do what we need to do, when we agree and we know this is the right move forward and we don't move forward, people are hurt. It has real impact.

I want to reiterate, for all those watching at home, this is about the best interests of the child. This is not, in a kind of weird way, just about grandparents. I mean, it is about grandparents; it's about their rights. But ultimately what the grandparents and what we want in this House are the rights of the child. That's what we want—the rights of the child. That's what this is about.

I want to dedicate my comments to my own grandparent. Her name was Helen Wilson; she actually long since passed from this planet. Helen was a single parent in her own right, had four children—her husband left her back in the days when that was rare—raised them and then went on to raise us. Really, in a true way, my parents had a very dysfunctional marriage. It ended up driving me out of the house at an early age. But who was still there? It was my grandmother. It was my grandmother who looked after us, looked after me. It was upon her death that everything fell apart. It was upon her death that really I ended up being a street kid on the streets of Toronto for many years. It was because of that death. So I really want to dedicate these comments to her, because she is not alone in what she did. She is one of, we've just heard, thousands and thousands of grandparents across this province.

I want to acknowledge what grandparents do even where it's functional, even where grandparents have access to their grandchildren. Grandparents do the work, often, that this House doesn't. We lack quality child care in this province, and yet it's grandparents who pick up the slack for all of that. How many couples in my riding, in all of our ridings, have their children looked after by their grandparent because there are not a lot of other options? And by the way, that's the best. It's one of the best options to have the grandparents provide child care. They're providing child care. They're providing financial support to young families. How many families in our

ridings could afford to buy their first home were it not for the help of their grandparents? How many institutions in this province could function without the huge volume of volunteers, many of which are retired people? By the way, that pool will be shrinking as more and more of us become part of the freedom 95 group who have no pensions.

But suffice it to say that now, grandparents not only look after grandchildren, and children, they also look after the institutions that make this province strong. All of that is done by our grandparents. If this bill does not pass—in the absence of this bill, what’s happening is we are forcing these people, who contribute so much and have contributed so much for so long, to go to lawyers to actually get their just due. That’s not what we want to do. People can usually ill afford it, forced into the courts just to be able to have access to their grandchildren.

I have a woman—and I want to tell a story as well. We all have them. Every MPP here has heard stories from their constituents, but hers is particularly moving. This is a woman who is now raising her grandchildren, just like my grandmother did with me, a woman who raised children from a very dysfunctional child of her own—a woman who wrestled with mental health and addiction issues and who fought her every step of the way. Clearly, it was in the best interests of the children not to be with their biological parents, in this instance. The grandmother stepped up here and tried to take them in.

The hurdles she had to try to help her own grandchildren were absolutely unconscionable. My constituency staff—and bless their cotton socks—did everything they could to help this woman, but ultimately, it was a matter before the courts. We all know that when it’s a matter before the courts, there’s very little, if anything, we as members of provincial Parliament can do to help our constituents. So all we were able to do was, really, just to sit back and watch in horror to see the trials she went through.

In this particular instance, it ended well. In this particular instance, after years of trying, she did finally get custody; she did finally get access. It all worked out. But during that time, these poor children, who could have been healthy, functioning children, developed all sorts of issues, as one can imagine, because the other aspect of this bill, what we’re speaking about here today, is the toll it takes on the children while this kind of struggle is going on. Because if grandparents do not have rights to be able to have access to their children—and of course, it’s not automatic, and the member pointed this out.

We also understand in this House that not all grandparents are wonderful. That has to be said on the record. Not all grandparent are wonderful. They have to make application, and it has to be overseen. But in this instance, the grandparents were wonderful. They were the best option for the children. This is many instances that we’ve all seen. The struggle and the time it took to gain access to their children and to gain, finally, custody of their grandchildren, meant harm to their grandchildren.

That’s what it meant: It meant these children were harmed. It meant that these children did not have the life they deserved. The pain we felt in my constituency office, looking at the process for this one constituent to go through, was amplified 100 times in the pain she felt looking at what her grandchildren were going through.

It’s been said that children are what you have so that you can have grandchildren. I’m not in that halcyon state yet. I have grown children, but I’ve got two marriages to go through—one hopes—and I’ve learned, like many people here who are in my position, not to speak about it, because, Lord knows, you don’t want to speak about it to your children. You don’t want to tell your children how wonderful it would be to have grandchildren, because then you almost guarantee you’re never going to get them. So you learn to be strategic on this issue.

But having seen others, and there are many grandparents who sit as MPPs here, and having seen the joy that they get from their children and grandchildren—and let’s face it, we know some of the reasons why. First of all, the second time around, you learn to do it better. When you’re young parents, you don’t have a lot of experience. Other reasons: The second time around, you have more time, sometimes more financial resources, and you can do it better. You also don’t have to do it all the time. You also get to enjoy them and then send them home. I’ve had some experience of that with nieces and nephews but never with grandchildren, and I can only imagine what that experience is like.

But I also, if this bill doesn’t pass, look into, as we all do, an uncertain future where that’s concerned, because one can never predict what happens to their children. One can never predict that.

I’m getting very overt signals here that I am to leave time for someone, so I’m going to wrap up.

The critical issue here—and I’m going to reiterate it on behalf of the other author of this bill—is, number one, four times is three times too many.

1540

Number two, this bill has not only to pass this House this day but has to go to committee, get out of committee and come back to third reading. That’s the difference. We ask the government to support us on this because I think on this side of the aisle we all do support us on that.

Thirdly, for all the grandparents who are here and all the grandparents out there who couldn’t make it here who have gone through these struggles, our heartfelt condolences to you and our pledge that this time we’ll get it right in this House.

Saying that, thank you, member from Niagara Falls; thank you to the grandparents who fought so hard; and best wishes to the grandchildren for a far, far better future than they’ve had to date.

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

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I’m pleased to speak this afternoon in favour of Bill 67, An Act to amend the Children’s Law Reform Act, and I’m pleased, again, to be in this House supporting my colleague for Niagara Falls and

my colleagues from Parkdale–High Park and Whitby–Oshawa.

I am glad to be speaking on this bill again. I spoke in favour of it in the past and I'm still supportive because I know that all children need stability. We know that children need feelings of self-worth and we know that those long-term relationships often come from a relationship with their grandparent.

We know that family law issues, particularly as they relate to custody of and access to children, can be particularly difficult. This is no less so when dealing with the issue of access by grandparents to their grandchildren. It's fortunate that in most cases, arrangements relating to the custody of and access to children, including access by grandparents, are often settled without recourse to litigation in the courts. The cases that do come before the courts, therefore, represent a very small percentage of the overall number of potential family law cases.

Historically, grandparents have had no legal rights of access to their grandchildren simply by virtue of their biological relationship. Legislation in all Canadian jurisdictions now makes it possible for grandparents to apply for custody of or access to their grandchildren. There's no jurisdiction in Canada, however, which provides grandparents access as a right, which is usually referred to as presumptive right of access.

There's no question that in most cases, the continuation of an existing grandparent-grandchild relationship is often in the best interests of a child. Similarly, relations between a child and other family members such as aunts and uncles, siblings, step-parents, step-grandparents and step-siblings can often be and are tremendously beneficial to a child's welfare and their development.

Grandparents are often a family's first reserve in a time of crisis. They act as playmates for their grandchildren, role models, family historians, and mentors, and they help lay a foundation for healthy self-esteem and security in children. They're really an important safety net.

We know that research suggests that grandparents play a significant role in the lives of children. In fact, ignoring the existence of a grandparent who has formed a strong bond with a child will not represent the best interests of that child.

My parents immigrated to Canada when I was three years old, and they left all of our extended family in Ireland and England. There were a couple of visits back and forth, but it wasn't as affordable as it is now. I didn't have the luxury of that Sunday night dinner to talk with my grandparents once a week or to pick up the phone; it was an expensive proposition. So for the most part, as a youngster, I got to know my grandparents through letters and audiotapes we used at the time and the packages that went back and forth at Christmastime. Although I didn't have their physical presence in my life until I was a teenager, I always felt that unconditional love and attention that all grandparents tend to shower on their grandchildren, and as an only grandchild, I was definitely spoiled in that respect.

I wish to recognize that special role that my maternal grandparents played in my life: Rose and Frank Gray. They were very simple individuals, but they found a way to make what I was doing as a teenager meaningful and special, and they helped me rear my own children. They gave advice that I think many of us rely on.

They're no longer in my life anymore, but I recognize how important that role is as I now approach that opportunity to become a grandparent myself before the end of the year. One of my children is finally going to make me a grandparent, so I know how valuable that resource is. I'm feeling that responsibility certainly coming forward and that untapped resource.

It's important to maintain those ties, and I wanted to be here to support my colleague from Niagara Falls and the members from Parkdale–High Park and Whitby–Oshawa in their attempts to bring this legislation forward. It's a good piece of legislation. I'm happy to support it. Thank you, Speaker.

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

Mrs. Jane McKenna: As a nana—and my hubby is a papa—it is a wonderful experience. I remember when my daughter—I was just turning 50—came to tell me that she and her husband were having our first grandchild. I kind of gasped a bit to think that I was going to be a grandmother, so I quickly took the name “Nana” so I didn't have to have the word “granny.” So I took that first. Anyhow, it's a wonderful opportunity, because you learn the most about yourself through your children and grandchildren. It is a wonderful experience.

I'm pleased to rise today to speak about Bill 67, and I commend the member from Niagara Falls for his dedication to this cause and his work pushing this legislation forward. It speaks volumes of your character, and I must say that I don't know you, but I would say that about you. This is, of course, the fourth time in the last seven years that this member has spoken to what is a very sensible, useful and humane bill, and the fifth time since 1995 that legislation of this kind has come before this House. Going over the history, I was struck by the fact that the last time it was debated, it appeared just before another marathoner, the condominium legislation introduced by the member from Trinity–Spadina. Hopefully this is a good omen and this bill will follow in its footsteps and be referred to committee in short order.

This is a bill that speaks to all Ontarians. There are studies upon studies and there are stacks of evidence that can tell you what you know in your heart—and hopefully from experience—to be true: namely, that the relationship between child and grandparent can be one of the most valuable bonds forged during the development years. That rare combination of life perspective and unconditional love can be very grounding but can also boost self-esteem and foster the confidence that young people need more than ever to tackle the demands of a world that is not always so nurturing. They offer the luxury of time and they offer often a neutral party at times when a father and mother may be at dramatic odds with each

other, as in a heated divorce. But mostly, this bill puts the child's interests front and centre and speaks to the power of family to transform those within it.

Certainly, as critic for children and youth services, I feel that sensible solutions that keep a child with family are always the best scenario. It strikes me as sad that we have to legislate something like equal access to family. Ontarians are living longer, more active and engaged lives, and it is fair to say that grandparents have never been better suited to fulfil the aims of custody or access cases and raise grandchildren as their own children in a place of love, encouragement, support and understanding. As a grandparent myself, as I said, I can't imagine being denied access to my darling grandson, Charlie.

This is a bill that deserves to go to committee. It deserves to hear input from a wide variety of stakeholders and for that input to be incorporated into legislation. We will naturally seek every assurance that the language of this bill is strengthened and that children's rights and needs are defended vigorously, but I am happy to support this bill and thankful for the opportunity to speak to it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Well, thank you very much, Speaker. It is a pleasure to stand in support of Bill 67, brought forth by, among others, my seatmate of eight and a half years, the member for Niagara Falls. I guess in this sense we've probably been joined at the elbows since our election. Like some members here, I voted for this bill four times, or I will have voted for it four times by the end of today, in its incarnations as Bills 8, 22, 33 and 67.

Today's grandparents are strong, and they're very healthy people. In fact, today's grandparents often look a lot more like their parents did of a generation ago. Our lifespans are longer. Today we look at the time in which we grew up, the era in which we grew up, and we think of the vigour with which we, who are the age of some of our grandparents—we've got a lot more vigour. We've just looked after ourselves. The quality of life is better. The modern medicine we have is better. Grandparents are simply better able to look after their grandchildren.

Bill 67 deals with some cases that many of us would rather not spend too much time thinking of: the breakup of a marriage, conflict within a family, the death or disability of one or both parents. Bill 67 deals with some of these often-tragic cases when the courts need to make an informed decision on who is going to assume custody of a child or of children. Bill 67 asks, when a court needs to consider the best interests of a child or children, that grandparents not be denied custody of the children nor be denied reasonable access to them.

1550

Now, I've had some representations from some of my friends who practise law and, in this case, family law. They've said, "Well, there may be a little bit more to it than that." And I said, "Yes, almost certainly there is, and that's why Legislatures have public hearings. But is there anything in Bill 67 or any of its predecessors that is a deal-breaker, that you absolutely can't live with, that you

can't sort out if you have a chance to have input via public hearings?" And all of them have said, "No. We can get this thing figured out." So let's get it figured out.

This bill asks courts to consider the interests of grandparents who are willing and able to assume custody of their grandchildren, should tragedy or other family circumstances strike their children's family. So let's look at why that would be a good idea.

Our government has ended mandatory retirement, and we recognize that we have a shortage of people in their child-rearing years. If you can't find them on the job, then how do you expect to find them in family settings, to be foster parents or guardians? It makes sense to say perhaps Grandma and Grandpa are as likely as any other to be good, fitting foster parents or to share some of the job of child-rearing. Not only have they done it, but they have the maturity and the perspective of experience and age to enable them to enjoy child-rearing in their mature years in a way they may not have done a generation earlier, when indeed it was their children.

Bill 67 says to the courts, "Don't dismiss the rights and willingness of grandparents to assist their grandchildren in child custody or access cases." I think it's a good bill. I support it, and I'm encouraging all members to support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Dufferin—Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon to comment on Bill 67, Children's Law Reform Amendment Act (Relationship with Grandparents). I've received correspondence on this issue many times from concerned grandparents who are saddened and frustrated that they've been restricted from seeing their own grandchildren. This is undoubtedly a very troubling situation, both for the grandparents and for the children. That is why Bill 67, which promotes the relationship between children and their grandparents, is important, particularly in situations where the child's parents have separated or divorced.

Bill 67 will amend the Children's Law Reform Act and prohibit the parents, or anyone else who is entitled to custody, from creating unreasonable barriers to the formation of a personal relationship between children and their grandparents. Bill 67 will also make courts consider a child's relationship with their grandparents in determining the best interests of the child.

By prohibiting parents or others with custody from actively preventing or impeding such relationships, the goal is to foster better relationships between children and grandparents. There is little doubt that many children have very special and important relationships with their grandparents. My own kids have learned so much from their grandparents, some of which I would not necessarily have taught as a parent, but nonetheless, I am grateful for what they have been offered.

It is for this reason I'm anxious to see Bill 67 head to committee so that these questions may be asked and addressed by interested grandparents, parents and other parties.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, I'm glad to have one minute and 23 seconds to speak to this particular motion. I want to thank my member for leaving me as much time as she did.

I would just say very quickly, because I have one minute and 12 seconds left, two things: If one thing is heart-wrenching, as a member of provincial Parliament—all of us have experienced grandparents who come into our constituency office and say, “I can't have access to my grandchildren.” I can tell you, as a grandfather, that is pretty hard to take. This particular bill gives us an opportunity to deal with this.

Are there problems? Absolutely. But I think, with good time at committee to be able to think this through as far as amendment, we should be able to figure out how we can make sure that when it comes to ordering up a separation, we can actually figure out how grandparents and others can have access to the grandchildren. Because never mind us as grandparents; the kids themselves have got to know who their family is. They have to have that connection. If this bill can assist in doing that, I think it's something we should all support.

On behalf of all those people I've had to speak to over the last 20-some-odd years who have no access to their grandchildren, like May, who I just spoke to last week, who has lost access to her grandson who's about six or seven years old—hopefully this will give people like May the kind of hope they need so that one day they can be reunited with their grandchildren.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate today. From the outset, I want to praise the member from Niagara Falls for having the tenacity and the stick-to-it-iveness to keep bringing this bill forward until it eventually gets passed. From the comments I have heard to date, certainly, I expect this bill to pass.

I think a lot of us have drawn on our own personal experiences, and I think we do that on a regular basis when we bring our advice and comments to the debate in the House. One of the voids in my own life is that I only knew one grandparent for a very short period of time. Two of my grandparents were killed in the Blitz during the Second World War, and so when I was born in the mid-1950s, I just never knew these people. My wife, on the other hand, grew up with almost a full set of grandparents, and she had a much different view of her grandparents. She knew them well.

I am at the stage of my life when I could now potentially be a grandparent, and some people have said, “You shouldn't give your children hints about becoming a grandparent.” I'll tell you, my wife is shameless in pestering my son to become a father, so that that would make us grandparents. It's still a bit of a mystery to me what being a grandparent is all about, but if my wife gets her way, we'll be finding out very shortly.

In the 1960s and 1970s, as the nuclear family started to break up a little bit—the breakup started to accelerate I

guess would be the best way of putting it—there was a saying: “Don't worry about the kids. They'll bounce back.” Over the fullness of time, I think we've found out that kids didn't often bounce back. Often, when the family had fractured, the only stable part of that family was the partnership that existed between either set of grandparents. While the parents sorted it out, often the kids were left to their own devices.

I think that's a perfect example of where grandparents can play a major role in a child's life. You can look at a number of cultures around the world where the elders are put in a position of esteem, where they're valued, where they're shown that they hold a special place in our society. By bringing this bill forward, the member from Niagara Falls is trying to establish in law the ability for those grandparents to actually have that special status protected.

I want to thank the member for his tenacity. I want to thank him for the ideas he brings to this House. I want to thank grandparents all over the province of Ontario who, despite the lack of legislation in this regard, play a role in their grandchildren's lives. They say that it takes a village to raise a child. Probably the next step out into that village from the actual parents themselves is often the grandparents.

I haven't heard anybody speaking against this bill. I think the task of this House is to get this bill out of the House into committee, and then we all need to do our part in encouraging our respective parties and House leaders, perhaps, to ensure that this bill finally becomes legislation. You've certainly got to give the member credit: He's brought it back time and time again. I think the people he is representing who have backed him along the way are hoping he achieves the success he is asking us to give him support for today.

If you knew your grandparents, if you didn't know your grandparents, all of us in this House understand the value behind grandparents in our society and in all those societies that make up the multicultural fabric of Canadian society. I would urge all members in the House to support this bill and allow it to move forward. Let's work together to make it become law.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am very pleased to be a co-sponsor of Bill 67, which would of course amend the Children's Law Reform Act with respect to children's relationships with their grandparents. I also would like to applaud the member from Niagara Falls for his persistence in continuing to bring this important bill forward, and also to thank my colleague the member from Parkdale–High Park, whom I've had the pleasure of co-sponsoring several bills with lately. It's truly been a pleasure.

1600

I'd also like to thank all the grandparents who are here today, and particularly I'd like to thank a few people from my own riding of Whitby–Oshawa: Ms. Lynn Porteous, and also Mr. and Mrs. Alexander, who have

spent an incredible amount of time, effort and, I think, expense in preparing packages to all of us as MPPs here at Queen's Park. I'm sorry, I don't have my package here with me today. They're beautifully decorated with great messages on them, exhorting us all to be supportive of this bill. So I'd like to thank them as well.

This is an important bill for grandparents in Ontario but also for children. As the member from Niagara Falls indicated, this bill does not guarantee that children will have an extended relationship with their grandparents. In some cases—a very small number of cases, I would suggest—that might not be appropriate. But what it does say—and it's going to ultimately be up to the courts to decide—is that the list that the court has to take into consideration when determining the best interests of a child, which is the determining test, should consider what the nature of the relationship is between the child and his or her grandparents.

I have to say, in my previous life as a practising lawyer, I did have the opportunity to practise in the area of family law a little bit, and I think there's nothing more sad or corrosive than the custody and access court issues that come before you as a lawyer and that the courts have to decide. It's obviously preferable if these things can be worked out. In some cases, they can't. But what this does is simply bolster the need for the courts to consider what the relationship is between the parents and the grandparents.

In my own case, and just on a personal note, one of the saddest things for me in being a parent is that my own children didn't get to enjoy a relationship with my parents. My father passed away before they were born, and my mother passed away when my sons were only four. So they grew up without having their grandparents going to concerts, to grandparents' day at school and so on. I think that's something that they really missed out on, because I saw the relationships that other parents had with the grandparents and with the children, and it's very positive and it adds a whole element to a child's life that they wouldn't otherwise experience—a closeness with a grandparent who loves you unconditionally.

So I would ask for all-party support of this. Let's get it into committee and let's move forward with it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Niagara Falls, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Kim Craitor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have a couple of minutes just to wrap up. Thank you to all the members who supported the bill and spoke on it.

I want to make just a personal comment. This bill is more than a bill to me. I want to dedicate it to two very kind and special people. I never knew my parents. I never met them; I don't know who they are. But two elderly people took me into their house and kept me and raised me. They were more like grandparents than parents, and by the time I was 16, they had both passed away. I often think, when I look at my life, how fortunate it was that

these two elderly people decided that they would raise me, give me some of their values, give me some of their best advice.

When the grandparents came in to see me, to talk about not having an opportunity to see their grandchildren—Nick and Mary Craitor came to me. I remember thinking how fortunate it was that these two people believed in me, as a child, even though I wasn't their child, and took me in. So this bill has never been about just a bill. It has been a bill that I very passionately, truly believe in, and that's why I've been committed in every way I can to having the bill get through. So I want to say for the record, and I never thought I'd have an opportunity to say this in Parliament: To Nick and Mary Craitor, I owe you everything, and I thank you for that.

I thank all the members again for speaking so eloquently on the bill, and I'm looking forward to support of the bill. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

COMPREHENSIVE PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION FREEZE ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE GEL GLOBAL DE LA RÉMUNÉRATION DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 43, standing in the name of Mr. Yurek.

Mr. Yurek has moved second reading of Bill 92. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a lot of noes.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

I believe the nays have it.

We will take the vote at the end of regular business.

PESTICIDES AMENDMENT ACT (LICENCE FOR COSMETIC PURPOSES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES PESTICIDES (LICENCE À DES FINS ESTHÉTIQUES)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Chudleigh has moved second reading of Bill 88.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes again.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will also defer the vote to the end of regular business.

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

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

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Craitor has moved second reading of Bill 67. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to—Mr. Craitor?

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'd like to refer this bill to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Shall the request that the bill be referred to the regulations and private bills committee—agreed? Agreed.

COMPREHENSIVE PUBLIC SECTOR
COMPENSATION FREEZE ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE GEL GLOBAL
DE LA RÉMUNÉRATION
DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Call in the members. It will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1606 to 1611.

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

Mr. Yurek has moved second reading of Bill 92.

All those in favour, please stand and remain standing.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	O'Toole, John
Bailey, Robert	Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Leone, Rob	Pettapiece, Randy
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	McDonnell, Jim	Smith, Todd
Elliott, Christine	McKenna, Jane	Walker, Bill
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Harris, Michael	Milligan, Rob E.	Yurek, Jeff
Hudak, Tim	Munro, Julia	
Jackson, Rod	Nicholls, Rick	

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please stand and remain standing.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Murray, Glen R.
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Forster, Cindy	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gélinas, France	Natyshak, Taras
Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Prue, Michael
Bradley, James J.	Hoskins, Eric	Qaadri, Shafiq
Broten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Sandals, Liz
Campbell, Sarah	Kwintner, Monte	Schein, Jonah
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	MacCharles, Tracy	Singh, Jagmeet

Coteau, Michael	Mangat, Amrit	Tabuns, Peter
Crack, Grant	Mantha, Michael	Takhar, Harinder S.
Craitor, Kim	Marchese, Rosario	Taylor, Monique
Damerla, Dipika	Matthews, Deborah	Vanthof, John
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	Wong, Soo
Dhillon, Vic	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dickson, Joe	Miller, Paul	Zimmer, David
DiNovo, Cheri	Milloy, John	
Duguid, Brad	Moridi, Reza	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 34; the nays are 52.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

PESTICIDES AMENDMENT ACT
(LICENCE FOR COSMETIC
PURPOSES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES PESTICIDES
(LICENCE À DES FINS ESTHÉTIQUES)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Chudleigh has moved second reading of Bill 88. We just have to open the doors to let other members in.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	O'Toole, John
Bailey, Robert	Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Leone, Rob	Pettapiece, Randy
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	McDonnell, Jim	Smith, Todd
Elliott, Christine	McKenna, Jane	Walker, Bill
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Harris, Michael	Milligan, Rob E.	Yurek, Jeff
Hudak, Tim	Munro, Julia	
Jackson, Rod	Nicholls, Rick	

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Forster, Cindy	Murray, Glen R.
Bisson, Gilles	Gélinas, France	Naqvi, Yasir
Bradley, James J.	Horwath, Andrea	Natyshak, Taras
Broten, Laurel C.	Hoskins, Eric	Prue, Michael
Campbell, Sarah	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kwintner, Monte	Schein, Jonah
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Singh, Jagmeet
Crack, Grant	Mangat, Amrit	Tabuns, Peter
Craitor, Kim	Mantha, Michael	Takhar, Harinder S.
Damerla, Dipika	Marchese, Rosario	Taylor, Monique
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Vanthof, John
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	Wong, Soo
Dickson, Joe	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
DiNovo, Cheri	Miller, Paul	Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 34; the nays are 51.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Point of order, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, a point of order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'd like to correct my record. Earlier today I said that no request had been made to adjust staffing levels at Ornge. I want to clarify that no approval has been given and make it clear that there will be no changes to staffing levels on Ornge's aircrafts.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member is allowed to correct her own record. It's a point of order.

Orders of the day?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I think you'll find there's unanimous consent to recess the House until 5 o'clock.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Is there unanimous consent to recess the House until 5 o'clock? Agreed.

This House stands recessed until 5 o'clock.

The House recessed from 1620 to 1700.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I think you'll find we have unanimous consent for the House to take another recess and for the members to be called back through a five-minute bell.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): There's unanimous consent, I understand, for the House to be recessed and called back in on a five-minute bell. Agreed? Agreed.

This House stands recessed.

The House recessed from 1700 to 1729.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy is seeking unanimous consent without notice. Agreed? Agreed.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move that, notwithstanding any standing order or special order of the House, there be a timetable applied to the consideration of certain business of the House as follows:

(a) Private members' public bills

No later than Thursday, November 1, 2012, the House leaders of the three recognized parties shall, by agreement indicated in writing to the Clerk of the House, select up to nine private members' public bills, three per party, for consideration in accordance with the following process:

If any of the selected bills is currently ordered for third reading, the order for third reading shall be discharged and the bill shall be recommitted to the same standing committee to which it was originally referred, and the respective committee shall meet at the call of the Chair for up to 90 minutes of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

Any other of the selected bills, after receiving second reading during private members' public business, shall be referred to a standing committee in the normal way, and the respective committee shall meet at the call of the Chair for up to one day of public hearings and up to one day of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill, on dates and at times as agreed to by the committee; and

Any bill recommitted or referred to a standing committee under this section shall be reported back to the House no later than Thursday, November 29, 2012. In the event any of the selected bills are not reported by that day, such bills shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House and at such time the bills shall be ordered for third reading; and

The order for third reading of one of the indicated bills standing in the name of a member of the official opposition and one of the indicated bills standing in the name of a member of the third party shall be called no later than Wednesday, June 13, 2012; and

The orders for third reading of two of the indicated bills standing in the names of members of the official opposition and two of the indicated bills standing in the names of members of the third party shall be called no later than Wednesday, December 12, 2012; and

When the order for third reading of any of the selected bills is called, 60 minutes shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

In the event of prorogation, any of the selected bills remaining on the Orders and Notices paper at prorogation shall be continued and placed on the Orders and Notices paper of the second sessional day of the second session of the 40th Parliament at the same stage of progress as at prorogation, and the timelines in this section shall continue to apply.

(b) Committees

The following committees are authorized to meet during the 2012 summer adjournment:

Standing Committee on Public Accounts: for the purpose of considering the Special Report of the Auditor General on Ornge Air Ambulance and Related Services, on June 26, July 18 and July 31, and August 1 and August 2. Any of these dates are transferrable to another date by agreement of the subcommittee on committee business, and the committee may meet on additional dates as agreed to in writing by the House leaders of the recognized parties and filed with the Clerk of the House; and

The committee is also authorized to attend the 2012 Annual Conference of the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees.

Standing Committee on General Government: for the purpose of its review of the Aggregate Resources Act, on up to four days during June/July, on dates and in locations in Ontario established by the committee.

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs: the committee shall be assigned the review of the auto insurance industry, currently being conducted by the Standing Committee on General Government pursuant to standing order 111, and that all evidence and papers relating to this review be transferred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs; and

The committee is authorized to meet during the summer adjournment for the purpose of this review on up to four days during June/July, on dates and in locations in Ontario established by the committee.

Standing Committee on Estimates: for the purpose of considering estimates, on up to four days during June/July, on dates established by the committee.

Standing Committee on Government Agencies: for the purpose of reviewing the operations of the Liquor Control Board of Ontario, on up to two days in June, and of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, on up to two days in July, on dates and in locations in Ontario established by the committee.

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly: for the purpose of its review of the standing orders, on up to four days during June/July, on dates established by the committee; and that for the purpose of its review of the standing orders the committee is further authorized to adjourn from place to place as unanimously agreed to by its subcommittee on committee business; and

The committee is also authorized to attend the 2012 annual meeting of the National Conference of State Legislatures.

(c) Bill 55, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts

When Bill 55 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs; and

The committee is authorized to meet for the purpose of public hearings on the bill in accordance with the following schedule:

June 6: 9 a.m. to 10:25 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.;

June 7: 9 a.m. to 10:25 a.m. and 3 p.m. to 9 p.m.;

June 8: 1 p.m. to 9 p.m.;

June 11: 9 a.m. to 10:25 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.;

June 12: 9 a.m. to 12 noon.

The deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be 6 p.m. on Tuesday, June 12, 2012; and

The committee is authorized to meet for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill in accordance with the following schedule:

June 14: 9 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.;

June 18: 9 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.;

June 19: 9 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

At 2 p.m. on Tuesday, June 19, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession, with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

The committee is authorized to meet beyond its hour of adjournment for clause-by-clause consideration on June 19, 2012.

The report of the committee on the bill shall be deemed to have been made, and shall be deemed to be received and adopted when reports by committees is called by the Speaker on June 20, and at such time, the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order shall then immediately be called; and

Two hours shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

If a recorded vote is required on the motion for third reading of the bill, the vote shall be deferred until deferred votes.

In the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

(d) Bill 19, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of the rent increase guideline

When Bill 19 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy; and

The committee is authorized to meet for the purpose of public hearings on the bill during its regular meeting times on Thursday, June 7; and

The deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be 2 p.m. on Friday, June 8, 2012; and

The committee is authorized to meet for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill following routine proceedings on Monday, June 11; and

The committee shall report the bill to the House not later than Tuesday, June 12. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

Upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill

shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called on that same day; and

When the order for third reading of the bill is called, two hours shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

The vote on third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

In the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order?

1740

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order: Member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm sure that if I spoke about something meaningful for about two seconds, our government House leader would be able to have a drink of water and finish his very long motion.

Hon. John Milloy: Members will be glad. I'm getting to the funny part in a second. Anyway.

(e) Parliamentary calendar

Notwithstanding standing order 6(a)(i), the House shall continue to meet from Monday, June 11 to Thursday, June 14, 2012; and

On June 14, 2012, the House shall adjourn following deferred votes and it shall stand adjourned until Wednesday, June 20, 2012; and

The order of business on June 20 shall be as follows:

Nine o'clock, prayers;

Reports by committees;

Orders of the day, which will be third reading debate on Bill 55;

Oral questions;

Deferred votes—a 30-minute recess, if required;

Introduction of bills, for the purpose of permitting the introduction of first reading of a government bill providing for the following:

An amendment to subsection 29(2) of the Taxation Act, 2007, to provide that a corporation's basic rate of tax for a taxation year ending after June 30, 2012, is 11.5%; and

An amendment to the Taxation Act, 2007, to increase to 13.16% the tax rate for individuals on taxable income over \$500,000 and to make such other technical amendments to that act as may be appropriate to implement this tax rate, including consequential amendments to other tax rates under that act; and

That the orders for second and third reading of this bill shall immediately be called consecutively; and

The Speaker shall put the question on the motions for second and third reading of the bill immediately, without debate or amendment, no deferral of either vote being permitted; and

In the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

Except that:

In the event that the required amendments are not made to Bill 55, the first order of business at introduction of bills and immediately following deferred votes shall be the introduction of a government bill to amend the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999, in such a way as to permit the Taxation Act, 2007, to be amended to increase the tax rate for individuals with a taxable income over \$500,000; and

That the orders for second and third reading of this bill shall immediately be called; and

The Speaker shall put the question on the motions for second and third reading of the bill immediately, without debate or amendment, no deferral of the vote being permitted; and

In the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes; and

Following the passage of third reading, there will be a 30-minute recess to allow for royal assent to be given to this bill and Bill 55; and

Upon the announcement of royal assent in the House, the proceeding "Introduction of bills" shall continue as set out above.

Adjournment of the House, without motion, will take place until Monday, September 10, 2012.

(f) Board of Internal Economy

The passage of this motion shall constitute an order to the Attorney General to introduce a bill, no later than the third day the House meets in the fall sessional period, to amend section 87 of the Legislative Assembly Act respecting the Board of Internal Economy as follows:

That the commissioners appointed to the Board of Internal Economy shall be:

(a) the Speaker, who will serve as non-voting chair;

(b) one member of the executive council;

(c) one member from the caucus of each recognized opposition party;

(d) one or more members of the government caucus, as necessary, to provide that the total number of commissioners appointed under clause (b) and by the government caucus equals the number of commissioners appointed under clause (c); and

That the orders for second and third reading of the bill shall be called consecutively at the outset of morning orders of the day on the first Tuesday following introduction of the bill; and

The Speaker shall put the question on the motions for second and third reading of the bill immediately, without debate or amendment; and

In the event of prorogation, the order in this section to the Attorney General shall endure and the bill shall be introduced no later than the third sessional day of the second session of the 40th Parliament, and the other timelines in this section shall continue to apply.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order: Member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I know it's picayune, but there's one slight little thing that you did here. On page 6, "Following the passage of third reading," you said, "there will be a 30-minute bell." It reads, "there shall be." Just to stand the record correct.

Hon. John Milloy: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I wish to correct the record. On the section under "Board of Internal Economy," my motion is that the orders for second and third reading of the bill shall be called consecutively at the outset of morning orders of the day on the first Tuesday following introduction of the bill.

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

Mr. Milloy has moved that, notwithstanding any standing order or special order of the House, there be a—

Interjection: Dispense.

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

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

STRONG ACTION FOR ONTARIO ACT
(BUDGET MEASURES), 2012

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 29, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to the order just passed, I'm now required to put the question.

Mr. Duguid has moved second reading of Bill 55, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The bill is ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There was a no.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): No?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There were two noes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sorry; I missed that.

All those in favour of the motion?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I think there may have been some confusion among some of the members in the calling of that.

I seek unanimous consent that we put the question again.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy seeks unanimous consent to put the question again. Agreed? The motion is carried.

Mr. Duguid has moved second reading of Bill 55, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

I heard a couple of nays.

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: I believe, Mr. Speaker, I can help out with that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I've received a letter from the Minister of Finance. Pursuant to standing order 28(h), he requests that the vote on the motion be deferred until June 4, 2012. Agreed? Agreed.

Second reading vote deferred.

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 30, 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 Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to the order just passed, I'm now required to put the question.

Ms. Wynne has moved second reading of Bill 19, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of the rent increase guideline. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

This will be a five-minute bell.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I've received a note from Minister Wynne. Pursuant to standing order 28(h), a request is made to defer the vote on the motion until June 4, 2012. Agreed? Agreed.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Agreed?

Interjections: No.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): You don't want to go home?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, please say "nay."

The ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1751.

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. Margaret 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
Brotten, 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	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

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	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration 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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Vic Dhillon, Michael Harris
Rob Leone, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioe Lim

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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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
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: David Zimmer
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Joe Dickson, Rosario Marchese
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David Zimmer
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Donna H. Cansfield, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Jim McDonell
Phil McNeely, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns, Monique Taylor
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Frank Klees, Jack MacLaren
Paul Miller, Rob E. Milligan
Shafiq Qaadri
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Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Gilles Bisson, Donna H. Cansfield
Steve Clark, Garfield Dunlop
Jeff Leal, Lisa MacLeod
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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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
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
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Vic Dhillon, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
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Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

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

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**PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS /
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