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of Ontario

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
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(Hansard)**

Tuesday 5 June 2012

Mardi 5 juin 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Tuesday 5 June 2012

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mardi 5 juin 2012

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

**WIRELESS SERVICES
AGREEMENTS ACT, 2012**

**LOI DE 2012 SUR LES CONVENTIONS
DE SERVICES SANS FIL**

Resuming the debate adjourned on May, 29, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: I didn't have the opportunity to do an inaugural speech, Mr. Speaker, so I was going to start with that today, before I complete my speech today.

I took over the riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry from a list of people who worked long and hard for the area. Many here and at home can recount the work of Jim Brownell, my immediate predecessor, who took a keen interest in history and put the interests of our people at the forefront. He followed John Cleary, a local mayor and warden of the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, working alongside my dad, Bernie McDonell, who was a former reeve of Lancaster township.

Previous to John, Noble Villeneuve, Minister of Agriculture under the Mike Harris government, ensured that the issues of rural Ontario were always addressed. No matter where I go, if people make the connection, they immediately bring back stories of Noble, and regardless of their party affiliation, they talk about the fun they had.

I'd like to talk about the proud riding in eastern Ontario. The historic counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, the gateway to Upper Canada in the late 1700s, were originally settled by Scottish Highlanders and the Empire Loyalists after the American Revolution.

This group of hard-working pioneers turned rough, untouched land into productive farms and villages. But one of their top priorities, next to food and shelter, was to immediately ensure that their children were educated to ensure their prosperity and the prosperity of the country. Many of these people and their descendants moved west and played major roles in the development of this country.

Concerned about the ambitions of our neighbours to the south, Rev. Alexander Macdonell obtained permission from the crown to assemble a militia, and the Glengarry Fencibles were formed at St. Raphaels. They were instrumental in defeating the Americans at Crysler's Farm on the other remembrance day, November 11, 1813, blocking the advance on Montreal of the Americans and forever changing the history of North America. This group went on to become the SD&G Highlanders, distinguishing themselves in the First and Second World Wars. Canada's oldest regiment is still honouring Canada in far-off areas of the world, recently returning from Afghanistan.

I was born and raised on a dairy farm in Lancaster township in eastern Ontario, the son of Bernie and Mary Elizabeth, descendants of the original settlers, and part of a family of 12 boys and girls. We learned at a young age to pitch in and help out with the daily load on the farm. Our educational experience spanned everything from a one-room school in Bridge End, moving up to the three-room Sam J. McLeod school at Bainsville and on to Glengarry District High School, with 1,400 children.

Then I was accepted into an engineering program at Queen's University. I look at my time at Queen's with great pride, where I obtained more than just an education and made many great friends. We worked hard, especially in first year when many of our friends didn't make it through. In fact, in a class of 76, almost two thirds of the class didn't make it through—definitely a warning to our class. In the end, it paid off and I'm a proud Queen's alumnus.

When I visit schools today to talk about local and now provincial politics, I encourage young high school students not only to go to post-secondary school but to consider the field of engineering, as it teaches one to work on a team; to use the latest science to analyze problems; and to propose practical, cost-effective solutions.

As a side note, I remember a non-engineering class in which the presenter's entire lecture—for an hour—talked about the logic of engineers in politics, for this very reason of having a background in science: being trained to analyze problems and develop practical solutions. One

would think this professor was actually looking forward to today's government and the need for practical, cost-effective solutions.

Growing up on a dairy farm in the 1960s and 1970s taught me about early mornings, long days and hard work. I experienced first-hand how supply management changed the industry, definitely for the better. I have seen milk cheques in the early 1960s for \$7 a week. Granted, it was the spring before calving, and lots of inflation has occurred since, but there wasn't a lot of money to go around, especially for a family of 12. Supply management allowed for mechanization and immense improvements in efficiencies that provide Canada with secure, high-quality food that we have grown used to today.

During university, I had a number of summer jobs: on the farm; installing water and sewer in Vankleek Hill; working in the oil sands of Fort McMurray; and as a technician at the Bruce nuclear plant. After university, I took a job with Bell Canada, working in Brockville and Sudbury before returning home to my native Glengarry county. I enjoyed 32 years at Bell Canada, which allowed me to spend most of my time in eastern Ontario. I particularly enjoyed my time working on the rollout of high-speed Internet to the area, as I truly believe it is an economic equalizer.

The original Scottish emigrants, mixed with the French movement from Quebec, developed a truly unique area of Canada, a musical and social atmosphere that is labelled today as the Celtic heartland of Canada.

I married my wife, Margie McRae, a high school friend, and we raised three children: Marion, Chelsea and Bernie. It was then that I got involved as a volunteer, first filling in as president of the Border men's hockey league. I also started coaching minor soccer and hockey, as part of the Char-Lan minor associations for more than 20 years. It was during these years at Char-Lan that I worked with Greg McCulloch on the executive. We really enjoyed working with the kids and watching them have fun. We worked countless hours together, and we always had a way of making it happen for the kids.

I enjoyed working with all the great kids, watching them grow up and being part of the community. I take great pride in seeing today Michael Robertson, who's on Canada's Olympic track team, and Christina Julien, who is Canada's second-leading scorer on the women's national soccer team.

I then joined the Williamstown Fair board, a true example of volunteers at work. This August, Canada's oldest annual fair will be celebrating its 200th anniversary.

I eventually got into politics, back when Bob Rae was Premier, serving as councillor for nine years, mayor for eight, and warden in the united counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry in 2006.

I followed in the footsteps of my grandfather, Rory Angus McLeod, who was the deputy reeve of Lancaster township in the 1920s and 1930s, and my dad, Bernie, reeve of Lancaster township in the 1980s. I always tried to follow the example he set, as he always believed in treating everybody fairly and the same.

I would like to take a second to acknowledge some of the people who helped me through my days in politics. Of course, my wife, Margie, and my family—our children, Bernie, Marion and Chelsea—were always there when I needed them. In the early days on council, I met Garry Roberson, a tremendous volunteer in the township, who helped me throughout my days in politics and showed me how to run an election. He, along with Rick Marvel and Barry Millet, loved politics and spent many a late night working on the cause. And of course, my brothers and sisters always stepped up to help when I needed something done. My brother Chris, mayor of North Glengarry, and his wife, Yvonne, were big helps. During my run for MPP, I had many great supporters: Marilyn McMahon, Guy Lauzon, Eric Duncan, Glen Grant, Marcel Lapierre, Les O'Shaughnessy, Verla Perrin, and many more. I'd like to thank them so much.

0910

Now I'd like to get on to the task at hand in Bill 82, An Act to strengthen consumer protection with respect to consumer agreements relating to wireless services accessed from a cellular phone, smart phone or any other similar mobile device. That's quite a mouthful, and I'll refer to its somewhat shorter name, the Wireless Services Agreements Act. It was introduced several weeks ago, on April 12, with some fanfare and great anticipation. I have a press release of that day in front of me. It makes some interesting reading. Before I delve into it, though, I'd like to share some speculations of mine with the House.

We all remember that on the days before and after April 12, this assembly was seized with the budget. We were observing a passionate deal-or-no-deal tango, particularly during question period, courtesy of the Premier and the leader of the third party. According to many Ontarians and many members of the press, there was a credible chance that Ontario might be plunged into an election over the Premier's disastrous mismanagement of the province's affairs.

With pressure heating up on the Ornge scandal, we were looking for a diversion. When we consider not just the policy but the timing of the announcement, I can see that the bill we have before us may be more about politics than actual substance. Any announcement from a ministry is guaranteed to grab the attention of the media, even more so during a slower news day at Queen's Park, as a constituency week always is, and the week of April 12 was a constituency week.

Furthermore, a Thursday announcement was just in time for the Saturday and weekend papers. By all standards, the Ministry of Consumer Services pulled off a public relations success by diverting attention toward this feel-good bill.

Examining the release itself, I'm immediately treated to the words "McGuinty government," and I can't help but wonder why the minister wouldn't seek to take some of the credit for introducing such an apparently popular and apparently sweeping reform in an industry every Ontarian deals with.

But let's not give all the credit to the minister, as her honourable colleague from Sault Ste. Marie has waged a

battle for transparency in wireless contracts since 2010 and presented a bill to this Legislature on our third sitting day, November 23, to that effect, a law that I will remind you passed second reading on December 1 and was in committee awaiting examination.

Here I will point out, Speaker, another aspect of this government's approach that puzzles me. It is important to bring this to light, and its relevance to the bill in question, because the intent and the spirit of the law are sometimes as important as the law itself.

The member from Sault Ste. Marie introduced this bill on November 23. It received all-party support at second reading on December 1 and was sent to committee, where it languished for several months and is still not moving. With this bill before the House, due to our parliamentary procedures, Bill 5 will likely not see the light.

Had the government cared about public input into the hearings and the workings of the province, rather than isolate itself in the working towers of its ministries, the committees of this Legislature would have been created before the winter break and allowed to sit through that session. Had the government genuinely cared about cell-phone consumers, they would have moved the relevant amendments to Bill 5 in committee during December and January, and in the second sitting week of February the regulation could have been put in place. Come August, the provisions of a wireless consumer protection bill would be in full force. Instead, it's June already and we're just beginning the discussion all over again—same principle, same faces, different bill number, and of course, different claimants to the credit.

I know the member for Sault Ste. Marie cares deeply about the issue, and I'm sure he is as frustrated with the needless setback as are those Ontarians who complain about their cellphone service.

Seeing that we're talking about the timing of this government's announcements and their subordination of policy to column inches in the *Toronto Star*, let me offer this House another interesting fact. The CRTC announced earlier this year that it would begin consultations regarding a national regulatory framework on wireless contracts. The proposals are supposed to be modeled after Quebec's Bill 60, and involve simple contract terms, less burdensome cancellations, transparency in costs and transparency in agreement amendments. It sounds quite similar to the bill we have before us and to Bill 5.

The CRTC informed the media of the consultation process on April 4, a full eight days before the ministry issued the press release about the "McGuinty government taking strong action." Ordinary citizens could contribute to the consultation online by visiting the CRTC website and submitting their opinion before May 3, the very same day the minister brought this bill before the House and all but killed Bill 5, from which no more media could be milked.

Since this government is one to appreciate short and snappy taglines such as "No more cell shock," I recommend we call this bill by an even shorter name, one that

could sum up the intent very succinctly: Bill 82, the "me too" act.

The same release, dated April 12, proceeds in its first sentence to state that many Ontarians experience a shock when they open their cell bill due to either out-of-the-blue charges or to being billed for something they believed was included in their plan.

The cited source is a report by the Commissioner for Complaints for Telecommunications Services. I took time to read this particular item, and the ministry's figures are a little incomplete. It is true that, of the commissioner's complaints, 62% dealt with wireless services. What the ministry forgets to mention is the total number of complaints. Considering that we're in the process of passing a regulation affecting a significant number of Ontarians, the public deserves to be as informed as the government, if it isn't better informed already. The total number of complaints from all Canadians logged by the commissioner for the 2010-11 period is 8,007. Of these, 3,314 came from Ontario.

According to an earlier and more informative press release by the member from Sault Ste. Marie when he introduced Bill 5, 77% of Ontarians have a wireless contract, about 10 million of us. So by simple mathematics, we see that if you're from Ontario, you have a one-in-3,000 chance of complaining to the Commissioner for Complaints for Telecommunications Services. Assuming 10 bills per year, for the sake of simplicity, that translates into approximately one complaint-worthy bill every 300 years.

The annual report this data is extracted from does not go on to split the complaints with merit from those where the CCTS sided with the provider outright, so we cannot know for sure how many customers were wronged in this time period.

The case studies quoted a few pages further paint a mixed picture regarding excessive data bills. Despite what the government may have us believe, one's shock at a large bill for data usage is no guarantee that the bill is cancelled or reduced.

The CCTS, the government's very source of justification for this bill, has confidence in wireless companies' data-monitoring tools. Allow me to quote: "Absent any tangible evidence to suggest that there is a problem with the manner in which the service providers' tools are measuring data usage, we too have little choice but to rely on the accuracy and integrity of the system-measured data usage. To date we have never concluded a complaint with a finding that the provider's system tool was inaccurate. But consumers tell us that they are frustrated and unhappy about being expected to simply accept the accuracy of the data as reported by the service provider. We know that no electronic system is foolproof, and we are aware that one provider admitted an inaccuracy in the way its system billed data usage to a small portion of its customer base."

How did we come to this bill? Over the last 20 years, communication technologies have leaped forward in ways that we could never have predicted. Nine years ago,

BlackBerrys made their first appearance on the broader market, and the now-famous iPhone was launched as recently as 2007. It is common for this market and society in general to evolve faster than the laws passed to govern them. The wireless service industry is a good example of that. We can trust the statistics or we can trust our own eyes. Cellphone communications are shifting away from merely calling and texting towards more data-intensive uses such as Web browsing, media streaming and social networking. I believe that last year smart phones and tablet computers accounted for more sales and more data flow over the Internet than personal computers.

0920

That is an immense challenge to the industry, considering that the underground networks used by conventional phones and broadband lines cannot be easily used, if at all, for transmitting data used by a smart phone. Companies must invest in new towers and new transmission technology, and the money has to come from somewhere.

There seems to be a consensus by public and the media that the rates paid by cell subscribers in North America are far too high, and that Canadian rates are higher than US rates as well. Reading the Toronto Star article of April 15 offers some insight into the perception that the public or the government have of the wireless phone industry: terms like “gouging,” “relief” and “cracking down,” strong language fit to describe a national emergency.

As legislators elected to exercise our powers wisely, we must approach every issue from different angles and assess each one on its merits, rather than its interpretation by the papers. Our rates are often compared unfavourably to European ones, both in terms of cost and quality of service. The market conditions are not similar. The Canadian market is regulated more tightly than those of the Europeans, but this is only half the problem.

The average European country has a population density of approximately 100 people per square kilometre, over 28.5 times greater than Canada’s 3.5 people per square kilometre. We have a total market of about 30 million individuals spread over 10 million square miles. The entire country of Austria wouldn’t fill the riding of Algoma-Manitoulin. So we’re comparing apples to oranges, and we’re missing the most important aspects of the debate.

Quality of service is not dependent on land mass. The government will talk about cell shock, and we will gladly engage them in that discussion. But many more Canadians and Ontarians get frustrated at the customer service provided by our largest wireless companies, and this bill will do nothing, and the government can do nothing, to address this concern. Consumers should not be led to believe that this legislation will all of a sudden solve the problems in the wireless sector, for it won’t.

It is, however, a step in the right direction. It will allow consumers to break unsatisfactory contracts without having to pay the full liability for the remainder of the agreement. We join Ontario consumers in welcoming

that, although our reasons and priorities may differ slightly. The current arrangement, where the consumer has to pay up front upon cancellation for all the monthly services he or she will not receive is outlandish and simply an income guarantee scheme for wireless providers.

The excuse that cancellation fee agreements between companies are banned by anti-cartel legislation is true but misleading. Every enterprise in this country is still free to conduct business as it pleases, and could unilaterally waive the requirement for a consumer to pay the remainder of their contract liability. Rogers did this in Ontario, effective January 22 this year.

So before we jump on to the bash-the-market bandwagon, there has been no market failure in this regard—absolutely none. Consumers were legitimately fed up with being bound by the threat of a large cancellation fee. It has been solved.

I worked for Bell for 32 years. It’s a company that many love to hate, but it was Bell, and its subsidiary, Virgin Mobile, first introduced the concept of a tab—no-term contract—and deferred payment for the mobile device of your choosing. This concept is being taken up very enthusiastically by other carriers, their low-cost subsidiaries usually jumping in first.

I won’t assert that the system is perfect. A consumer purchasing a \$350 phone with Koodo, 100% deferred on a \$35 monthly contract where 10% of one’s bill is written off the cost of the phone every month, would pay off his phone in 100 months. To some, that may be a laughable proposal, yet it’s a step in the right direction. The consumer is not bound, and they know exactly what they owe on the device and can choose a cheaper device if they so choose.

Another area where the market is working without much government intervention is domestic roaming. Most European companies have separate area codes for mobile devices and one rate for all calls to any part of the country. Any special offers are limited to calls within a carrier’s own network. For instance, Spain and France give cellphone companies area codes 06 and 07, the UK is 07 and so on.

As members of the North American numbering plan, Canada does not have that possibility. It does, however, have some positive outcomes. By tying cellular numbers to the local area code, the distinction between calls to cellphones and land lines becomes impossible. Households can go entirely wireless and forgo their land line. In many urban areas, this will not affect users’ access to broadband Internet services either, thanks to the availability of affordable so-called “dry” DSL lines that work without an active phone.

Some statistics by the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association estimate that 13% of Canadian households use only wireless service today, and the number is growing. In the US and Canada, a conventional contract used to limit the usage rates to local calling, unless the user purchased a long-distance package. This is no longer the case. To the best of my knowledge, Koodo Mobile is the first Canadian company to do away with

domestic roaming and long-distance charges. The market has again worked in this case, because so-called Canada-wide calling is not a rarity any more. But by all standards across the low-cost providers, no company will ever sell you a service at a net loss. Therefore, doing away with long distance and roaming rates did not impose a total cost on the industry.

I will take care to highlight that the system isn't perfect, either. Low-cost carriers that do not have national coverage are at a disadvantage, since they cannot offer their consumers the mobility that larger, more established providers can give. At some point, outside the GTA, Montreal and Vancouver, your low-cost operator will need to use someone else's network and charge you accordingly. Furthermore, the possible cost of removing long-distance rates may have been passed on to consumers through higher rates in data or a less convenient choice of service and add-on bundles.

Only true competition, in a truly open and transparent market, will drive down the total cost of any wireless service. I am interested to hear the opinion on this matter at the committee stage of Mr. Sawiris, chair of Wind Mobile. He is seeking to expand his service in Canada and could offer some interesting insights.

In the meantime, we have to make the limited market price we're stuck with work. The imperfect arrangement of low-cost subsidiaries to national carriers and smaller, locally bound independent carriers is allowing greater experimentation with plans, tariffs, offers and prices. The price system, better than any survey or Ministry of Finance pre-budget tele-town hall, is allowing customers, Canadians and Ontarians, to vote with their wallets. As a result, we are seeing greater availability of desirable services and we have a greater choice of payment plans and options.

The US counterpart to the wireless telecommunications association had this to say about individual states regulating their own cell market:

"Policy-makers should take a very cautious view towards regulating" the wireless sector. However, "if additional legislative or regulatory support is needed ... consumers would be best served if government action remains at the national level, and the states are only allowed to take appropriate action relative to their laws of general applicability. As the national licensing authority over a national industry, the FCC is the appropriate government body to safeguard consumer protection, public health and safety in the event of any demonstrated market failure."

Speaker, we have an imperfect market, but it isn't stale and it isn't set in stone. It is responding to consumer signals. I don't see a demonstrated failure here, either. Bill 82 is a good proposal, and we look forward to examining it more thoroughly in committee, but it isn't as urgent as some fearmongers would have us believe.

I spoke earlier about comparisons to Europe, and we need to compare apples to apples, so here's a thought: Let's compare the cost of a Blackberry Curve 9360 with a plan in a densely populated area, provided by the same

company in Canada and in Italy. I won't mention the names, so not to bias people. In Canada, one gets a Blackberry Curve, at the regular price of \$300 Canadian, for \$0 on a so-called "tab" that's wiped clean every three years. After three years the handset is yours; the condition: maintaining a \$40-a-month contract. No commitment, except the payment of the remainder of the handset, if the agreement is cancelled within three years. For \$40 a month, one gets unlimited calling throughout Canada, unlimited incoming calls, unlimited texting in Canada, unlimited data and caller ID. The unlimited part is, of course, dependent on where you are. Outside the carrier's coverage range, you're out of luck.

0930

In Italy, the same company, in a densely populated area, offers the following: The phone's regular price is €300, or around \$387. You can get it for zero if, for a period of two years, you maintain a so-called platinum plan. This includes essentially unlimited talk, texting and data. The price: €70, or C\$90. Drop the plan to gold, which includes almost unlimited talk and text, and you'll pay C\$127, and €50 or C\$65 a month. Overall, for the same phone one would spend C\$1,400 on here, you would spend \$2,100 in Europe. It shows, Speaker, that there's an inordinate amount of hype and hysteria around the issue of wireless communication, and it clouds sound judgment.

The main Canadian providers of wireless services have joined the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association and abide by a code of conduct, freely available for anyone to read. Wireless providers swear by this code, as it includes deliverables designed to make every wireless consumer in Canada an informed one.

In theory, the following information should always be available to the consumer, either at the point of sale or on the company's website: monthly base charge; minutes and data included in the base charge; additional minutes and data rates, which most commonly are the source of cell shock; notice of roaming charges; additional taxes and fees collected; duration of service period; early termination fees; trial period terms; prepaid credit and account expiration dates; and coverage map.

When the consumer signs a contract, the code of conduct demands that the provider include the following in the agreement: all charges that are billed, and how they are calculated; consumer rights in case the charges are changed; the minimum service period and term duration; renewal conditions; and cancellation procedures and cancellation fees.

As far as advertising goes, the code becomes slightly less about deliverables and more about principle: "We do our best to clarify the conditions and charges that apply to the advertised prices for our phones, other wireless devices, and services. If additional charges may or will apply, that fact will be noted in the advertisement.

"Any disclaimers used in our advertising will also be clear, understandable and directly linked to the advertised offer."

On this issue, we could definitely do better. The code does not have criteria for prominence and no mention is

made of all-in pricing, as is the case of Bill 82. If this legislation takes effect, the advertised price will have to include all charges over the entire duration of the agreement if the advertised offer is a contract, or the total monthly charge before HST if the advertised offer is a month-to-month. For a marketing department, this is a nightmare. An often-used strategy in many industries involves the advertisement of a price below a certain threshold to entice the consumer, and the deal is usually concluded personally with a sales representative.

In advertising, we are constantly bombarded with prices just short of a solid number, such as \$199.99, followed by small print. The concealment of important facts in small print will be disallowed by Bill 82. For example, the words “for the first three months only; full monthly charge of X” will now have to be featured prominently in the ad, though the law makes no mention of exactly what “prominent” means. I guess we’ll have to wait and see the regulations the minister will make.

Whatever course of action this government decides to take on this issue, they should take great care to ensure that they don’t suddenly deprive many marketing executives and advertising departments of their bread and butter. They are well-paying jobs, and reducing our tax base would be quite a pity in these tough economic times.

All-in pricing is a tool for transparency. However, only when it is fair and applies equally to all is it worthwhile, and this is very important. If the government purports to take a stance for consumers, it should follow through without affording any category or provider a special privilege.

The record for this government on this particular issue is not a good one, and I will provide one example. In the automotive dealer sector, regulated by the Ministry of Consumer Services, the dealers’ greatest grievance revolves around an exemption in the vehicle dealers’ act that binds dealers to all-in pricing but excludes manufacturer advertising. Large advertising campaigns by manufacturers turn into a nightmare for the dealer, as the vehicles are advertised at manufacturer cost without factoring in the costs the dealer has to incur. When the dealer quotes a customer the all-in price, his transparency is taken for dishonesty and profiteering.

This party will never buy the argument that there is still a profit margin somewhere, despite government regulation. It is not the government’s job, nor has it ever been, to regulate revenue, profit or business planning. This is an important matter because it involves the fairness of the law and the equality of its application.

Take the bill, turn to page 14 and look at section 23(d): “The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations ... exempting any supplier, wireless agreement, goods or services, any combination of any of them or any class of any of them from any provision of this act or the regulations, and prescribing conditions or restrictions that apply in respect of an exemption.”

I look forward to hearing from the government on why this clause would be included and why its scope had to be so broad. It leaves the minister vulnerable to intense

lobbying for the purpose of exempting either an entire carrier or a particular product from the act. If I were a dishonest wireless service provider, I would lobby to exempt my newest offered product—let’s say, the newest iPhone—from the requirement to disclose its real market value. If a regulation to this effect was issued, my customers wouldn’t know the size of the discount I offered them when I signed them up, a discount that they would be expected to pay back should they cancel early. Am I being pessimistic? To my understanding, this is an entirely possible scenario. I look forward to the government side coming back with an answer to this, either during the debate or during the committee stage of this bill. Ontarians deserve to know why a law so widely touted as the silver bullet against all the ills of the cellphone industry includes such a cop-out clause.

As far as cancellation fees go, we on this side of the House are in favour of the provisions in Bill 82. Taking away the right of carriers to charge the consumer total unpaid future liabilities is a way to increase competition. Carriers that provided good customer service and good network service were left at a disadvantage by those who cut corners on some of those aspects and bound their users with the threat of a hefty bill that was sometimes larger than a tax refund. I know we will hear more about this in committee.

I will compare Ontario’s cellphone customers to mortgage holders and wireless service providers to banks, for the sake of argument. When we take out a mortgage, the bank doesn’t give us the loan out of the goodness of their heart or because we looked well on that particular day. The bank is ensuring its income flow, your interest, so that they can run their operations, expand into other markets, expand their service and offer their depositors an attractive interest rate on savings. In much the same way, our wireless companies prefer long-term contracts because they ensure a greater income security for the provider.

Switching phone companies is not the easiest of tasks. Some people will swallow their frustration and stay with the provider they have an agreement with.

There is an argument to be made by the wireless industry that regulating advertising and cancellations will lead to higher prices. Less secure income will involve, according to some analyses, a drive to increase immediate revenue by raising prices and reducing choice. Earlier this year, I received a brief on the topic from the legislative research service, whom I wish to thank very much, on behalf of the whole House, for their tireless hard work. Let’s see if this argument holds water:

“To date, there is no empirical evidence of how the legislation has affected consumers or the industry. The CWTA maintains that the new regulations will result in increased costs and higher prices for consumers; however, the CWTA has received no feedback from its members regarding the impact of the Quebec law.

“According to Quebec’s consumer protection office, the new requirements do not appear to have affected prices or the subsidies offered by service providers, and

no companies have left the Quebec market since the new law took effect.”

The price of a contract with any major carrier is the same in Quebec as it is in Ontario, and the bundle offers appear to be identical as well.

0940

Shy of opening up the companies' financial books and the board meeting minutes, we will never know if the enactment of strict consumer protection legislation in Quebec resulted in the rest of Canada sharing the price. For instance, we will not know whether, without Canada's law, our own contract would be \$3 a month cheaper or include extra data. It's simply a matter of speculation.

As I said earlier, this government appears determined to chase the limelight on this issue, whether it's wise or not. The CRTC is consulting with stakeholders throughout the nation, and despite two other provinces introducing legislation, BC and Alberta have already chosen to put the CRTC on notice: “Draw up a national standard or we will regulate our own.” It is also worth noting that where the CRTC creates a national standard in an area where jurisdiction is shared by the provinces, the provincial regulating efforts become moot.

Are we jumping the gun on this issue? The way the ministry handled media releases and the tabling of this bill, I believe we might be. We are chasing after Quebec, Manitoba and the CRTC, and trying at the same time not to be outdone by Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador.

A rushed approach to legislation is dangerous. However mighty and caring this government thinks it is, it is still subject to the laws of unintentional consequences. Good, thorough consultation is the solution, but we have witnessed time and time again the yawning consultation gap this government opened between itself and Ontarians.

It appears this trait is not limited to this Liberal Party. I have been told that the assembly of Nova Scotia sent a wireless regulation bill to committee, who sent an offer to the CWTA to present its case at the committee meeting with one day's notice. We have no explanation for this behaviour other than the unwillingness to hear the other side, heed the warnings it may sound and examine whether they are based in reality.

In a minority Parliament, as we see today, being popular and being perceived as decisive seem to have trumped responsible government and statesman-like restraint. We can now look at Bill 19 and the lack of consultation with landlords, or to Bill 30 and the absence of any statistical base on which it could rest, or regulation 233/10 and the way it was hidden from everyone, key stakeholders included. So we can go on and examine Bill 50 and the false premise that it is a solution to a problem that stems from the government itself and the attitude to accountability.

Consultation has been forgotten by this government and we are offered no guarantees that this bill won't be more of the same exercises in grandstanding, wedging Ontarians against each other, or chasing positive press over good policy.

I also wish to thank my colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings for delivering the response to the minister's statement in the Legislature on May 3 while I was being briefed by ministry staff on the proposed law. We have been assured by the minister and her staff that this bill is consistent with initiatives undertaken in other provinces to regulate cellphone contracts, and I, for one, would appreciate being able to take them at their word. However, I can't, and I will explain why.

There are many proposals for improving cellphone service in Ontario and Canada. Some are radical, some less so. It is useful in this regard to examine the comment sections of various news websites that deal with cellphone regulation stories. One often cited is the abolition of the three-year term and the mandating of a maximum 24 months for a contract. In the context of easier and less hassling cancellations, such a proposal becomes redundant, but if it were implemented, it would not be beneficial to the consumer. Three-year terms are not an ideal agreement to begin with. Smart phones have a shorter shelf life than that; the warranty does not extend that long; and if the customer requires a newer handset, it usually comes with a brand new agreement. I don't see the need to examine that proposal, and I hope the government is going to be taking my same advice.

Other proposals include mandatory unlocking of the mobile device once it is paid off or the contract is up. The argument on the consumer side is that should a device last that long and be paid off through consumer compliance with the contract terms, it should become his property. The original bill by the member from Sault Ste. Marie included such a provision, yet is nowhere to be found in Bill 82. It may have been an omission or the result of consultations with the industry. In any case, it is a proposal we are open to. When we examine the speed at which technologies develop, combined with the shorter life of most high-technology gadgets, following a two- or three-year term, the original device will have to be depreciated significantly. Moreover, it would have been superseded by newer and more attractive models and therefore of little market value.

The prospect of an unlocked smart phone at the end of a term could also be an encouragement for consumers to take greater care of their devices. We are sometimes treated to offers of no-questions-asked warranties on some goods which include repairs due to mishandling by the owner. On its surface, it's a godsend for the consumer, who won't need to worry about his or her choices and any decisions. But in the long run, it is an excuse for waste.

This leads me to another issue at play in this bill and the debate that surrounds it. The PC Party, more than anyone else in this chamber, has always stood on the side of personal freedom, choice and responsibility. We're also the party that first acknowledges that a truly efficient market in any industry is founded on rules and transparency. I am concerned that the government's intent with this bill is not just to create a transparent marketplace but to fool consumers. The rhetoric I hear from this

government's benches is that the consumer is always right and the cellphone company is always wrong. I will therefore reference the same annual report from the complaints commissioner that the ministry so eagerly justifies this bill with.

Case study 1, concerning Internet service: "The consumer was receiving Internet service from a participating service provider that permitted the customer to use 25 GB of data each month. A few months after subscribing for the service, the customer began downloading movies and songs from the Internet. By his estimate, he downloaded approximately 100 movies and 300 songs during the month, in addition to web surfing, emailing and other activities.

"He later received a bill for about \$250 for additional data usage not included in his plan.

"The customer's complaint was that he should not have to pay the bill as he did not realize that downloading movies and songs from the Internet would consume such a large amount of data. During the course of our investigation, we found that the customer's service provider had an online tool by which customers can check to see how much data they have used. However, the customer claims that he was not made aware of the existence of this tool.

"We concluded that it was the customer's responsibility to monitor his usage, in particular given the significant change in the nature of his use. This is particularly important in cases such as this where the customer was unsure of how much data he was using when downloading movies and songs. Thus we did not recommend that the service provider waive the charges."

Simply put, the watchdog is telling us, "Consumer beware."

This principle applies to smart phones as much as it does to Internet services. Our own BlackBerrys have several applications on them that consume large amounts of data whenever they are active, including when they work in the background. Also, some applications may begin charging user fees the moment they are opened, whether intentionally or by accident.

In this context, the government will not be telling consumers the whole story. Section 13 of this bill deviates from the models adopted by Quebec and Manitoba and the model possibly undergoing discussion at the CRTC. It is the part of the bill that requires cellphone companies to inform the user when they are about to reach their maximum allowed use, whatever service they are subscribed to. It will not change any provision regarding application user fees or provide relief for a customer who has found himself out of data halfway through the month.

Speaker, I wish the government would reconsider this section even before the bill reaches committee stage, for reasons that would become very obvious to anyone reflecting on this matter. The bill is about 135 inches long, give or take a few, yet the section of this bill that deals with the ministry's *raison d'être* for this bill is only 1.25 inches long. The source of the largest and most widely publicized so-called cell shock is over-usage charges. Such charges for voice and text tend to be fairly contained and not entirely shocking.

0950

To put things in context, one needs to talk six hours within a month above one's allotted minutes to incur an overage charge of \$100. Data is a lot easier to lose track of, something the commissioner expresses quite clearly as well. Allow me to quote: "In other contexts where consumers are making purchases of a product sold in units, or that has to be measured, consumer is able to verify the accuracy of the measurement, more or less, based on their personal experiences. For example, consumers have a sense of what a pound, kilogram or litre represents. In addition, standardized measurement tools (for example, in gas pumps or on weight scales) are available to support the transaction. This allows consumers to have confidence that they are actually receiving what they are paying for.

"This also applies to other telecom services. When a customer makes a long-distance call, he is billed by the minute (or the second). Customers generally have a sense of how long" the call is "and can assess the amount they are billed for the long-distance call in light of that experience (and their phone probably also measures the length of the call!). Unfortunately, consumers cannot rely in the same way on their experience to measure a megabyte or gigabyte as they do a pound, kilogram or litre, since data is not a tangible product."

Let's be very clear and realistic before we continue: Nothing in the cellphone world is truly unlimited. The transmission capacity of our existing infrastructure and using our existing technologies is a set amount. It's undoubtedly large enough to satisfy the current demand of Canadian consumers, but there is nonetheless a limit to it. Because it is scarce, the exchange of data to and from smart phones carries a price. I will not delve into debates on whether or not data plans available in Canada are priced fairly. It is beyond the point. A telling trend from the past few years had unlimited data plans broadly available within an affordable price range. It contributed to a rapid penetration of smart phones and quasi-smart phones into the Canadian market. The same companies today will not likely offer similar service, or if they do, they will place certain limits on them. For instance, a common fair-use policy will have the user transferred to a slower data exchange server once his or her monthly usage exceeds a certain amount.

Cellphones today are becoming more like computers than phones. Moreover, 3G networks are being used by tablet devices as well, capable of performing very data-intensive tasks.

I will quote just one example: Watching a video on a BlackBerry screen will likely use 10 to 15 times less data than streaming the same video on an iPad. The uptake of data services is fast and the infrastructure needs expanding, so I predict we can expect greater limits on data plans in the future or a slower network. This preamble is essential if we are to discuss the sort of cell shock the minister is attempting to tackle.

Data on a cellular plan is a resource to be used wisely and sparingly, and the consumer must always be aware of

the terms and definitions used in the industry. This issue is fairly new, and as a matter of fact, there is still confusion amongst insiders themselves regarding the estimated data usage of an average smart phone user. Some claim a standard Web page can weigh as much as four megabytes. An online usage estimator provided by Virgin Mobile suggests that a user visiting 10 Web pages a day and sending 10 emails a day from a non-BlackBerry smart phone will use 50 megabytes per month. When we are faced with such conflicting evidence, users should take control of their smart phone and be proactive. The government does not need to impose an additional requirement upon cellphone providers, particularly one beyond the scope of Quebec, Manitoba and federal regulations, if this market has already provided an alternative.

A simple Google search for “data traffic monitoring apps” will show that independent application developers have already created dozens of either free or cheap apps that measure a phone’s data traffic. Some go as far as including used text messages and voice minutes. They are available on all platforms, including iPhones, BlackBerrys and Androids.

According to the CWTA, implementing an early warning system on the operator side would cost anywhere close to \$100 million per operator. If every Canadian customer bought a 99-cent app to monitor his or her data use and made a habit of checking it frequently, the total cost to the entire Canadian market would be \$30 million.

On one hand, the government tries to fix a problem that stems from ill-informed consumers. On the other, the market already provides a cheap alternative. Roaming data charges can be avoided simply by disabling that feature in the phone’s settings. I can do that with a BlackBerry in less than a minute. The take-home message for this government is, don’t fix it if there’s an app for it.

Lastly, I would touch on the renewal clause, section 15. This is a particularly vague clause that could cost us dearly unless it is clarified. Today, once one’s fixed-term agreement is up, the contract usually becomes a month-to-month agreement on the same terms until such time as the user or the provider decides to terminate. It ensures a smooth transition out of a fixed-term contract into the freedom of no-strings attached service. Shy of including an automatic transition clause into the original agreement, the user would see his or her service cut the moment the contract runs out. If they wanted to avoid such a headache, the user might need to sign a new month-to-month contract with his or her provider. No one can guarantee the same terms, prices or services the user subscribed to will be available the next time.

Putting it bluntly, this clause denies consumers the option of continuing on their present terms in a month-to-month agreement and gives everyone one more headache to deal with. I’m sure it’s not the minister’s intention, and I look forward to the corresponding amendments to section 15.

During our discussion, I cited a friend of mine who has a phone, and I’m sure it’s three years that he has been working on the month-to-month contract. To many

people, it doesn’t make sense, but for a lot of people, when the contract runs out, they just want to continue the service.

Most of us are leading busy lives and appreciate peace of mind. Not having to worry about your contract ending is, by all measures, an improvement in a consumer’s peace of mind.

Let me be clear: Automatic renewals for a fixed term longer than 30 days should not be allowed.

Law-making is not about taking shots in the dark or throwing spaghetti on the wall and seeing if it sticks. Bill 82 needs to strike a very delicate balance between the interest of the consumer, the needs of the industry and the mandate of the CRTC. It seems to have been drafted in a hurry, rushed out of the gate before the media could focus on the CRTC consultations, and based on evidence that does not stand the test of reasonableness.

Furthermore, the principle behind the bill could well be applied to other telecommunications industries, including the provision of broadband Internet services.

Three case studies in the commissioner’s annual report deal not with smart phones but with Internet users who did not realize how much data they had been using and were hit by over-usage charges.

Once the Bill 82 media cow runs dry, the media will come up with band shock, specifically targeting the broadband sector. This isn’t a case of “we ought to have a law.” The laws that would truly reform the cellphone market in Canada can only be made in Ottawa. On our end, we can look out for our consumers and protect them against clear abuses and unreasonable charges, such as cancellation liabilities.

We in the PC caucus will ensure that this government does not let its new law-making instinct become biased against industry in order to score some brownie points with the Toronto Star.

Ten million people in this province will be affected by this law. The legislative precedent it sets will affect many more in other industries that are not yet regulated according to the principles of Bill 82. We must proceed carefully, listen to advice, examine every proposal and think outside the box.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important bill for the Canadian public, and we in the PC Party are saying that the committee stage will be very important. We need ample time to listen to consumers as well as the industry to make sure we don’t make errors that we will pay for in the future.

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Being from the industry, I know that infrastructure investment is crucial in this regard. We don’t want to fall behind other countries in the world where there is sufficient investment in their infrastructure. We’re now moving to 4G service, which gives us all kinds of possibilities. In a lot of ways, coming from a rural area, I would like to see this industry regulated to encourage investment in areas where they do not have cell service today. Cell service today is a great alternative to broadband services in areas where wired service is not a possi-

bility. It's not as good and it's not as cheap, but it's an alternative, and it is becoming, as I said in my speech, an economic equalizer.

Areas without broadband service or cell service are really being held behind. I think that one area we can look at is making sure that all areas of this province are serviced to the maximum that we can afford. I believe we can do that more through enticing industry, private industry, to go out and service these areas through different plans, like the plan we have in eastern Ontario, through the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus. We're looking at servicing all of eastern Ontario. More plans like that through western Ontario and northern Ontario would service the province well.

So I look forward to the committee stage of this bill.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry on his inaugural speech. I know that the member and the member from London–Fanshawe, when we were out at the cattlemen's event earlier this week, talked about our large families. I come from a family of seven—

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Hey, me too.

Ms. Cindy Forster: —and the member from London–Fanshawe from a family of six siblings. So we were talking about the struggles that our parents had trying to raise that many children and send them off to college and university. But I'm sure that your family and friends are very proud of you, and I thank you for sharing with us today your political and your work successes over the years.

I also have a moment here just to speak about the bill. I've got a little story about the cancellation piece, their not being up front when they tell you when your plan might be cancelled. I just happened to find myself on a deserted highway in Oregon, only to have no cell phone service because I was never told that, after you reached I think it was \$300, your service would be cut off, whether or not you were behind in your bill. So here I was, in Oregon, at night, broken down, and I didn't have any cell phone service. When I contacted them later, I said, "You cut my service off." They said, "Well, we sent you an email." I said, "Well, I know. You may have, but, in fact, I didn't have any email service, I didn't have any phone service, and my vehicle wasn't working."

That's one of the kind of hidden things that nobody discloses to you. So of course, from that point on, I actually had it billed to my credit card so that I didn't find myself in that situation again.

So I look forward to further debate on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Madam Speaker, it was a very, very thoughtful presentation this morning, the maiden speech for the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. He shared a lot of his personal experience and indeed his political experience.

I take great interest, of course—he talked about one of the most famous regiments during the Second World War, the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders. Many young men from Peterborough were members of that famous regiment. Indeed, I see my friend the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, and not only was his father a very distinguished member of this House, but he was a very brave member of the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders.

It's ironic: Tomorrow, Madam Speaker, we celebrate the 68th anniversary of Normandy. It's interesting, over the last number of years, Canadian history books on the Second World War have retitled a famous photo. Many of us will recall there's a landing craft at Juno Beach which, for many decades, was attributed to the South Saskatchewan Regiment, but in recent years, that has now been relabelled, because we found out that, indeed, that was the landing craft of the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders. That correction has been made in Canadian history books.

Indeed, their history was very interesting, post-Normandy. They were involved, of course, in the decisive battle at Caen. Then they were instrumental during the famous closure of the Falaise Gap, which led to the advancement of the allied armies through France and, ultimately, for the SD&Gs to go into Holland and then into northern Germany.

In fact, the history of that regiment, centred in Cornwall, is unique. When you look at the battles and awards of honour after the Second World War, the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders won a significant number of those battle honours in some of the toughest battles around. So I appreciate the member talking about that history.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to provide a few moments of comment on the inaugural speech for the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, and also his comments on Bill 82.

He's my neighbour. He's just east of my riding, and we deal with each other quite a lot. In fact, the member has a very distinguished career, coming to this place from being the mayor of South Glengarry. He brings with him this very calm, cool and collected way about him. He delivers—

Interjection: His demeanour.

Mr. Steve Clark: His demeanour, yes.

He mentioned his years with Bell, and I know that for a time he did work in my riding, in his younger, perhaps wilder days.

He brought forward a number of comments this morning on Bill 82 that I think are extremely important and I hope are dealt with during committee. I'm not a big fan of too many regulations. In fact, I favour education instead. For a time, in the mid-1990s, I was involved with the Internet business. I know that some of the points he made about cellphone shock with the bill were certainly evident as people became more comfortable with the

Internet. I found that when I was in that business, we had to spend a lot of time with people, educating them about the bills and the charges, to try to help them work through as they became more comfortable. This technology has evolved greatly over the years from when a cellular phone, or a car phone, as they were called at the time, had a huge box that would fill your trunk.

I believe that during committee stage, we really need to take into consideration some of Mr. McDonnell's comments and bring those forward.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I did want to make comments on Bill 82, the bill that's being presented and debated, the Wireless Services Agreements Act, 2012.

One thing that came to my mind is how we're communicating today, compared to just a few generations ago for my mom and dad. My parents communicated with the old rotary phone—it was black—and that was the most basic level of communication that we had. Of course, there was also the verbal. When you went to your friend's house after school, you had to let them know where you were. Otherwise you called in, and hopefully they were home so that they knew your whereabouts.

My generation, my kids—I started with the computer and the big cellphone, the car phone that the other member just mentioned. It was really heavy to carry and very cumbersome. Today's generation that we're talking about now—I mean, you don't see a child—maybe starting at the age of 13, they have their own cellphone, and that's the way parents are communicating with their children and they're keeping tabs on their children, so to speak. Where are their whereabouts? They don't have to worry about calling home and Mom and Dad knowing their whereabouts. They can just give them a quick text.

The generation that we're facing today, they are becoming dependent on this type of service. If we don't have the contracts and the agreements that are going to be fair to consumers, so that the agreements have clarity and clairvoyance and the charges are reasonable, then it's going to make it harder for people to stay in touch and be communicating. Also, it's going to be difficult for people to actually have faith in that contract and that they're not going to get ripped off, so to speak. It has to be a fair contract, and the services that they're getting—their payments, the cancellation fees—it has to be a fair system so people can afford to stay in communication with each other. It is an affordability issue, because that's the way people are communicating in this generation. We have to look after that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I'd like to thank the honourable members from Welland, Peterborough, Leeds–Grenville and London–Fanshawe for their comments.

A couple of interesting points: The SD&G Highlanders is a famous regiment and one that's very near and dear to residents of my community. He talked about the

renaming of the ship at D-Day. It was through the perseverance of Bill Shearing, who was the honorary colonel, who noticed that. It took quite a few years, even though the physical evidence was overwhelming. It's funny sometimes how the military can be very slow to change things.

The first Canadian recipient of the Victoria Cross was actually from my hometown and in that regiment: Claude Nunney, who had emigrated from Ireland. He must have had quite a distinguished career, because he went from private to sergeant a few times, and back and forth. At the time of the award, he was actually a private again. But his bravery was well noted and received—I think the only Canadian to receive three full battle awards, the Victoria Cross being one of them.

I know my time is short, but just on the cell bill and that type of technology and how it changes: It's interesting. A few years ago, I was in a meeting in Montreal, and we were trying to figure out where the growth was going, and it was just killing our equipment. I went back home. My daughter was home from university, and she was watching a movie on her computer at the table. So I was talking to her and I said, "Where did you get the movie?" She said, "Oh, I'd like to watch a show but I have a class so I just downloaded it from the Internet. It may take 10 hours, but it doesn't really matter." I said, "Well, how would you do it?" She said, "I just go to the website, click this and it's done." I got back to the meeting and I said, "We're thinking this is tough to do? This is so easy that I'm surprised everybody's not doing it."

That's just an example of where this technology is going, where the usage is going, but, probably more importantly, where we want to be with it.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

The House recessed from 1012 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, I would like to introduce two people from my riding—I won't hit on your parade earlier—Karen and Mike Vecchio are here from St. Thomas. Karen works for our MP Joe Preston and does a wonderful job. Mike Vecchio is a strong supporter of our community. I welcome them both here.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased to introduce Christine Hart, who is here today. She's the mum of Katie Mowat, a page from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, who is page captain today. Christine is the former Liberal MPP for York East. She's here to celebrate her daughter and we recognize her today.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to welcome Clifton Foo and Michael Anderson, constituents from my riding in the Speaker's gallery, and I'll be enjoying dinner with them.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's my pleasure to introduce Mary Beth Walsh, who is in the members' east gallery today,

who is the mother of page Colin Walsh from the great riding of Peterborough.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to say today that a page from my riding, Anthonie Korstanje, is the page captain and he is joined today, to watch him exercise his duties as page captain, by his proud mum, Angela Korstanje, his dad, Joe Korstanje, his brother Joshua Korstanje and aunt Adrienne Hol. Welcome here to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to introduce Meghan Walker and Alison Dantis from the Ontario Association of Naturopathic Doctors. They're hosting a lunch reception today from the end of question period until 2 p.m., and I'd encourage all members to attend.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I would like members to welcome, from the Yukon, the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Tourism and Culture, the Honourable Mike Nixon, who is in your Speaker's gallery.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I take this opportunity to invite all members of the Legislature to welcome some dear friends who hail from the great and extremely well-served riding of Etobicoke North, and they are Mr. Jack Helferty, Ms. Pauline Helferty and future parliamentarians David and Nicolas Malcolm.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm pleased to introduce today in the public galleries some graduate students from McMaster University, with Dr. Henry Jacek.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to welcome Mrs. Zezima's grade 5 class from Oriole Park Junior Public School this morning, from my riding of St. Paul's. The class is here this morning to watch question period and tour the Legislature.

Mr. Frank Klees: It's my pleasure to introduce Mr. Ted Greig in the west gallery. Ted is the husband of Neave Greig, who is my constituency assistant in Aurora. Welcome, Ted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? The member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: This week 35 years ago, a young man joined us at the Ontario Legislature. The member from St. Catharines, Mr. Bradley, is celebrating 35 years as a distinguished member of the Ontario Legislature. Could we all rise for Mr. Bradley?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to thank the member for Peterborough for stirring it up.

On a personal note, I think that all of us would be so lucky to be able to serve the province of Ontario as this man has done and as all of us have on an ongoing basis. It is a testimony to the longevity of the member from St. Catharines.

That wasn't a point of order and it's out of order, so we'll move on.

I too have some introductions to make. It is customary for the Speaker, so I will be repeating some of the invitations that have already gone through.

Christine Hart from York East in the 33rd and 34th Parliaments: We welcome Christine to the House. We thank you for being here.

Again, to reinforce what has already been done, we have in the Speaker's gallery today the Honourable Mike

Nixon, Minister of Tourism and Culture, Minister of Justice and the MLA for the riding of Porter Creek South, Yukon. Welcome.

One that I'm glad what you've all left me is, my other brother Joe is here again. Thank you, Joe.

We don't know who the other guy is—oh, no, wait a minute; we do have to do that properly. What we have here is the former member from Elgin–Middlesex–London in the 37th, 38th, 39th and the Speaker of the House of the 39th Parliament, Mr. Steve Peters. Thank you for joining us, Steve.

I'm sure we all want to join Steve this afternoon when we hang him in the hallway. His official portrait will be unveiled this afternoon at 2 o'clock.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I just noticed that Rev. Dr. Brent Hawkes is here from Metropolitan Community Church. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, the Ontario PCs remain very concerned about the hollowing out of the manufacturing sector under your leadership. We believe that better days are ahead if we make the right choices to get our fiscal house in order, to make energy reliable and affordable and to actually lower taxes and the red tape burden.

We saw 2,000 jobs lost on Friday at the Oshawa GM plant. The Chevy Equinox, Speaker, was an Ontario icon. If you drove the Equinox anywhere in North America, it was made here in Ontario, made by Oshawa workers and families. The announcement on Friday is that that production will now take place in Tennessee in a reopened plant.

Premier, isn't this a clarion call that we need to change course? Why are we hemorrhaging jobs across the border into Tennessee? We want to see them working here in Ontario.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I appreciate the question raised by my honourable colleague, but I do want to once again gently confront him with the statement made by his honourable colleague who sits one, two, three, four to his left, who said, and I quote from the Toronto Sun, "Ontario's auto bailout was a bad idea, and the province should have just stood aside and let Chrysler and General Motors go bankrupt."

Speaker, we bring a decidedly different approach. We have, in fact, invested in the future of the auto sector in Ontario.

GM has invested in a new transmission line in St. Catharines, for 300 new jobs. They have invested \$96 million to expand capacity at the CAMI plant. Toyota has created 400 new jobs, Speaker, at their Woodstock plant. Ford has put in place a third shift at their Essex engine

plant; that's 100 new jobs. Honda has added 400 jobs. Chrysler has invested \$27 million in jobs—all since the recession, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, the workers at GM in Oshawa were confronted Friday with the news that they would lose 2,000 jobs. These are good middle-class jobs that help to build those communities and build our province.

The problem is, this is not the only one. We're seeing our manufacturing sector hollowed out. It's not like it's going over to Third World countries for cheap labour; it's crossing the border into Quebec, into Tennessee, into Indiana. This is a significant problem, and you dismiss it with your silly games.

Let me tell you about the Chevy Impala as well. This is one of the most popular family cars in the US. It made Wall Street's top 10 best-selling cars of all time: 14 million units sold. It was made here in Ontario, in Oshawa, but as of Friday the answer is: no more. It's moving to Michigan.

Premier, why is this happening over and over again? Why are good jobs leaving Ontario and going to the United States or Quebec?

1040

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, it's always good to get my honourable colleague's perspective, but I think we should hear from a few others in the private sector. Bombardier, one of our strongest global champions—there was a speech delivered just last week on the occasion of Bombardier's 20th anniversary in Ontario. This is what the CEO for Bombardier said: "We continue to believe that manufacturing in Ontario makes sound business sense and that it has a bright future. The province's fundamental strengths create an excellent jurisdiction for innovative, capital-intensive manufacturing. These strengths include a very skilled and adaptive workforce, a top-notch research infrastructure and a supportive policy environment. These are the reasons that brought Bombardier to Ontario and have kept us here."

I'm with Bombardier. I'm with continuing growth.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, you're missing my point altogether. We are listening to the private sector, and they've cast their votes: 300,000 manufacturing jobs have left our province under your leadership. Why have they done that?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Economic Development and Innovation, come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Your skyrocketing hydro bills, your increasing swamp of red tape that bogs them down whenever they want to open up a new plant, expand a facility. It's not simply the 2,000 jobs in Oshawa. That's bad enough. But we saw in Timmins the Xstrata plant move 100 or so kilometres across the border into Quebec because of your energy policies. We saw recently the bearing maker Timken closing a plant in St. Thomas.

Navistar closed their plant in Chatham and went to Indiana—675 jobs there; Cat out of London, heading to Indiana.

Premier, we're hemorrhaging good jobs. These are jobs that build the middle class, give them security and help people climb the economic ladder. Isn't this a clear signal that something has gone off the rails? We need a fresh approach: more reliable, affordable hydro, lower taxes and a pro-growth, pro-jobs government. Why don't you understand this and why—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's hard to figure out where my honourable colleague is coming from, because on the one hand, he says that we need to do more to support economic growth and new jobs in Ontario; on the other hand, he says when it comes to partnering business, when push comes to shove, when it comes to standing up for the auto sector—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, come to order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: When it comes to the southwestern Ontario economic development fund, he is opposed to that. Speaker, last week—

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: They don't want to hear, but there is unavoidably more good news. Last week, Telus announced that their workforce, which has grown from zero to 8,000 since the year 2000—they've invested \$22 billion since the year 2000—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Try again.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, just last Friday in Ottawa, Telus announced that they're going to invest yet \$650 million more to create 900 more jobs on top of the 8,000 they've created since the year 2000. The fact of the matter is that the economy is moving in the right direction.

ABORIGINAL LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier on this theme of the hollowing out of our manufacturing and resource sector in Ontario. I'm incredulous that the Premier doesn't even bat an eye at the loss of 2,000 good middle-class jobs in Oshawa and at what has happened in Timmins and southwestern Ontario. The Premier's solution seems to be that we're all going to go work down at the wind farm one day, we're all going to work for the wind turbine company, but that has been a dramatic failure. I don't think anybody believes the Premier that his HST tax increase created 600,000 jobs. I don't think anybody believes the Premier that his Feed-in Tariff program created 50,000 jobs; in fact, it's costing us jobs. The Feed-in Tariff program is one of the most disastrous, wrong-headed, job-killing programs in the history of the province of Ontario.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Economic Development and Innovation, the second time.

Mr. Tim Hudak:—we know that you'll be signing a deal between Samsung and Six Nations in a disputed area. Premier, please tell me that you are reviewing this latest deal between Samsung and Six Nations outside of Caledonia.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think Ontarians could be forgiven for being confused on what position my honourable colleague takes from one day to the next. He says now that we need to do more to support the auto sector, but as I say, when push came to shove, when it came time to provide real economic support to protect—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member for Nepean–Carleton, come to order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty:—400,000 jobs-plus, he was missing in action. When it came to laying shape to our budget so that we could work together to build a stronger Ontario economy and create—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You promised 650,000 jobs, and we're losing them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. The member from Nepean–Carleton. I will now start identifying individual members.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My colleague from the Ottawa area is taking out her anger on her colleague to her immediate left, Speaker—me—today, and I just don't think that's fair.

Whether we're going to support the auto sector or not, that's a position which varies from day to day with my honourable colleague, as it does when it comes to the HST—by the way, a measure which was wholeheartedly endorsed by the auto sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, the only thing confusing, Speaker, is that the Premier, whose policies of high energy rates, more red tape and higher taxes have cost us 300,000 manufacturing jobs, wants to double down on policies that fail economic sense.

I want to talk particularly about your Samsung deal. The Samsung deal is a bad deal for Ontario families, and now, as part of your Samsung deal, you're working out a contract with Samsung and Six Nations to build the world's largest wind and solar projects on crown land, government-owned land, ORC land as well as disputed land, potentially. I remind you that there's been an occupation in Caledonia now for six years. As part of your deal with Six Nations and Samsung, we'll be seeing millions and millions of dollars, in fact \$55 million, in payments going to Six Nations. Before you proceed with your deal, Premier, don't you think it's time to say, "End the occupation. Get off the land before you get \$55 million from Ontario"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Well, it took us a while to get there, Speaker, but I thought this line of questioning had to do with strengthening the economy—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty:—and creating more jobs and building more opportunities for all Ontarians. I thought that's what that line of questioning was, and that is an honourable line of questioning, Speaker.

Interjection.

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We will not shrink from our responsibility to continue to find ways to grow this economy. We will continue to aggressively pursue clean energy in Ontario.

Interjection.

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We will continue to find ways to work with our First Nations community and create opportunities for young people—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham, order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty:—growing up in those communities, just as we will for our young people—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty:—growing up right across the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I take it the Premier's answer to my question is no, that he won't suspend this deal until he cleans up the six-year occupation in Caledonia.

Interjection.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: The problem is, Premier, that your Feed-in Tariff program, your expensive subsidies for wind and solar projects, is driving out good jobs like we had at GM—2,000 jobs gone. They are a major abrogation of local property rights, and split communities. And you have six years of occupation going on in Caledonia. This is a very deadly mix that actually is going to hurt job creation in the area and exacerbate an ongoing occupation on the Caledonia Douglas Creek Estates.

It seems to me simple: Before you proceed with this deal—in fact, we think it's a bad deal altogether—say you won't give the \$55 million until we end the ongoing occupation at Douglas Creek Estates. Isn't six years, Premier, quite long enough?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, it was my understanding there's supposed to be some even tenuous connection between the beginning of a line of questions and the conclusion of the line of questions. We started off by talking about the economy and jobs; now we're talking about an alleged occupation. But Speaker, let me respond to that. We will continue to bring goodwill to these

circumstances. I will invite my honourable colleague to encourage his federal counterparts to roll up their sleeves, to work in earnest and to resolve a problem that predates Confederation, Speaker. In the meantime, we will do everything that we can to ensure that we bring goodwill and find common ground.

POWER PLANT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. We know that the OPA has offered a New York hedge fund more than \$80 million to make your headaches with the Mississauga gas plant go away. They didn't take the money, but Greenfield, the company that was building the plant, has been receiving public money. My question, Speaker, to the Premier is, how much has the government paid off to Greenfield so it can not build a power plant?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, to the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Last September, this party did make a commitment that we would not proceed with the gas plant in Mississauga on the site—a commitment, I might add, that was immediately confirmed and accepted by the two parties opposite. At no point have they ever suggested that they would not have done exactly what we're doing.

1050

There are a number of discussions and lawsuits at which the interests of the people of the province of Ontario are being represented. I look forward to a point at which we're able to speak to the conclusion of the discussions from the various other proceedings.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Interjection.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, back to the Premier: The Minister of Energy has refused to talk about this fiasco at committee, and the government is stonewalling at every turn. But information is available on the public record. In court proceedings in New York, in May, lawyers for Greenfield stated, "OPA is advancing money to Greenfield to pay ... vendors." How much has the government and the OPA paid to Greenfield so far?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: My friend the leader is correct in suggesting that there are legal proceedings on both sides of the border relating to the decision not to proceed with the gas plant on the Mississauga site, a decision that reflected a lot of input from the community of Mississauga and the western GTA, a decision that was immediately accepted and endorsed by the leader's party and the Leader of the Opposition. Those proceedings are ongoing. They are obviously very complex and technical. The interests of the people of the province of Ontario are being represented through them, and it would be best to speak to them at the conclusion of the proceedings so we continue to protect the interests of the people of the province.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, the correct thing about the statement of the minister is that New Democrats don't support private power deals no matter where they take place, so we didn't support that from day one.

The government claims, though, that it can't comment about the specifics, but the facts are already in the public record. The government claims the public doesn't need to know, but they're spending the people's money, not their own money. This is yet another example of a private power mess that's making life more expensive for the people in this province who are picking up the tab and who are paying the bills.

If the government refuses to tell people how much money has been spent so far, will they let Ontario's auditor review the mess and tell us how much of our money has been wasted?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Our position throughout is that we've listened very carefully to the people of Mississauga. The western GTA decided not to proceed with that plant, and the interests of the people of the province of Ontario, including the monetary interests, are being represented and protected at the proceedings on both sides of the border and in some separate, confidential, very sensitive negotiations and discussions. It would be unhelpful to speak to part of it, allegations of part of it because it would inevitably accrue to the detriment. It would harm the interests of the families and businesses in Ontario, and we won't do that. We'll continue to protect and represent them and hope—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Prince Edward–Hastings, come to order.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: —look forward to speaking to this when I'm in a better position to do so.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: With a protection like that, Speaker, we're all in trouble.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier. A review of the government's local health integration networks was supposed to happen over two years ago. In fact, it was postponed until July 2012. So my question is a very simple one: When is it going to start?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. We are committed to reviewing the LHINs. I think it's important that we do take a look and see what more we need to do to further strengthen the role of the LHINs in this province. We know that they have fundamentally changed how health care is delivered. We're now seeing hospitals, Speaker, with balanced budgets. We're seeing a much, much better integration of care—care that's

working for patients. So we will, of course, do what we are mandated to do when it comes to review of the LHINs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, people are very worried about the state of Ontario's health care. They see growing wait times and cuts at hospitals, doctors who are unable to see patients, and unelected, unaccountable LHINs making more and more decisions. The LHIN review is a chance for all parties to work together, to actually start facing the challenges in our health care system in a collective way. Will this government move forward with the LHIN review, or will they continue to do the same old "my way or the highway" kinds of approaches that certainly have not been working so far?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I want to make it very clear that we will be reviewing the LHINs as per the legislation, and we very much look forward to the constructive input from people in this Legislature; most importantly, though, from people out there in Ontario who have first-hand experience with our health care system. There's nothing more important, in my opinion, about our transformation of health care than the integration of care so that it works for people. We have a wonderful health care system, but we know there's more we can do and the LHINs are really driving the change in our health care system. I look forward to the input of the party opposite.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People stuck with long wait times or without a family doctor or home care support are really tired of being ignored. They know and we know that we can do better and that we need to do better, and the government can't simply sweep the problems under the carpet and pretend that they're not there. People are tired of an out-of-touch, arrogant government. They want to be heard and they want us to work together to actually tackle the challenges that we're facing.

My question is very specific: Will the Premier commit today that no new legislation on LHINs will move forward unless the long-delayed review actually takes place first?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I released our action plan for health care in January. Important elements of that are in fact what the member opposite is talking about. We need to strengthen home care. We need to strengthen community care. We have too many people in our hospitals who would much prefer to be home in their own bed rather than in a hospital. It is the LHINs that are driving that integration that is best for people. So we absolutely look forward to the input from both parties opposite as we look to how we can continue to improve care for the people of this province.

ABORIGINAL LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Premier: We know, whether it be militant confrontations or imposing wind

turbines on unwilling communities, your knee-jerk reaction is to not only write a cheque but to give away the farm. Think of Douglas Creek Estates in Caledonia; or handing over 300 acres of the Burtch correctional property to Six Nations; and now laundering land-lease money from crown land at South Cayuga to Six Nations, all to buy peace for the Samsung deal in Haldimand county.

Six Nations elected Chief Bill Montour, is quoted in the Teka newspaper: "Through this process, the province of Ontario has admitted that Six Nations has land ownership."

Premier, there's no land claim at South Cayuga. Why would you set the precedent of assigning land-lease money to Six Nations?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'm going to share the supplementary with my colleague the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. You know, the Samsung strategic investment in the province of Ontario presents a remarkable—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't like what I'm hearing.

Minister.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: It presents a remarkable opportunity—an opportunity for the people of Ontario to receive the benefit of 16,000 jobs, \$7 billion worth of investment, and three manufacturing facilities already set up in Tillsonburg, in Windsor and in Toronto, with another one to come. It also presents an opportunity for those with whom Samsung and their partners will contract, an opportunity to benefit from the investment. Six Nations has reached an agreement, an arrangement with Samsung, that will provide many long-term benefits to Six Nations over the years to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Premier, here's your energy minister who had indicated the agreement has nothing to do with government. However, following your deal with Samsung and Six Nations, elected Chief Bill Montour said, "A letter from the Minister of Infrastructure states that the lease from the land surface will be turned over to Six Nations. That is unprecedented. They have always maintained that we have no right to that land."

1100

So which is it, Premier? Is the government involved in the agreement or not? Is this about handing over lease money to Six Nations or handing over crown land, all the while sticking Haldimand county with wind towers and property devaluations? As one of my constituents indicated, "They got the gold mine; we got the shaft."

Premier, the chief has the letter. Why has this land-lease precedent been set?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the member opposite is talking about specifics, and I think the Minister of Energy has addressed those.

What I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, is that the other thing that the member is talking about is a relationship and the relationship between government and First Nations, all of the First Nations in the Six Nations. I think what's happening is, we're the party that is implementing the recommendations of Ipperwash, as the Minister of Finance is saying. We are very clear that we need to work with all of the community and Six Nations. It's extremely important to the future economic development in that community that the government have a good working relationship, that Samsung is able to develop this project. But to have a local member who is doing nothing but dividing and stirring the—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It has become evident to me that I will now start warning. You know: one warning only.

ARBITRATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

Finally, after weeks of silence, the minister and the president of the Ontario Medical Association met and talked. Today, staff from both sides are continuing those preliminary talks. New Democrats are happy to see that the conversation has resumed, but the government's refusal of the OMA's request for a conciliator is sort of baffling. Can the minister explain why her government is so opposed to allowing a conciliator to help reach an agreement with Ontario physicians?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I too am very pleased that the conversations are beginning to resume when it comes to achieving a negotiated arrangement with the Ontario Medical Association. I think the patients of this province expect government and the doctors to work together to land on what is right for the patients, Speaker.

We have made a decision. The decision is that we must address the most urgent priority in health care now, and that is, we need to strengthen community care; we need to strengthen home care.

We look forward to conversations with the doctors. We know we must reach an agreement, and I look forward to that happening.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm glad the minister knows that she has to reach an agreement, because the Canada Health Act is clear in recognizing the value of conciliation, but this government has chosen to ignore this guideline and impose a unilateral agreement.

Now that the government is taking steps to go back to the negotiation table, will she accept the assistance of a conciliator between the Ministry of Health and the OMA?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Again I thank the member for the question. I really would like to know what the NDP position is on this aspect of our budget, Speaker.

I think we all recognize that we are working very hard to get back to balance. All of us are doing our job, and that includes those who work in health care. We are choosing to protect the expenditures on physician compensation. We've invested in an increase of 85% since we came to office in 2003. We believe that any additional new money must be invested where it will make the greatest difference for patients, and that is in community care and home care.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Education. As you know, I sit on the Standing Committee on Social Policy. I've been there for the public hearings on Bill 13 and Bill 14, and I've been there for Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act.

A lot of public attention is being paid to the part of the bill to allow gay-straight alliances in Ontario schools. Just last Friday, I went to visit a school in my riding. It's a great high school called Blakelock. They have a GSA there in the riding. The kids basically said to me, "We don't know what the adults are all upset about here. We've been doing this for five years, and it's working."

Will the minister please tell this House clearly what Bill 13 says about gay-straight alliances?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Education.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Thank you very much, Speaker, and thank you to the member for Oakville, who worked hard on this important piece of legislation.

During public hearings on Bill 13, we heard a number of deputations from Ontarians, from students, from teachers, from groups who work with youth and who are focused on creating a more safe and inclusive society. We heard from those deputants that it was important to ensure that students who want to establish a group like a gay-straight alliance in their school be supported to do that. We believe it's not up to us at Queen's Park to tell students how to name their clubs but that schools and school boards shouldn't prevent students from using the words that matter to them, like the students at Blakelock have chosen to do.

That doesn't mean that our government will force schools to have a GSA or a specific name of a student club. What we're saying here is that, if passed, Bill 13 will mandate that all schools will have to support students like those at Blakelock if they wish to form a student-led support group. They might call it the Rainbow Club, they might call it Born Equal or an anti-homophobia alliance. It's their club, after all, Speaker, and that's the way it should be.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I think a number of us were really proud to speak yesterday during third reading debate on this bill. I talked about how I believe every generation improves upon the conduct of the past. I spoke about how much I learned from my own son when

he was young about accepting and embracing people who are different, and I spoke about how I believe that kids lead us adults in social change.

Minister, I believe the Accepting Schools Act makes a very important statement. That statement is, bullying is simply not acceptable in our schools and that homophobic bullying also has no place in our schools.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, how does this bill help fight LGBTQ bullying in our schools?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to commend the member from Oakville for his remarks on third reading debate yesterday. I agree there's nothing radical about ensuring that students get the support that they need, and that's what the Accepting Schools Act is all about. Evidence and experience show us that peer-to-peer support like GSAs makes kids feel more accepted at school. That connection leads to academic success, and that's what our schools are all about. People for Education, in their recent report, found that 88% of students agree that students should have the right to establish gay-straight alliances at school. Many, many individuals, including John Tory, the former leader of the PC Party, have spoken in support of GSAs and kids being able to choose the name.

Last week, Ryerson University hosted a summit on LGBTQ suicides, sponsored by TD Bank. They brought experts from North America, and they came to discuss the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ youth. It's our responsibility to fight that in our schools, and that's what Bill 13—

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

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. This weekly report prepared for cabinet provides an ongoing update of incidents involving our air ambulance service—accounts of pilots not available, paramedics not available, confused dispatch calls. According to the Premier, he doesn't recall ever seeing this report, and so apparently the Minister of Health hasn't thought it important enough to distribute to her cabinet colleagues.

If the Premier and his cabinet don't consider this important enough, I would suggest it would be good mandatory reading for every member of the Legislature and the public. Will the Premier agree to make this weekly report public so that we can know what's going on at Ornge without having to wait for brown envelopes from frustrated civil servants?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, you know, when it comes to who's got credibility on this issue, we have the member from Newmarket–Aurora who is actually calling into question the credibility of the chief coroner of the province.

1110

It might be helpful to review the qualifications of the chief coroner of Ontario, Dr. Andrew McCallum. He's a

graduate of McMaster University's school of medicine. He served in the Canadian Forces as a medical officer and flight surgeon. He trained in emergency medicine at the University of Toronto. He is a fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. He was a regional supervising coroner for eastern Ontario, adjunct associate professor of emergency medicine at Queen's University—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —chief of emergency medicine and chief of staff at Hamilton Health Sciences—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark will withdraw.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'll withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): He is now warned. Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —and an associate professor of medicine at McMaster University.

Speaker, the member opposite is attacking the credibility and the ability of Dr. McCallum—

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

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I'm not sure which question the minister is answering, but it's not mine. And I will forgive the minister, because sometimes her notes get mixed up.

With every day that passes, the Premier, his minister and his cabinet are owning the scandal and mismanagement at Ornge. There's no reason for that. They boast of change, but most of the bodies who created the mess are still there. Rather than making meaningful change, we get meaningless legislation and redrafting of agreements.

Speaker, that's why 20 pilots and 11 aircraft engineers have left Ornge since January of this year.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, come to order.

Mr. Frank Klees: They see that nothing of consequence has changed, and they refuse to be part of a dysfunctional organization. The consequences will be an exodus of more good front-line people. When will the Premier admit—

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

Mr. Frank Klees: —that his minister is incapable of managing this file?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, it's clear that the member opposite is calling into question the professionals who are responsible for managing our health care system. He is doing this for clearly what is partisan political gain.

I think the people of this province are actually interested in knowing if Ornge is doing what they are supposed to be doing. Just yesterday, 49 people were

transported by Ornge; 42 patients were transported from one facility to another, six by land ambulance; six babies, pediatric patients, were transported by Ornge; and there was one incident where a helicopter attended to a scene.

Speaker, the front-line staff at Ornge are doing their job, despite the ongoing attacks of the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. When asked two weeks ago about the need to consult with the horse racing industry, the Minister of Finance claimed that he met with the Ontario Horse Racing Industry Association, saying that he “sought their advice on how to move forward.” In fact, the minister was referring to a \$500-a-head fundraiser he had held the previous night, and the individual he met with did not speak on behalf of OHRIA.

Does the Minister of Agriculture agree with the Minister of Finance’s new definition of consultation?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Well, obviously if you want to know the Minister of Finance’s position, you’ll have to ask him.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs will—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would offer all cabinet ministers and the Premier the advice that you just simply defer, as opposed to making any comments.

The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the OLG have, in fact, met with representatives of OHRIA throughout the process. I have met with them throughout the process. The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and I will have a very significant announcement with respect to transition assistance to the industry in the very near future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, the folks in the horse racing industry are waiting to hear from their Minister of Agriculture as to the effects of this on rural Ontario. Obviously he’s not involved in any of the consultations either.

The government has promised to start consultations on the horse racing industry—something they should have done when they put thousands of jobs at stake—but they’ve yet to provide a firm date. People in the horse racing industry have only heard words like “in due course.” That’s simply not good enough.

When exactly will the Minister of Agriculture give these hard-working, dedicated business owners a date for consultations so they can make the business decisions they need to make?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the representatives of the horse racing industry, in fact, have said things about the member opposite. He promised them, in public, that the NDP would support more money for the industry, and then, when push came to shove, they didn’t. You

stood publicly at Windsor Raceway and you said that you, as part of the deal, would demand funding, and they didn’t. We have said from the beginning there will be transitional funding to the industry.

The member’s trying to have it both ways. He goes out in public and promises one thing, and he comes in the House—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville will withdraw.

Mr. Steve Clark: I withdraw.

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan: He comes to the House, and not only do they not put something in the budget deal, they don’t even vote for the budget, for or against it. They’re trying to have it both ways.

We have undertaken transition funding. The Minister of Agriculture and I will have more to say about that in the very near future.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: My question’s for the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation. Minister, we know that job growth and economic recovery can only come if jurisdictions can demonstrate and harness innovation and entrepreneurship in order to boost growth and employment.

Last week, I had the opportunity to attend a great event here in Toronto on behalf of our University of Windsor Centre for Engineering Innovation—and I often meet with innovators and businesses in Windsor. We know and believe that a strong, innovative economy that stimulates growth and creates high-quality jobs is critical if Ontario’s economy is going to remain competitive. The opposition continues to criticize our approach to the economy and job creation.

Minister, you have said that you have an optimistic forecast for the future of Ontario’s economy. Can you tell me specifically: What is the government doing to help entrepreneurs drive innovation and expand their companies?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for the question. I want to say that I’m very optimistic about Ontario’s economic growth potential, driven very much by the innovative spirit of our business sector. Our Premier launched the province’s innovation agenda in 2005, and through it developed the Ontario Network of Excellence. This is a province-wide innovation initiative that helps—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew is now warned.

Hon. Brad Duguid:—entrepreneurs grow their ideas into businesses. No matter where Ontario’s technology-based businesses, entrepreneurs and researchers are located, Ontario’s Network of Excellence provides access to the programs and services that they need to bring their

ideas to market. By providing a team of experienced advisers, these centres help businesses through coaching, mentorship and assisting with setting goals.

I'm very proud, Mr. Speaker, that through the Ontario Network of Excellence, all kinds of innovators are collaborating to spark new ideas across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: Thanks for the answer, Minister. We know that today's globalized economy requires companies that are forward-thinking, agile and able to compete internationally.

The question that we often get asked is, in terms of yearning to access international markets and reach new customers, how do we bring those innovative products to market? What is our government doing to help companies expand into the global market and what evidence is there to show that the work of the Ontario Network of Excellence is actually working?

Hon. Brad Duguid: That is a really good question. Let me tell you about InGamer Fantasy Inc. Just three years ago, this company—which illustrates precisely how our province is a leader in innovation. InGamer is a social fantasy sports game played during live sporting events. InGamer's co-founders were film and television producers, and neither had business backgrounds, but through the Ontario Network of Excellence, they were able to bring InGamer to the marketplace.

InGamer is currently expanding its product offering in an effort to increase sales and distribution in preparation for the US launch in September. No one else in North America does what InGamer does. In fact, InGamer is the only digital tech company in the world represented by IMG, the world's largest independent producer and distributor of sports programming.

InGamer is just one example of how we've worked to foster innovation through Ontario's Network of Excellence. We wish them success in their US launch.

1120

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: To the Minister of Health: It was reported that the minister expressed considerable disbelief at revelations that the Mazza executive suite was still very much intact.

Let me introduce her to those Mazza loyalists, who were very much part of the Mazza scheme, and whose continued presence in the crystal palace are responsible for the exodus of pilots, paramedics and aircraft engineers who want nothing to do with the ongoing incompetence at Ornge: Dr. Sawadsky, the medical director who signed off on the medical interiors of the AW139s and who, the deputy minister testified, misled the ministry; and Steven Farquhar, the vice-president of operations, who was responsible for, among many other things, the decisions of signing off on those medical interiors, the downstaffing and launch policies and the mismanagement of the critical care land ambulance

program. These are the very individuals who have put patients' lives at risk.

How can the minister claim that there's a new management team when there's not?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, there is no question that there is a new board of directors in place at Ornge. There is no question about it that the senior leadership at Ornge is gone and is being replaced with new senior leadership.

There is also no question that the party opposite has been fully informed of changes at Ornge. Guy Giorno, Kelly Mitchell, Tom Lepine, Jacob Blum, Lynne Golding—I'm sorry, not Lepine—a number of prominent Conservatives have made it their business, Speaker, and have been handsomely paid to ensure that the members opposite actually were informed of changes at Ornge.

We are determined to continue to improve care at Ornge. We need Bill 50 to pass.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Just a little bit of advice for the minister: Perhaps she could consider asking for a list of the executives and managers responsible for medical and operational decisions before she took her so-called swift and decisive action. Then she could compare that to the current list of executives and managers who are responsible for those same responsibilities today.

Here are the names that she'll find on both: Dr. Bruce Sawadsky, medical director; Steve Farquhar, COO; Sandra Wilkie, quality assurance; Lindsey White, deputy director; Mark Repic, operations manager; Lisa Rutledge, operations manager. This is the reason that 20 pilots, 11 aircraft engineers and numerous paramedics have abandoned the embattled Ornge group since January of this past year: because they have seen that nothing has changed, and there are deep consequences.

This minister doesn't have control of her file. She needs to resign. Will you do it today?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I understand that—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland—Quinte West is now warned.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —the party opposite is playing a political game for partisan advantage. I can tell you that there are many issues in health care that I think would benefit from questions from the members opposite, but they continue to ask questions only on one narrow part—very important, but one part of our health care system.

I think it's important that we let the committee do its work. We have had 30 witnesses; the committee has sat for 24 hours. There are more hearings scheduled. Some of the witnesses being scheduled for upcoming hearings include Tony Clement, the former Minister of Health for the province of Ontario; Jacob Blum, former Ornge CFO;

and Bruce Tavender, Ornge VP of finance. A number of people, Speaker, are coming and testifying.

I look forward to the committee completing its work, but I absolutely must ask: Why are the members opposite blocking Bill 50? It's important legislation. We need it to pass.

ASSISTANCE TO FLOOD VICTIMS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. For over a week, the people of Thunder Bay have seen the worst of nature and the best of their neighbours. Record rainfall caused extensive flooding damage to private property and to public infrastructure. The people of Thunder Bay have pulled together to make the best out of a very bad situation, but they need a helping hand immediately from the province.

There's no question that Thunder Bay is a disaster area. When can city officials expect money to begin flowing to Thunder Bay from the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to take the opportunity—and I'm grateful that my honourable colleague has raised this matter—to commend the people of Thunder Bay and the surrounding communities who have worked so hard and pulled so well together at a time of great challenge.

I took the opportunity to speak with the mayor of Thunder Bay a few days ago and to encourage him and his council to apply for—I think they call it ODRAP—the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program. The council must pass a resolution in order to qualify for that.

We are, at this point in time, working with the community. The mayor placed a great deal of emphasis on a particular water treatment plant that represents a real challenge for them financially. I can say that we will continue to work hand in hand with the community to ensure that they get the support that they need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Last week, I wrote to the Premier's office calling for quick relief for flood-damaged Thunder Bay. City officials, first responders, utility crews and workers at the Atlantic Street pumping station have done an amazing job keeping people safe during the crisis.

The Red Cross, the Salvation Army, community groups and business associations are doing their part on the ground in that community. Neighbours are helping neighbours. When will the government step in with funding from the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program so that the people of Thunder Bay can get back to rebuilding their community?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to say that, as the Premier said, we are very much working with the people of Thunder Bay and the local members are working with their community. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is working with Emergency Management Ontario. Their assessment is going on. That's

what needs to happen before the applications to the ODRAP fund can take place.

There's actually nothing to prevent the city of Thunder Bay from taking action immediately, which I know that they are doing. But the assessments have to go on in order for the ODRAP fund to kick in. That's the process and what I am making sure—and I speak with my officials regularly on this. Our people are on the ground; Emergency Management Ontario is on the ground. Those assessments are going on so that those applications can be made once the council has taken their action.

SKILLS TRAINING

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, our government has worked hard to position our province to meet the demands of the new knowledge-based economy. In this new economy, Ontarians will be required to transition from the traditional work models to a knowledge-based economy that is ever-changing. The creativity and productivity of workers will be at the core of an organization's success.

Our government needs to ensure that we provide the help required for individuals to transition easily into our new economic landscape. This will help Ontario to continue to prosper.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, what will the minister do to help individuals transfer their skills, talents and wealth of knowledge into the new economy?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: My friend is quite correct. We have come out of this recession with a very different economy than when we went into it.

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's very clear that the opposition doesn't understand this, because they cut a half a billion dollars from universities and colleges. Through their entire period of time, university funding actually net declined, which created a crisis. Had they continued in power, we would have ended up without a recovery, because 70% of the jobs coming out of the recession require a university or college education and 81% of the folks who lost work during the recession did not have high school.

Our program, Second Career, right now has over 55,000 people who lost jobs, who didn't have those skills, who are now getting a university or college education and getting back into the economy, three quarters of them getting jobs through this program.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you, Minister. The government's investment in post-secondary education shows that our priorities are the same as all Ontarians'. Higher education is the single most important investment that our children need to succeed. Minister, we know that more than 70% of the jobs will require post-secondary education in the future, and our government needs to take effective action to

increase the skilled workforce in our economies. Otherwise, we will be unable to fill the jobs of the future.

How is our government working to encourage our students to transition from our best English-speaking schools to our world-class post-secondary institutions?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's interesting. There was a time when you would go and work on an auto assembly line; you probably dropped out of high school. Today, you have to go to an institution like UOIT or Durham College and you have to do a degree or a diploma in robotics or in design.

Mr. Speaker, now 96% of our university graduates are employed within two years of graduating. Eighty-five per cent of them get a job in their field. That is an unprecedented achievement here in Ontario. Employment gains for those with post-secondary education accounted for 86% of the job gains over the last two years. I'll repeat that again, Mr. Speaker: 86% of the job gains in the last two years, which is over 345,000 jobs, require university or college. So while people are looking for low-value jobs over there, we've been busy creating—

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

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question this morning is for the Minister of Health. Minister, residents of northern Ontario now realize the Ornge scandal has hit home. They understand that helicopters were purchased that don't measure up to the medical requirements, and they've learned that a \$6-million kickback was made to one of Ornge's for-profit companies for that purchase. Now they've learned a long list of fateful northern incidents involving the shortcomings of that helicopter purchase. Recently, three northerners have died because the interior design of the helicopter did not allow for proper care.

Minister, you've known about this problem. Why haven't you done anything to fix it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would caution all of us not to jump to conclusions without knowing the facts. We rely on the chief coroner of Ontario to ensure that patients are getting the care they need. We have a very clear process, Speaker, where we do investigations of every complaint—thorough investigations. We've seen evidence of that. The coroner is notified whenever appropriate. Under the law, Speaker, the coroner is notified, reviews the information, can request more information, can do his own investigation, can order an inquest.

I simply caution these members to remember: These are real people we're talking about; these are real families.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Again to the minister: Let's look at the facts revealed to your cabinet. Last July 17 in Capreol, a patient died after the Ornge paramedics couldn't perform CPR due to the helicopter's interior. Two days later, in Parry Sound, the single paramedic on board the helicopter informed EMS that due to the inter-

ior design of the Ornge helicopter, he was unable to perform CPR, and that patient died too. In Timiskaming on October 22, responding to the collapse of a 14-year-old boy, the single paramedic on board the Ornge helicopter could not perform CPR. This patient also died.

Minister, northerners are dying due to this scandalous helicopter purchase, and this is happening under your watch. Knowing this, will you now admit failure and resign your post?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Health?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said in the earlier question, we are talking about real people with real families. I think those families deserve to hear the truth. They deserve to trust the information they're getting.

I rely on the chief coroner of the province of Ontario. He has the credibility. He has the skills. He reviews these cases thoroughly.

For me, I am nothing short of appalled by the politicization of this issue. I think it's important that we take our responsibility seriously and let the coroner do his work.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, you announced yesterday that you're not going to move forward with major agencies as far as privatization without a vote in the House. Why do you treat northern Ontario differently and not allow the same rule to apply to northerners?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, we will be bringing forward amendments to committee on the budget bill to ensure that the process that we're already doing has enormous legislative scrutiny so that there's no uncertainty around that. Our undertaking is to look at all assets, all services of the government, make sure they're being run in a way that maximizes benefit to all Ontarians.

These are the choices we have made on a number of files. It's part of getting back to balance, part of being able to make investments in health and education, to protect the important gains we've made. I look forward to working with the third party on those amendments that will come forward on the budget bill.

I hope at the third reading opportunity when the budget bill comes up that, instead of sitting on their hands and doing nothing, the NDP will actually take a position.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You don't have to worry about New Democrats taking a position when it comes to the ONTC. We have said from the beginning that we oppose the privatization, and we urge this government to reverse itself.

But the question is this: You have agreed to insert in Bill 55 amendments that say that there's going to be a litmus test to any privatization. The first part is that you're going to have to refer the decision to committee and then to a full vote of this Legislature. You're then quoted in the paper as saying "no" for the ONTC, that you will not follow the same process.

If you want to have clarity, if you want to make sure things are done right, why do you have a rule that's different for northern Ontario than it is for the rest of this province?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Northern Development.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Speaker, let me quote from a letter to the editor that is in the Timmins Daily Press and posted 56 minutes ago:

"When the NDP had the chance to save ONTC by voting against the Liberal budget, they chose to abstain...."

"The NDP had the chance to kill the divestment by voting with the Conservatives...."

"They had that chance and yet they chose to do nothing."

"So please spare me your protests and ... rhetoric...."

"When one abstains, one chooses to sit on the fence. It says: 'You decide.'"

"However, when one abstains, it is similar to not voting and you have now lost the privilege"—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's never too late to warn someone and it's never too late to name someone.

You have 10 seconds to wrap up.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: "If you didn't feel it was an important issue to either support or deny, then you really cannot complain about the outcome, can you?"

That's from Chris Loreto from Timmins.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from London–Fanshawe on a point of order.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to correct the record from June 4, page 2677. I'd like to correct it to say, "Earlier this year, the government said that over 300,000 students would benefit from the grant." Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is a point of order, and the member is allowed to correct her own record.

DEFERRED VOTES

ACCEPTING SCHOOLS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 POUR DES ÉCOLES TOLÉRANTES

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1145.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On June 4, Ms. Broten moved third reading of Bill 13, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to bullying and other matters.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Duncan, Dwight	Miller, Paul
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milloy, John
Balkissoon, Bas	Forster, Cindy	Moridi, Reza
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Murray, Glen R.
Bentley, Christopher	Gélinas, France	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gravelle, Michael	Natyshak, Taras
Best, Margaret	Horwath, Andrea	Oraziotti, David
Bisson, Gilles	Hoskins, Eric	Piruzza, Teresa
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Prue, Michael
Broten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Campbell, Sarah	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Schein, Jonah
Chan, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Singh, Jagmeet
Chiarelli, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Sorbara, Greg
Colle, Mike	Mantha, Michael	Tabuns, Peter
Coteau, Michael	Marchese, Rosario	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crack, Grant	Matthews, Deborah	Taylor, Monique
Craiton, Kim	Mauro, Bill	Vanthof, John
Damerla, Dipika	McGuinty, Dalton	Wong, Soo
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	Wynne, Kathleen O.
DiNovo, Cheri	McNeely, Phil	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	Meilleur, Madeleine	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Jackson, Rod	Nicholls, Rick
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Chudleigh, Ted	Leone, Rob	Pettapiece, Randy
Clark, Steve	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Dunlop, Garfield	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Elliott, Christine	McDonell, Jim	Smith, Todd
Fedeli, Victor	McKenna, Jane	Thompson, Lisa M.
Hardeman, Ernie	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
Harris, Michael	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Hillier, Randy	Milligan, Rob E.	Yakabuski, John
Hudak, Tim	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 65; the nays are 36.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Haldimand–Norfolk

has given notice of his dissatisfaction with an answer to his question given by the Minister of Energy concerning the assignment of land-lease payments from the ORC land in South Cayuga to Six Nations. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

VISITOR

Mr. Bill Walker: Speaker, I'd like to offer a point of order. I inadvertently forgot to introduce another guest, Paul Osborn, from my riding.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further votes. This House stands adjourned until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1149 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: It's my distinct pleasure—I won't take Vic's message here, but I want to introduce Jan Westcott, who is a good friend to all of us here in the Legislature, and his guest, Robert McPherson. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Introduction of guests. The member for—

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Brampton West.

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

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to welcome Rob McPherson, who's the managing director of Bacardi Canada, and Jan Westcott, CEO of Spirits Canada. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I apologize to the member; I had a blank. I apologize.

Introduction of guests. The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, I'd just like to extend that. Robert McPherson is the president and CEO of Bacardi Canada, but it's also the 150th anniversary of Bacardi rum. Thank you for your great "spirit."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Eventually, I think if we put them all together, we'll have a members' statement.

The member from Scarborough—Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome my good friend and former mayor of the city of Toronto, Barbara Hall, of the Ontario Human Rights Commission. Welcome, Barbara.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome the former mayor.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FOREST FIRE

Ms. Laurie Scott: I would like to take this opportunity to comment on the heroic efforts of the many professionals and volunteers who were able to get Timmins

fire number nine under control after 13 terrible, anxious days for the people of this community.

For 13 days, the residents of Timmins were faced with the very real possibility of evacuation and the loss of their homes. This fire had become the largest forest fire in the Timmins area in more than 50 years. It was more than 70 kilometres long and covered nearly 40,000 hectares. The outpouring of effort and generosity from across the province and the country was outstanding.

Special thanks should go to the hard-working employees and volunteers of the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ontario Provincial Police, the Timmins police, EMS and fire services, the Canadian Red Cross, professional fire rangers from across Ontario, British Columbia, Manitoba and Alberta, water bombers from Ontario, Quebec, Alberta and BC, and the many other organizations and individuals who responded to the emergency with both time and donations.

As a result of the heroism and supreme efforts of the many, many people who answered the call for help, the homes, cottages, businesses, lifestyles and livelihoods of thousands of Ontarians were saved. As the PC critic for the Ministry of Natural Resources, I would like to extend a very sincere thank you to all those people and congratulate them on the successful outcome of their efforts.

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I rise today because we're coming to the end of this session. I want to acknowledge the incredible work of all of our incredible staff. We represent just the tip of the iceberg of an army of really hard-working EAs, LAs, constituency staff, ministry staff. I want to give a particular shout out to my staff: Gerard Di Trolio, Susan Rogers, who just had a birthday, Carly Jones and Bhutila Karpoche.

I also want to thank the ministry staff who worked on Bill 13, who worked with us, both Peter Tabuns and myself: Gabby Gallant and Howie Bender. These are the names you don't hear in this Legislature often, but these are the people who really make this place work. So I just want to say thank you for a lot of work this year. Thank you for long hours and weekends and time put in, often without recognition. This minute and a half is yours, and I dedicate it to you on behalf of all members here. Thank you for what you do, thank you for how you do it, thank you for when you do it. We do not forget in this Legislature that without great staff, we aren't great either. Here's to our staff.

BACARDI LTD.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Today I would like to speak about a great company located in Brampton, and a company that many of us are quite familiar with. The year 2012 marks the 150th anniversary of the founding of Bacardi by Don Facundo Bacardí Massó, in 1862. Bacardi has been operating continuously in Brampton since 1969, when it was opened by Alberto Bacardi, a member of the original

family. He came to Canada and liked Ontario so much that he decided to make it his home.

At Bacardi's Brampton plant, the blending and packaging they do add value to our local economy and provide jobs for about 100 people. In addition, \$16 million is spent annually by Bacardi Canada with other Ontario-based companies.

Bacardi Canada is also a good corporate citizen, supporting many civic projects, charitable organizations and local sports activities. In order to become more environmentally friendly, Bacardi switched from glass to PET plastic bottles for their popular summer drink, Bacardi Breezer. This initiative, as well as their carbon-neutral Break-Free Zones, reduced the company's emissions, equivalent to taking 200 cars off the road.

The work of the Bacardi facility in Brampton is a remarkable example of the success of an Ontario-based plant that contributes not only as a local economic driver but as a great corporate citizen while providing Ontario with great products.

I would like to congratulate Bacardi as they celebrate their 150th anniversary.

ACTON-GEORGETOWN WALK FOR ALS

Mr. Ted Arnott: On Saturday, I had the privilege of attending the Acton-Georgetown Walk for ALS. ALS, sometimes called Lou Gehrig's disease, is a rapidly progressive neuromuscular disease. Those suffering with ALS have their muscles slowly degenerate, eventually leaving them unable to move. Approximately 2,500 to 3,000 Canadians over the age of 18 currently live with ALS. It's an awful disease, for which there is currently no cure. Some 80% of those diagnosed die within two to five years.

But the compassion of our community gives cause for hope. The Acton-Georgetown walk has grown into the biggest ALS walk in Canada. Each year, hundreds of people show up to raise money to support those living with the disease and to fund ALS research. Last year's walk raised \$180,000. That accounts for almost 13% of the \$1.4 million raised province-wide. Over the past three years, the Acton-Georgetown walk has raised over \$600,000.

I want to congratulate everyone involved for the incredible success of this event. In particular, I want to recognize Dr. Jeff Sutherland and Scott Murray, two Georgetown residents who are suffering from ALS. They have done so much work to raise awareness of the disease, and it was amazing to see how many people came out on Saturday to support them and others afflicted with ALS and their families. I also want to thank the co-chairs of the walk, Mary Jo Knox and Rob Blackburn, and all the volunteers who made the event such a great success.

This month is ALS Awareness Month, and I would encourage all members to take the time to learn more about this disease and support efforts in their communities to raise awareness.

ENERGY CONTRACTS

Ms. Sarah Campbell: With the warm weather now here, many people across my riding and across Ontario will open their door to find a salesperson waiting outside, offering substantial savings on electricity and natural gas bills. These salespeople will use any trick in the book to make a sale, including guaranteeing savings, promising greener energy or even pretending to be from their local utility—anything to get the customer to sign on the dotted lines.

These companies say that these agents are rogue agents, yet I've dealt with hundreds of cases, in dozens of communities hundreds of kilometres apart, and the stories are all the same across the board. These companies do not provide a good or a service. The natural gas and the hydro that they sell are the same natural gas and hydro that people have had before. They do not protect the consumer. A 2009 exposé by CBC found that since being introduced, a grand total of zero people saved money on their hydro bills.

While it is possible to save money on natural gas, my experience has been that customers end up paying four to five times more than they would pay their local, publicly owned utility.

If these companies are offering a valuable service, they could use traditional means to peddle their wares and not resort to doorsteps, where they cannot be monitored.

I am today calling on the Minister of Energy to do the right thing, to stand up for consumers and ban the door-to-door sale of costly and misleading energy contracts.

TIM HORTONS CAMP DAY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Tomorrow at 7 o'clock in the morning, I'll be pouring coffee, which isn't all that unusual—everybody pours coffee in the morning—but I'll be pouring this coffee at Tim Hortons's head office.

I'm rising today to remind you about a wonderful event that will be taking place in all our communities. Tomorrow is Tim Hortons Camp Day. That means that every penny from all the coffee sales gets donated to the Tim Horton Children's Foundation.

On camp day, the coffee proceeds will help send more than 14,000 underprivileged kids to a Tim Horton Children's Foundation camp. They get to participate in a wide range of first-class programs and activities, and they build their self-esteem and leadership skills.

As many of you know, I'm privileged to have Tim Hortons's headquarters in my riding of Oakville. On numerous occasions, I've seen restaurant owners working closely with local youth organizations and schools. They select children between the ages of nine and 12 to attend a 10-day summer or seven-day winter camp.

Since 1975, more than 150,000 children have attended a foundation camp at no cost to them or to their families.

1510

I'd like to encourage all the members here, everybody watching on TV and all my fellow Ontarians to help send

a kid to camp by purchasing a cup of coffee tomorrow from your local Tim Hortons.

ST MARYS CEMENT

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm proud to rise today to recognize outstanding achievements made by an industry in my community, St Marys Cement.

This year, St Marys is celebrating its 100th anniversary. The anniversary is particularly significant because last fall, the St Marys plant in Bowmanville proudly became the first plant in North America that successfully achieved the ISO 50001 standard. The 50001 is a certification which helps businesses understand and modify their energy consumption and use. To date, St Marys has reduced electricity consumption by 11 million kilowatts. That's enough power to power 1,100 homes for a year. Not only is this good news for the planet, but it's also good news for the bottom line. Because of this work, St Marys has realized over \$3 million in savings, let alone the savings to our environment.

I would like to recognize the plant manager, Fabio Garcia, as well as Jim Storey, Jason Schultz, Brian MacDonald, Louis Kaye, Martin Vroegh and Wilson Little. All of them are members of the energy management and energy conservation committee with St Marys.

On June 7, the first ISO 50001 ceremony in North America will be held at the St Marys plant to recognize this important milestone. I'm confident that members of this House will join me in extending congratulations to the entire team at St Marys.

On a personal note, many of you may know that Wilson Little is retiring sometime this year—a great leader in the industry. I thank him for his service.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Reza Moridi: I rise here today to speak on an ongoing international issue. Lake Urmia in northwestern Iran is one of the world's largest salt lakes, but it is rapidly shrinking.

Lake Urmia is an internationally registered and protected lake by the UNESCO biosphere reserve. In recent years, it has been suffering from great amounts of drought as a result of the construction of dams on rivers feeding the lake. Satellite observations of Lake Urmia's surface show an overall decline of about four metres in its depth between 1992 and 2011.

Lake Urmia holds eight billion cubic metric tonnes of salt. According to experts, if the lake completely dries up, a vast amount of salt will be released into the region, resulting in an ecological, agricultural and social catastrophe in the Azerbaijani province of Iran. It will force millions of people to abandon their homes around the lake, and the vast majority of flora and fauna will be lost completely.

The Save Lake Urmia campaign is an international campaign dedicated to preventing the extinction of Lake Urmia and to encourage the Iranian government to take action for its preservation.

I urge my colleagues to take some time to promote this campaign to their constituents to help further raise awareness to save such an environmentally important asset of this planet.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Randy Hillier: In 1978, Scott Finlay from Napanee suffered a critical brain injury skiing during the Canadian downhill championships. His father, Hugh, has been trying to set up a facility in Napanee to serve those with acquired brain injuries for over 20 years.

I first met with the LHIN back in 2010, along with ministry officials and people such as Hugh Finlay. The LHIN has a funding envelope of over \$3 million annually for acquired brain injuries, yet they couldn't tell me where that money goes because they don't know.

A year ago this week, the LHIN finally submitted their plan to recommend and construct an ABI facility in Napanee. Months later, the Ministry of Health said that they needed to resubmit a plan that matched the ministry's vision for such facilities, so they did. Earlier this year, the LHIN resubmitted their new plan for the Napanee facility, which fulfilled all the MOH requirements. Yet there haven't been any new developments.

Like the Carleton Place hospital in my riding, this government has demonstrated that promises and proposals for health infrastructure are nothing more than 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 believe that political and electoral gain ought not to be the determining factors for health care funding.

SPECIAL REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House I have today laid upon the table the 2011 Annual Energy Conservation Progress Report, Volume One, from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario entitled A Review of the First Three Years of the Green Energy Act.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Reports by committees? You don't heckle the Speaker.

Reports by—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And you're still doing it.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk received a report on intended

appointments dated June 5, 2012, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I would like to start off by asking you to welcome with me the following people that we have in the House today with us. We have Barbara Hall, the chief commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission. She's joined by Nancy Austin, Michael Gottheil, David Wright and David Draper. The last three are with the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal. We also have Kathy Laird, who's with the Human Rights Legal Support Centre. I wonder if you could welcome those individuals for being here.

Applause.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to recognize a significant milestone in human rights. June 15 marks the 50th anniversary of the Human Rights Code of Ontario. Ontario has been and is a trailblazer when it comes to human rights. Fifty years ago we, in this province, enacted the country's first Human Rights Code. The code provides us with a framework of human rights goals and standards to aspire to, and it was a declaration to all that injustices simply would not be tolerated.

The code ensures that all Ontarians have equal rights and opportunities, and prevents discrimination and harassment based on things such as race or ancestry, place of origin, colour, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, disability and age.

Ontario has a proud history of protecting and advancing human rights and is recognized around the world as a pioneer. But, Speaker, we did not achieve this status overnight. As a society, we have worked hard for the gains we've made, never settling for the status quo and constantly pushing for change where change was needed.

We have come a long way over the last 50 years, aided by the efforts of many brave women and men. Take the story, for example, of Daniel Hill, the head of Ontario's first Human Rights Commission. Just a few decades ago, Mr. Hill found out first-hand how it felt to face racism in search of a place to live. Daniel Hill, a black man, had done something that was almost unheard-of at the time: He had married a white woman. When Hill and his wife, Donna, tried to rent their first apartment right here in Toronto, Donna had to bring a white friend with her to meet with the apartment owners. It took weeks before the Hills could sign a formal lease with that landlord.

There are many other examples that I could mention, stories such as the one I just related that illustrate how far we've come in the last 50 years. I think we can all be

proud of the leadership role that we here in the Ontario government have played in furthering human rights in Canada and for the great work that has been done and continues to be done. But we must continue to be vigilant in order to protect these gains that we have made.

Four years ago, our government took a further leadership role by introducing a new and strengthened human rights system that consists of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, which looks at systemic as well as overall policy issues; the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, which deals with individual claims and cases of noncompliance; and a new, robust Human Rights Legal Support Centre, which assists those who have cases in front of the tribunal. These three institutions are now working for the people of Ontario.

1520

We modernized and strengthened the system by giving people direct access to the decision-makers and offering free legal advisory and support services for those who feel that they've experienced discrimination.

To ensure that we remain on track, our government included a commitment to conduct an independent review of the system's progress after three years. Last year, Andrew Pinto, a prominent human rights and employment lawyer, was appointed to lead this important work. Mr. Pinto is currently looking at the implementation and effectiveness of these changes that we made three years ago and is preparing a report which I look forward to reviewing later on this year.

All of us can be proud of the fact that Ontario is leading the way in advancing human rights here in Canada. We have taken steps to strengthen our human rights system to better ensure dignity and justice for all Ontarians and ensure that each and every person has the right to live freely and be treated with respect. We have worked hard to make certain Ontario is a welcoming, tolerant and accepting place where our citizens are free to pursue their hopes and dreams. We owe it to individuals like Daniel Hill and their successors.

As we recognize the 50th anniversary of the Ontario Human Rights Code, I take this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to upholding human rights for every person in Ontario.

SENIORS' MONTH

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I rise today to celebrate and recognize seniors in communities across Ontario as we celebrate Seniors' Month. The theme this year is "Celebrate. Participate." This month, we want to celebrate our seniors and encourage them to participate in their communities, and we want to encourage all Ontarians to take the time to attend Seniors' Month events.

This theme also helps build momentum for the upcoming Ontario 55+ Summer Games taking place this August in one of the most beautiful cities in our province, one that I'm rather partial to, Brampton. These games happen every two years and were most recently held in Oshawa. The games will bring out some of the best of Ontario's active seniors, whether it's through tennis,

swimming, card games or pickleball. I'm excited about hosting the games this summer and hope to see all of you there in Brampton this August 14 to 16.

Seniors' Month also happens to be a great time to acknowledge the people who have worked hard and sacrificed so much to improve the quality of our lives. Whether it's a parent, a grandparent, an aunt, an uncle, a neighbour or a friend, we all know a senior who has provided helpful wisdom, guidance and support. These are the people who built this province, and many of them still continue to help make this province a better place to live.

In Brampton, we are fortunate to have a very influential senior, one that I am also rather fond of, someone who still works hard every day to shape our province: Premier Bill Davis. Premier Davis still sits on boards, still provides advice and still mentors many young leaders in our province. He even called me the other day to offer advice on ways we can improve our health care system. I'm certainly grateful that Premier Davis still has the desire and the energy to provide us with constructive ideas about how to make this province an even better place.

There are countless other seniors in all of our ridings who share Premier Davis's passion. They have earned the right to age with dignity, independence, and the freedom to make their own decisions. They have earned the right to live in communities that are age-friendly. They have earned the right to continue to make our province a better place to live.

For our part, the McGuinty government is taking action to help ensure that Ontario seniors have the support that they need to live safe, active, healthy lives. We are the first government in Ontario's history to regulate retirement homes. The first resident protections, including a Residents' Bill of Rights, will come into force this July 1.

We just announced a partnership with the Alzheimer Society of Ontario and police organizations to develop and deliver the province's first wandering prevention program. It's a program that will establish a standard, province-wide model to respond to emergencies when vulnerable seniors go missing and may be in danger. We're also helping caregivers through the proposed Family Caregiver Leave Act. And, because we know our seniors want to stay in their homes longer, our government's proposed healthy homes renovation tax credit, worth up to \$1,500 a year, would, if passed, help Ontario seniors live safely and more independently at home.

But Seniors' Month is, first and foremost, about celebrating our seniors and encouraging an active, healthy lifestyle. So I'm pleased, Mr. Speaker, to tell you that we support 273 elderly person centres, which offer recreational and wellness programming; we're helping raise awareness across Ontario about the universal benefits of age-friendly communities; and, each year, we celebrate the remarkable contributions of seniors through the Senior Achievement Awards.

I look forward to joining seniors across the province this month and over the summer to celebrate their con-

tinued contributions. I'm proud we have a month to recognize the important contributions of our seniors, but I feel compelled to say that we would be better served if we celebrated our seniors' accomplishments every day. After all, these are our parents, grandparents and the people who made Ontario what it is today. I ask you all to keep this in mind as you host or attend Seniors' Month events in your community.

ARTS AND CULTURE AWARDS

Hon. Michael Chan: On behalf of the McGuinty government, I'm pleased to take this opportunity to recognize 12 remarkable Ontario artists and arts organizations. The year 2012 marks the sixth year of the Premier's Awards for Excellence in the Arts, which celebrate artists and arts organizations for their innovation and creative talent. The passion they bring to their work inspires all Ontarians to participate in the extraordinary cultural life of our communities.

Our government knows how important artists and arts organizations are to Ontario. Our government understands the relationship between the arts and our quality of life. We know as well the very real value of the arts to the overall economy, because arts and culture build vibrant and creative communities, sharpen our competitive advantage, spur economic growth, and create a stronger Ontario.

The arts and culture sector is one of Ontario's fastest growing sectors. There are about 57,000 professional artists in Ontario. The creative sector contributes \$20 billion annually to Ontario's economy and employs over 200,000 people. The men and women working in the creative industries are vital to Ontario. They are key to a creative and innovative knowledge-based economy. Our government is proud to support and recognize artists for their important contribution to our communities and our economy.

This is why our government created these awards. It is a way for us to salute these extraordinary accomplishments. Today, I am proud to shine a light on our finalists, whose passion and creativity reflect the best in Ontario's cultural sector.

There were 163 nominations for the 2012 Premier's awards. The nomination process was open to all Ontarians, and the people of Ontario showed what a strong interest they take in our arts and cultural industries. An expert jury chosen by the Ontario Arts Council awards office evaluated candidates and selected 12 finalists and the awards' laureates.

Our finalists in the individual artist category are Lydia Adams, conductor; Shirley Cheechoo, visual artist, playwright and filmmaker; Lawrence Cherney, musician and founding artistic director of Soundstreams Canada; writer Dennis Lee; David McFadden, poet; and Richard Underhill, musician.

1530

Our finalists in the arts organizations category are the Images Festival, the Ottawa Chamber Music Society, Sudbury's Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario, Roseneath

Theatre Company, Toronto's Tarragon Theatre and the Hot Docs Documentary Film Festival.

Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, the laureates of this year's awards will be announced. We celebrate and applaud all of Ontario's great artists, poets, novelists, dancers, musicians, playwrights, painters, photographers and filmmakers, whose work empowers our province.

I invite all Ontarians to start to consider nominees for next year's awards. This is a great opportunity to give back and celebrate their contributions, achievements and unwavering commitment.

Ontario is home to one of the best cultural sectors in the world, now and into the future, and we, as Ontarians, are proud of it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to stand today and recognize the 50th anniversary of the Ontario Human Rights Code on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak.

The Ontario Human Rights Code gives all citizens of the province equal rights and opportunities while protecting them from discrimination. The code ensures that everyone is universally free from discrimination and harassment wherever they work or live in the province of Ontario.

Ontarians pushed for legislation to protect human rights following World War II, and the province was one of the first to introduce socially accepting legislation such as the Racial Discrimination Act in 1944, the Fair Employment Practices Act in 1951 and the Fair Accommodation Practices Act in 1954. In 1962, under Premier John Robarts, these acts were brought together under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Protecting people from discrimination and harassment is one of the most important ways to make sure everyone can reach their full potential and contribute in their communities. Over the past 50 years, systemic barriers within our institutions have been broken down and new opportunities and challenges have arisen. Yet all the while, the code has remained, and Ontario has now been a leader in protecting and advancing human rights for more than 50 years. For half a century, Ontario's public policy has recognized the dignity and worth of every person and provided equal rights and opportunities for all.

Speaker, every person has the right to be free from discrimination and harassment. That fundamental right is the foundation of the Ontario Human Rights Code, and it is with pride that I, my party and my leader acknowledge its 50th anniversary. Congratulations.

SENIORS' MONTH

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to mark Seniors' Month in Ontario on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Progressive Conservative caucus.

During this month, we recognize the thousands of seniors in Ontario who have contributed to building our society and who continue to make a difference in the lives of families and communities.

In my own riding, I think of people like John and Jeanne Pynn from Sutton, the first couple to be presented with the Ontario Senior Achievement Award—each for individual achievements. I think of Susan Boyne-Bird, who has just become the neighbourhood network ambassador for East Gwillimbury; Audrey Whitcombe, master gardener and active community volunteer with everyone from youth to seniors; and Margaret Hambly, entrepreneur and business owner, who has worked on many volunteer activities, including the very successful Georgian Bay Steam Show.

Seniors such as those I've mentioned—and I only have time to mention a few—are the heart and soul of our communities. They volunteer to help those in need, they work to improve our local quality of life, and many still run businesses that create jobs and prosperity.

ARTS AND CULTURE AWARDS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's wonderful to stand up and congratulate the finalists and to recognize and celebrate the talent that we have here in Ontario. The Premier's Awards for Excellence in the Arts are an annual award and something that is very worthwhile in the arts community. You know, 50 years ago, we remember the rock and roll artists that came along and created a new music genre. That's what we remember, more than we remember the development of the economy of the 1950s or the 1960s, even though that economy was an amazing thing. It was booming, and yet the things that people associate with the 1950s are the music, the arts that were generated there.

Fifty years from now, we will also remember the arts that were developed in this time. The recognition and the celebration of those arts is a worthwhile cause because that will define us as a people and it will define our society. It will remind people what we were all about.

The Premier's awards are something that I'm very pleased about. Hopefully they will continue long into the future and recognize the great talent that we have, not only in this city but across Ontario.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm very proud to rise today to speak on the 50th anniversary of the Human Rights Code. Ontario was a trailblazer in being the first province to enact the Human Rights Code, acknowledging that human rights are our birthright. They are rights that we are entitled to simply by being born, and we recognize that we must protect all people to ensure that they enjoy freedom from being discriminated against, that they can be accepted, not simply tolerated.

In being trailblazers in recognizing these rights, I challenge Ontario and I challenge us to move forward

and to be greater trailblazers by creating a more accessible system, by improving on the great work we've already done and ensuring that our system of the Human Rights Code and our tribunal is more accessible, more independent and not dependent on simply one ministry but is something open to the entire Legislature.

We can be trailblazers, we have been trailblazers, and we must acknowledge that a free and democratic society requires protection of our human rights, which are our birthright.

SENIORS' MONTH

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to respond to the minister's statement on seniors. I'm a firm believer that seniors are the backbone of our society. They represent our past, present and future. But more than that, how we treat our seniors is an excellent indicator of who we are as a society. I believe and my NDP caucus believes that all seniors deserve to live with dignity and respect.

Recent reports would indicate that the loss of dignity suffered by seniors has become epidemic in this province. When asked to take action on the recent reports of senior abuse, this government's response was to implement quick-fix solutions. This, coupled with the fact that a majority of seniors today are living at or below the poverty line, is unacceptable.

Seniors have become the forgotten generation, and we must do all we can to address this distressing fact. We must set aside our personal and political leanings and agree to prioritize Ontario's seniors by repaying their lifetime of hard work with the dignity they deserve.

ARTS AND CULTURE AWARDS

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, it is my pleasure to talk about the Premier's Awards for Excellence in the Arts. I'm very impressed by the nominees for the 2012 awards and congratulate them for their nominations on behalf of the NDP caucus.

However, I will suggest that we do more to encourage nominations from the farthest corners of our province. Eight of the 12 recipients are from the Toronto area. I'm sure that each member here knows of outstanding achievements by artists and art organizations from many different art disciplines who have contributed to arts and culture in Ontario over a significant period of time and who qualify for these awards. It is telling that the majority of these chosen are from Toronto, and it's likely due to the fact that they gain exposure. In order to bring art to a more public level, you need to be in a large metropolis. But just think about how far these financial awards would go in other parts of Ontario. Just think of how exciting it would be for artists to have the resources to stay in their community that might be a major inspiration for them. I'm sure that the Ontario Arts Council does a stellar job of getting the nomination packages out to every community in our province, but I

encourage this minister to work on an expansion of these awards to ensure that artists who can't or don't want to move to the big city will have an increased opportunity to be recipients of this award.

I encourage every MPP in this Legislature to seek out qualified artists and art organizations in their own ridings and to be sure that they are nominated for the 2013 awards. The 2013 nomination deadline is December 3, 2012.

PETITIONS

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've affixed my signature.

1540

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. John Vanthof: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I have a petition signed by some members of the Canadian Auto Workers in my riding. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Canadian automobile industry is of vital importance to Ontario; and

“Whereas each day auto workers produce millions of dollars worth of product; and

“Whereas the sector accounts for thousands of jobs in Ontario; and

“Whereas the auto workers of the CAW have asked the federal government and the provincial government to develop a national auto strategy;

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

“To request that the province of Ontario call on the federal government to develop a national auto strategy to support the Canadian auto sector and to develop an overall strategy for keeping good jobs in Ontario and Canada.”

I agree with this, will sign it and send it down with Andrew.

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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

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

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

“Whereas individuals with intellectual disabilities and the organizations who support them fought for years to break down barriers and live in inclusive communities; and

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

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

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

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

SCHOOL CLOSURES

M^{me} France Gélinas: It pays to get up early. I have this petition that was gathered by Anita Gibson, a constituent in my riding, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ministry of Education in their ... accommodation review guideline mandates that the AR process ‘ensures that where a decision is taken by a school board

regarding the future of a school, that decision is made with the full involvement of an informed local community and it is based on a broad range of criteria regarding the quality of the learning experience for students’ yet this was not the case for the decision to close Long Lake Public School;

“Whereas the Ministry of Education in their ... AR guideline mandates ‘In recognition of the important role schools play in strengthening rural and urban communities and the importance of healthy communities for student success, it is also expected that decisions consider the value of the school to the community, taking into account other government initiatives aimed at strengthening communities,’ yet in the case of the decision to close Long Lake Public School no such consideration was made;

“Whereas the community participation in the mandated process was extremely limited because none or limited financial, programming, funding, timing, and transportation information was made available by the board to the stakeholders, and this dearth of data had the effect of limiting the participation of both the parents/guardians of students at the affected school, and the wider community, with the result being neither were represented in the final outcome; and

“Whereas the current Education Act of Ontario, very undemocratically, provides school boards with the absolute power to close any school they choose with no avenue of appeal available to anyone, not even members of their own communities;

“Whereas many other communities across Ontario are now encountering very similar behaviours by their school boards;

“Whereas this represents a major paradigm shift in the cultural and historical context of the provision of education in Ontario, implemented without any political debate or public discussion about the merits and risks inherent in adopting such a model;

“Therefore we ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario” to put

“(1) An immediate moratorium on all disputed school closures resulting from the” AR “process and continuing until at least June 30, 2015; and

“(2) The immediate striking of a truly independent third party body with the authority to review and reverse all disputed school closures found to be detrimental to the community or in conflict with other provincial programs or regulations; and

“(3) Revision of the Education Act to require school boards to work with their municipalities and communities to ensure school closures comply with the principles and practices of sound community and educational planning.”

I’m sorry it was a bit long, but it was very important for my constituents to be heard. I fully support it and will give it to page Sam to bring to the Clerk.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas all Ontario students have the right to a school environment where they feel safe, welcome and respected;

“Whereas school boards must take preventative measures against bullies and issue tougher consequences for those who participate in bullying;

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

“Whereas all schools should support students who want to lead activities that promote acceptance and respect for all, including a group named a gay-straight alliance;

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

“That Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, 2012, be adopted so that students across Ontario are protected from the harmful effects of bullying and given every opportunity to succeed in school.”

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

INVASIVE SPECIES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition with 900 signatures to do with invasive species. This is an Asian carp petition to the province of Ontario and the federal government of Canada. It reads:

“Great Lakes residents, both US and Canadian, alarmed that Asian carp are considered the most imminent threat to the Great Lakes, are calling for an effective long-term solution. Currently, bighead and silver carp are the dominant fish species in the Mississippi and the Illinois Rivers. They are voracious eaters capable of eating up to 20% of their body weight each day and growing up to 110 pounds. They consume plankton, algae and other microscopic organisms, stripping the food web of key food for native fish. There are no fish in North America large enough to eat adult Asian carp, and they produce many offspring that grow quickly, rapidly becoming too large for native predators.

“The Great Lakes Commission and the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative recently presented a report to their members, the Great Lakes states, provinces and mayors and the region’s stakeholders and decision-makers. Their report outlines viable solutions to the threat from Asian carp and other invasive species moving through Chicago-area waterways while also maintaining and enhancing the system’s benefits. The report shows that separation is achievable from an engineering perspective and will advance a long-term solution that safeguards the Great Lakes and Mississippi river basins from aquatic invasive species.

“We, the undersigned Canadians, do hereby petition our provincial and federal governments to immediately begin to work with the Great Lakes Commission and the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative to provide assistance to ensure that the process begins as soon as possible to separate the Chicago waterways with

permanent barriers to prevent Asian carp from getting into the Great Lakes.”

I do support this initiative.

1550

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I have another 1,000 signatures here for a petition regarding auto insurance. It reads as follows:

“Auto insurance reform needed ...

“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 reforms that protect consumers, ensuring that premiums are based on a fair assessment of a driver’s known ability and history, rather than unfairly targeting drivers on the basis of where they live.”

I strongly agree with this petition, affix my signature and will present it to young page Tameem.

ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas there are an estimated 181,000 Ontarians diagnosed with Alzheimer’s and related dementia today, and that number is set to increase by 40% in the next 10 years;

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

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

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

I agree with this petition and sign my name.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim McDonnell: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas industrial wind turbine developments have raised concerns among citizens over health, safety and property values; and

“Whereas the Green Energy Act allows wind turbine developments to bypass meaningful public input and municipal approvals;

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

“That the Ministry of the Environment revise the Green Energy Act to allow full public input and municipal approvals on all industrial wind farm developments; and

“That the Minister of the Environment conduct a thorough scientific study on the health and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines.”

I agree with this petition and will sign it.

TOURISM

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition that 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 Sam to deliver.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Bob Delaney: I’m pleased to present this petition on paved shoulders on provincial highways. It’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and I join with my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka in reading it. It reads as follows:

“Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary provincial highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

“Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

“Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

“Whereas” a private member’s bill proposes “a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

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

“That private member’s Bill 9, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated provincially owned highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process.”

Speaker, as one who has biked through my life, I understand the importance of—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The time for petitions has ended.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HEALTHY HOMES RENOVATION TAX CREDIT ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE CRÉDIT D’IMPÔT POUR L’AMÉNAGEMENT DU LOGEMENT AXÉ SUR LE BIEN-ÊTRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 9, 2012, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement a healthy homes renovation tax credit / *Projet de loi 2, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts en vue de mettre en oeuvre le crédit d’impôt pour l’aménagement du logement axé sur le bien-être.*

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you very much, Speaker. This is a long recess. I believe the last time I debated this bill was May 9. I recall—maybe I moved adjournment of the House at that time and never came back. So I’ve almost forgotten what I was talking about in the initial 24 minutes.

The first thing I’d like to advise the Chair of is that my colleague from Leeds–Grenville will be sharing my time with me.

As I was saying when I was rudely interrupted by the bells on May 9, we’re discussing seniors and the need for the healthy homes tax credit, Bill 2. Because it is so long ago, I actually will take a look at Hansard and give a brief synopsis of where I was positioning myself and our party.

Seniors—the definition being 65-plus—qualify for this tax credit proposed by the bill. That’s about 13% of Ontario’s population in total, or about 1.8 million people broadly speaking. But there are some very mitigating circumstances, one of which is that the median senior income in Ontario—meaning that most seniors living in

Ontario are in this category—is \$25,000 per individual and \$45,000 per couple. You can see where I'm going with this. That translates into approximately \$2,000 to \$3,700 of income—gross income—per month, depending upon whether you're a single senior or part of a senior couple. In order to qualify for the maximum tax credit of \$1,500, which is 15% of the maximum expenditure of \$10,000, a senior actually has to have \$10,000 to spend. That is the problem. That really is the problem, as one of my colleagues has said. So they have to have that. When the senior spends the \$10,000, he or she actually winds up out of pocket to the tune of \$8,500.

So the point I was making at that time and the point I want to reiterate to set the tone for the rest of the debate today is that that takes that 1.8 million people and whittles it down to a very, very, small piece of the overall pie in terms of the number of people who actually could participate. That's the point of our party in saying that we find it hard to support a bill like this. As much as we are oriented towards helping seniors—and I think the record on that speaks for itself—this is an inappropriate approach.

What you've got is this global universe of 1.8 million; you cut through the first layer and you find the people who can actually afford it. Now, you have to think about that: If you were 70 years old, for example, in 2008-09, you would have been a person who may very well, if you look at that generation, have been retired—retired in the context of yesteryear, not retired as we see it in the future, where I think we're all going to have to work until we drop, but a 70-year-old, in 2008-09, living on retirement income, which is presumably made up of pensions and dividends that were based on an economy that was buoyant until that time and were decimated. So what happened is—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Will you be quiet, please, sir. Thank you very much. I really appreciate it.

You wind up with dividend income or interest income and you then had to dip into the principal. You dipped into the principal, and you were left in the situation they find themselves in now, which is a reduced principal and a reduced income on a go-forward basis, and therefore a reduced ability to get involved in some program like this. Not only that, but not any renovations qualify; only renovations that the McGuinty government has decided qualify.

So you're talking about healthy homes. What's a healthy home? A healthy home is a home that has to be equipped for somebody who is verifiably incapable of, for example, mounting the stairs, climbing into a bathtub, that kind of thing. So there's a handicap involved, and that person can't be on something like ODSP, or Ontario disability.

So you cut it down, you cut it down and you cut it down; how many people do you suppose actually qualify to receive this? So our party's position was, "Okay, if you wanted to help seniors, then why don't we talk about helping seniors on a more broad-based basis than this?"

Nobody seems to be able to come up with a solution to how to address that aspect.

I said, and I'll put Hansard down in a moment, "Who are you guys kidding? Where's the take-up on this?" That is the notional direction in which I was heading when we adjourned on May 9.

1600

Something has come up between then and now that really mitigates against this bill, and that is the issue of how we afford it. First of all, we were given information by the government of the day on how they would fund this. We were given figures of \$60 million for the period elapsed to date, and \$135 million—approximate—in ensuing years, all of this to be funded from existing programs so that it wouldn't be new spending. I take that with a bit of a grain of salt, but the fact of the matter is, that's what we were given.

In the intervening period of time, we've seen a couple of things transpire. We've seen a negotiation with the socialist party on the basis of what their needs were, to add a couple of amendments which changed the dynamics of the budget with which we were presented. More recently, without any knowledge on the part of anybody I know on this side of the House, in either that party or our own, we hear of the Premier talking about a change in the aspect governing privatization. I'm talking about the budget. So he's going to climb down and take the Liberal Party down on what appears in something called schedule 28 of Bill 55, now before committee. Schedule 28 deals with the powers of the cabinet that would allow for privatization of certain aspects of government and the ability to contract out by tender. We thought that was a pretty good idea.

If you're not going to do that, then what you do—and this does relate to this bill—is you change the dynamics of the budget again so that we no longer can look at the revenue figure that was supplied to us when the budget was tabled on March 27 and take that as gospel, or even as a legitimate estimate, and we cannot look at the cost figure that was tabled against it and look at that as a legitimate estimate, because there are costs against it that have come up that we also can't estimate, which are the costs of not privatizing some of the things that the government was anticipating in the formulation of the budget.

Everything that we have to debate here—and we're debating Bill 2, which carries costs with it—is in question. I don't know if it's \$60 million to date or \$135 million in ensuing years, and I don't know what programs they're going to shift to get that money to fund this program. I don't know any of that. I don't even know—and nobody knows, except maybe, secretly, the government—what the real revenue figure is for the budget for the year that we're now in or what the real expenditure figure is. Most significantly, we have no idea what the deficit is going to be, and it would be nice to know, given the fact that we are all here, all 107—I guess 106 right now—having to vote on a budget that already is covering a year that began on April 1. That's a problem,

and it's a problem in debating any bill that carries a cost, and this bill carries a cost.

Getting back to the crux of the bill, I don't see how the bill actually helps seniors in any kind of broad-based way. I really don't see how the members on the other side, on the Liberal side, the government side of the House, could convince themselves otherwise. Not only does this bill not help seniors; it has no meaningful impact whatsoever on the economy, notwithstanding the protestations of the government of the day. It doesn't really encourage any kind of broad-based renovation projects and it doesn't really create jobs on any kind of a broad basis. The two biggest single stumbling blocks for my party in supporting the budget in the first place were: You don't have a jobs plan and you don't seem to be able to control spending. What am I talking about right now? I'm talking about a bill that underscores the fact that the jobs they're talking about inherent in this bill are some numbers somewhere, somehow—we don't know what they are—and they're spending some money against the budget that we don't know the value of. That is a situation that I called absurd and, indeed, it was absurd.

I also recall that, about the time that we stopped debating this on May 9, I had this unique ability to speak and think at the same time on two completely different subjects. I was thinking how much I was boring myself talking about this bill. But I digress, because the fact of the matter is that we're being serious here. We have a jobs crisis in the province of Ontario. It's not something that we fabricated and it's not something that our friends on the government side even deny. We have a jobs crisis in the province of Ontario, and it is not overstatement to say that we are in dire financial circumstances in the province of Ontario. All government efforts have to focus on creating opportunities for businesses that will result in new jobs for Ontarians. Instead, the Liberal government spends its time doing what? Political promotion. What we're talking about here is promoting half measures—and I think I'm being generous when I call them half measures—like Bill 2. This doesn't only give me pause; it concerns me, because the fact of the matter is, Speaker, as is well known to you and well known to everybody here who reads statistics—and we all have to—we are at a point in Ontario where we're pushing on 600,000 unemployed. We hear more bad news every week; indeed, it seems like every day. We heard about General Motors in Oshawa, a couple of days ago, adding 2,000 more next year. These are great jobs that are leaving the province.

Under those circumstances, I think we have to be looking at the overall situation. We have to look at things on a grander scale. We're facing the highest level of unemployment in recent history—7.8% currently; 64 months, I believe it's 65 now, where we have been at the tail end of Canada, all provinces and territories, in terms of percentage unemployed—no hope of this number dipping below 7% until 2015. It means a number of things. It means that Ontarians are in the depths of an income crisis. I know, I know; the Liberal government doesn't even begin to understand that concept. They keep

raking in money from taxpayers, individuals, businesses, and what do they do? They spend it.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Shurman: That's right. The McGuinty government has raised taxes on Ontarians to such a degree that even in the depths of recession, government revenues have actually increased. I'll say that again, because I think the people who are watching outside of this place have to understand something. As much as we have a financial problem in Ontario, we have to understand what created that financial problem. It wasn't a lack of revenue, because even in the worst year we had, which was 2008-09, when, admittedly, the world was in a crisis from which we haven't fully emerged—certainly, the depths of it were in that particular year—even in that year, Speaker, this province took in more money than it did the prior year, and the year after that it took in more money again. We have always increased revenue in every single year of Ontario's existence.

In 2011-12, we took in a record of \$108.3 billion, and despite that, this government has still managed to put Ontario into record debt and on the path towards what? A deficit that has been estimated as—2017-18—\$30 billion.

Mr. Steve Clark: Shame.

Mr. Peter Shurman: That's correct; \$30 billion, and it is a shame.

We don't have a revenue problem in Ontario. We have a spending problem in Ontario, and we might as well give it a name, so I'm going to name it the McGuinty factor.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Well, that's what it is. You put bills in front of this Legislature like this and you say, "Look what I'm going to do," because you made a political promise during an election that sounded quite nice and serves very, very few on a very small basis.

I know that the NDP will support this bill in the end, but I also know that in committee when this was considered—and I sit on that committee—they shared the same concerns that we did. It wasn't broad-based enough. They can speak for themselves, but the point is that I think we see through what this bill is about and why it was tabled.

We were talking about the McGuinty factor. Ontarians, unlike the government, are in the depths of an income crisis. They've lost their jobs; they've had their wages cut; they've given up shifts. Many of these Ontarians are taking care of aging parents, grandparents. Creating conditions in which businesses can thrive and expand would result in good jobs for Ontarians so that they actually could take care of their families.

If you want to really do what this bill purports to do, which is to provide for people who are less capable of creating what they need in their homes to allow them to stay in their homes, the best way you can do it is to create the conditions for employment in Ontario so that the economy and the people who are generating that economic activity for both the province and for themselves can take care of their responsibilities, which include their

families, family commitments. Innovation, accountability, fiscal responsibility on the part of the government are crucial to achieving that objective. At a time like this, when we are literally standing on the brink of an economic disaster—and I'm not overstating the case when I say that—in the province of Ontario, every move counts and at all times the government must make the decisions that will deliver the biggest bang for the taxpayers' buck.

1610

I'm going to defer to my colleague from Leeds–Grenville in a moment, but I want to end on that note by saying that this bill, while it does do something—which I'll describe as a pittance for a very small section of the seniors' community—is not broad-based enough to say that it does something for a segment of the population that is always on the short end of the stick, notwithstanding the fact that it has contributed arguably the most to what our province is. They lived through bad times; they lived through good times. Now they're in bad times again, and they're paying a dearer price than the rest of us. Some of us have taken a big hit in our salaries; some of us haven't got any salaries. The people who are at the part of the age spectrum that this bill might have served had it been more broad-based are people who are not in a position to go out and earn salaries again, much less get increases. They've suffered from decreases as a result of the economy that we have, and that we did have on a worldwide basis, and it was mitigated in a negative way by the actions or inactions of the McGuinty government, and this basically pours salt on a wound.

With that, Speaker, thank you very much for the time, and I defer to my colleague.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide some comments on Bill 2, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act. I first want to give credit to the member for Thornhill. Earlier in his remarks, when he spoke prior to today on this bill, he mentioned a private member's bill that he had brought forward twice that would essentially allow seniors to stay in their homes and provide a tax deferral on their property. I think it set a record for the only co-sponsored bill that was never supported by all three parties. He tabled it the first time and I think it was soundly defeated, but he listened to all the comments that were made in the Legislature, repackaged the bill, went to a New Democrat and a Liberal, brought it back forward, and then the Liberal government, without notice, came and defeated it. But surprisingly, lo and behold, this concept that the member for Thornhill brought forward to allow seniors to defer payment of their municipal property tax surfaced during the election as a campaign promise of Dalton McGuinty and the government.

So I agree with Mr. Shurman, the member from Thornhill, that if the government was serious about bringing a much more broad-based support mechanism for seniors, I suggest that that original bill that he tabled—not once, but twice—that had support from the three parties, should have been at least for consideration.

Again, I hope that during the questions and comments and the other rotations as we debate this bill, the government will come forward and talk about that concept, because if it was good enough for them—as we say when you are going to copy someone's suggestion, that's a great form of flattery. However, I'd love to see the government put something on this floor, because unlike this bill, Mr. Shurman's bill had no cost, certainly not the cost that we're seeing with this bill, and even more so when we look at the amendment that was tabled.

I look at my own constituency office and I don't have a flood of emails or phone calls on this item.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Did you have one?

Mr. Steve Clark: I had a complaint, but I'll get to that in a moment. I brought it up during second reading, so hold that thought.

I don't think it's because seniors don't have very worthwhile projects in their homes in terms of renovation. It's that the reason they can't do those renovations is because they can't afford to, based on the fact that, as the member for Thornhill mentioned, you have to spend \$10,000, or up to \$10,000, and who has that money lying around? The reason they don't have the money lying around? I think it's fairly simple: It's the policies of this government, things like the HST, that have caused great problems with our senior population. Their energy policy, that has caused many seniors to fear that they'd have to leave their homes—those are the kinds of comments that I get at my constituency office. People are afraid, with the cost, to keep the lights on, as opposed to having \$10,000 lying around to spend on some of those types of improvements. Forget about putting a chairlift or an accessible washroom in; seniors want assistance to keep the lights on.

In terms of the HST, I wanted to look back at Hansard, and I'm glad my colleague the member for Durham is here in the chamber beside me, because he always manages to get to the heart of the reason why this bill is an abysmal failure. As the member for Durham noted in the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, if a senior in the province did have the luxury of having \$10,000 to spend on a project that qualifies for this rebate—and there are a number of very worthwhile improvements that don't qualify—even if they did qualify, they would only get \$1,500 back. To some, that may sound like a great deal; to others, not. But the member for Durham noted that, thanks to this government's hated HST, they're actually paying \$1,400 in the McGuinty sales tax on that \$10,000 of work. So at the end of the day, they've got about 100 bucks.

I think that really cut to the heart of the problem, and I want to thank the member for Durham for bringing that point up in the standing committee, because I think it's a good one.

In terms of this bill—you read the bill, and I've read the bill and looked at the amendments, and I will get to the amendments in a moment—it makes me remember another bill that we're debating. We're having hearings this week on Bill 19. The minister at that time stood and

she trumpeted that the legislation in Bill 19 would be a great protection to tenants from soaring rent increases, when she knew when she said that that it really does nothing of the sort. It may save tenants a few extra pennies, but when we look at the pennies that they would save because of that bill, I suggest that the first time that person received their energy bill, those pennies would be gone.

The government knows, in terms of Bill 2, that there are very few seniors in the province, the 1.8 million folks who are over 65, who are even in a financial position to spend \$10,000, not when you consider, as the member for Thornhill mentioned earlier this afternoon, that for the average senior in this province, the median income is about \$25,000 per individual and approximately \$45,000 per couple. Again, in addition to the income issue, there are a number of repairs that seniors would want to do that just would not be deemed eligible by the government.

During second reading, back on February 21, I talked about one of my constituents, Ron Stewart, who runs a small business called Stewart Property Maintenance, a business that, because of this government's policy with the HST—it has been devastating to his home service business. He falls above the \$30,000 threshold. He provides very important services to seniors in our community. He finds that the HST is making it difficult for seniors to afford his services and also for him to find people to work in his riding. He has to charge an additional 13% on grass cutting, snow removal, house-keeping—those are vital services that I think this government has overlooked when you have the opportunity for someone to stay in their home. I know that Ron was very concerned, that he just didn't see that there was a large uptake for this particular bill from his clients, and I have to tend to agree with him.

There's another issue that I want to bring to the table, and it's a story of note on the HST in the Vancouver Sun. It makes a couple of points that I believe are very relevant to the debate today.

1620

First, it pointed to the annual BMO Home Renovation Report, which noted that across Canada, only 51% of homeowners indicated that they are planning a home renovation project this year, and to members in this House, that is 11 percentage points below last year's total. What that tells me is that when you poll the full spectrum of homeowners and find that barely half are planning to do any work on their home, surely there's a very tiny, very slim percentage of seniors who (a) have the financial wherewithal to undertake a project, and (b) would be considering the kind of project that would qualify under Bill 2.

But what perhaps is most interesting from that article, Speaker, are the comments from Peter Simpson, who is the president and CEO of the Greater Vancouver Home Builders' Association. As we all know, the HST era in British Columbia is rather short-lived. It's going to, as I'm sure the members opposite know, disappear next year. I would have loved to be able to have the mech-

anism here in this province that they had in BC, to be able to mobilize constituents, to be able to have that direct democracy that they've had since 1991. I think it would have been a tremendous thing to see how that evolved in British Columbia.

But back to Mr. Simpson. Mr. Simpson had this to say about why so many BC residents in the survey indicated that they aren't planning renovations this year: "It's possible the upcoming change from the harmonized sales tax back to the provincial sales tax and goods and services tax might be causing people to think about putting off renovations until next year."

So there you have it. If the government wants an answer on why Ontario seniors are forgoing the kind of renovations necessary to keep them in their homes, maybe, just maybe, they should look in the mirror. I think that's an extremely important point. So many of my constituents continue to express the concern, the same concern that the member for Durham brought up at the hearings for this bill.

The other issue that came up when I was reading the bill, when it came out of committee, is (3.1), information concerning the tax credit, and I think it was an amendment—was it a socialist amendment?

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you, the member for Thornhill.

And (3.1) says:

"An individual who wishes to claim the healthy homes renovation tax credit may contact the Ministry of Finance to obtain information concerning the tax credit, including the following:

"1. A list of appropriate organizations that may be able to provide any of the following:

"i. General advice about qualifying for the tax credit.

"ii. Review of quotes from contractors to ensure that the quotes are reasonable.

"iii. A list of experienced contractors who have successfully worked on projects that have qualified for the tax credit or any similar tax credits."

Then, finally, the second section:

"2. Any other information that may assist the individual in determining whether he or she may qualify for the tax credit."

So I'm not particularly sure, and perhaps the members opposite in the government could address, if this bill moves forward—and I suspect that it will pass with the government and the third party's support—how that is going to work. I'm still unsure how this is going to operate, whether it's going to be done by a call centre. I can't understand the costs, and I don't know how that's going to impact the government's allocation for this bill.

The member for Thornhill made some exceptional points with some of the schedules that the government now wants to walk away from in the budget and how they're going to pay for that. I think it's very important, as we move forward with the debate on Bill 2, that someone on that side of the House, or maybe someone who proposed it, can explain how the mechanics of this

are going to work. When the federal tax credit legislation was in effect, I don't believe my federal counterpart got those types of calls on who would qualify.

It's going to be interesting to see how this information—it appears in the preamble, I believe. It mentions that the ministry—yes, here it is, at the bottom of the explanatory note:

“An individual who wishes to claim the tax credit may contact the Minister of Finance for information about the tax credit, including the information specified”—and it lists all the subsections.

At the bottom, it says, “The Minister of Finance shall ensure that the appropriate annual financial reports compare the anticipated cost of the credit for a year against the actual cost of the credit for the year.”

Mr. Peter Shurman: Because they don't know.

Mr. Steve Clark: It would be—yes, absolutely. They wouldn't know.

I think it's important that someone take time to explain that to members of this House, because I think it's very important as we move forward to the debate.

The other issue that I spoke about earlier, and that I believe needs discussion, was the fact that there are some non-eligible renovations, things like new windows, replacing insulation, new heating or air conditioning. Those are the type of things that I think are pretty crucial to people staying in their homes, especially given the huge increase because of this government's failed energy policy that's causing concern in our senior population about how they're going to stay in their home. How are they going to have a healthy home? How are they going to be able to stay in their homes?

By not including things like windows and insulation, heating and air conditioning, it's quite ironic to me that when it comes to renovations that would cut down that expense, to have a more efficient system in your house to heat, to have those critical items like new windows or better insulation, things that would ultimately reduce your energy consumption—we had a policy during the election that seniors loved, which was this whole smart meter tax machine scheme that the government had, to make it optional. I had so many seniors whom I spoke to, both prior to and during that writ period, who were really concerned. I had one that I read into Hansard. It was a letter to the editor, where he talked about having to be a senior vampire, where he had to talk about doing all his business at night and sleeping during the day because he was home and he couldn't adhere to the McGuinty way with the smart meter tax machine.

To add insult to injury, now you've got some very good renovations on insulation and windows that wouldn't even qualify. Not everyone can have a chairlift. Not everyone can do the renovations that are included in this bill, and I think the government has really missed the mark.

We had Mr. Shurman's bill, which was tried not once but twice, that would have provided that broad base. We had a vote right here in the Legislature—Mr. Mantha, Bill 4, the private member's bill—where all of us on this

side of the House made a decision for broad-based relief that would help all seniors. Mr. Shurman's, with some qualifications, would help low-income seniors. This bill would only help those who have \$10,000, give them only \$1,500 back, and with the extra HST cost—

Mr. Peter Shurman: It's a wash.

Mr. Steve Clark: Yes, it would make no difference.

However, those same seniors would continue to show up at our constituency offices, would continue to express the same concerns, concerns that we dealt with in the first week in the Legislature on Bill 4. I had so many people come up to me after that fateful day, a day that I couldn't believe. We had the Premier here on private members' business. It was the first time that I had ever known about the fact that the government would be here in their place voting against something that clearly was the will of the people. You talk about an issue that people were so concerned about; that was one issue.

Over and over and over again, the failed policies of this government on green energy, the fact that they're not listening to local government—and as the critic for municipal affairs and housing, I certainly hear loud and clear from my municipal colleagues that they're fed up with this government.

The other issue that has hit my inbox this week—hundreds of emails in the last 48 hours—is on the community start-up benefit that the government has foisted upon municipalities to develop a housing strategy. My office is right beside an ODSP office. We have a great relationship, Speaker, with the ODSP office because of our close proximity. We've dealt with community start-up issues numerous times.

1630

For many of those seniors on ODSP, that community start-up benefit provides them a great leg up. Many times they'll use it to upgrade their housing accommodation. Sometimes they'll use it to help with a renovation, a minor renovation, maybe a lift in their shower. So to take that money and take a portion and throw it into municipalities for housing plans—I can understand why, in the last 48 hours, I've had hundreds of emails. I spoke to our critic for community and social services earlier today, and it's amazing how people have mobilized on that issue and how mad they are that the government would just unilaterally make that change.

So there is a lot that this government could have done on a broad base for seniors—

Hon. James J. Bradley: I got a call from Senator Runciman.

Mr. Steve Clark: Well, you go ahead and call him, and he'll wish you a happy anniversary, the minister from St. Catharines.

I know deep in your heart, because I think we know how your program—you would love to support a broad-based support like Bill 4, like Mr. Shurman's bill, but you're frozen in your place on supporting, I think, a bad piece of legislation that doesn't help seniors. It doesn't help seniors on a broad basis. There are so many holes in this piece of legislation, just in the amendments alone,

that I think will cause more confusion in constituency offices, not assistance.

I think we all agree that trying to help our constituents and assist them in any way we can is paramount to becoming a good member of provincial Parliament. This bill is not a good bill.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I would like to make some comments on the views of the members from Thornhill and Leeds–Grenville regarding this bill.

One of the things that the member from Thornhill said: It does do something, and for that, we will support it. The problem is, it could have done so much more.

One of the problems that we see with this bill is that it tries to do—

Hon. James J. Bradley: What does Uncle Ernie say?

Mr. John Vanthof: We don't talk much about this bill—it tries to do several things and ends up doing none of them well. If the real purpose of this bill was to keep seniors in their homes, like seniors in Iroquois Falls or Kirkland Lake, you would broaden it, because not all seniors need the walk-in bathtub. A lot of them do need basic things for their home that would keep them in their home years longer.

The other focus of the bill is to create jobs, supposedly. But again, it's not a very efficient method of creating jobs. If you wanted to create more jobs, you would, as the member from Leeds–Grenville said, remove the HST burden, as we passed here on this side of the House.

But I would like to focus, really—keeping seniors in their homes should be the main focus, because it helps society. It obviously helps seniors, but it helps society as a whole. And with the number of \$25,000 in income for your average senior, this bill is not what's going to keep seniors in their homes. We could have, we should have—hopefully we will in the future—broadened it out to make true measures, not just ones that look good in the press, but real, thought-out measures. Some of them would be new windows or new insulation. You know, some of these houses were built when Mr. Bradley came to the Legislature. They could use some work.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: I listened intently to the dynamic duo this afternoon from Thornhill and Leeds–Grenville talking about our healthy homes renovation tax credit.

Madam Speaker, I just want to set the context for you. Last Saturday, I had the opportunity to be at Home Depot in Peterborough. For those that might be familiar, it's at the corner of Lansdowne and Park, and I couldn't get a parking spot at Home Depot last Saturday. I went in there, and there were throngs of people. There were seniors buying lumber, there were seniors buying electrical equipment, and there were seniors buying plumbing equipment. They were flocking to the seminars at Home Depot—you can sign up all the time to do your renovations. And I spoke to those people, because I know many of them very, very well. They said, “Jeff, when are you

going to get this bill through Parliament at Queen's Park so we can take advantage of that home renovation tax credit?”

I said, “Joe, listen. I will get back on Monday. I will work with the opposition. We will get this bill through so you can get all your renovation work done and take advantage of that tax credit.”

But it's interesting that one of the big areas a lot of seniors are looking at is their bathroom facilities, in order to make them more accessible. Often, if you have back trouble or hip trouble or knee trouble, you have to make that bathtub accessible. This tax credit will allow people to spend those dollars to make that bathtub accessible when they have mobility problems, so they can stay in their home longer.

I say to my friends from Thornhill and Leeds–Grenville, come to Peterborough. I'll sign you up for the seminar at Home Depot at the corner of Park and Lansdowne, and they can do the renovations in their homes and take advantage of the home renovation tax credit. Let's help our seniors in Ontario.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to get up and comment on the comments on Bill 2 and maybe call the bluff on the member from Peterborough's talk of all the wealthy seniors that are in the province. What about the poor ones who couldn't get to Home Depot, couldn't even qualify to have the \$10,000 to apply for the home renovation tax credit? Come on. I'm glad that the Home Depot was busy, but you're ignoring the whole bigger picture we have in the province of Ontario, which is that seniors can't afford to stay in their own homes. I can tell you repeated stories upon repeated stories of seniors having to sell their homes because they can't afford to stay in their homes—

Mr. Todd Smith: Electricity.

Ms. Laurie Scott: —because of skyrocketing hydro rates. Right on, member from Prince Edward–Hastings. They can't. They come to you crying, and what can you do?

We tried to change the government. We were very close. We even passed a bill in this Legislature removing the HST from home heating. We won that vote, but no, the present Liberal government wouldn't bring that in. They brought in this very targeted seniors program for home renovation that only a very small group of seniors will qualify for—you have to have \$10,000 to qualify for \$1,500 back—and the Liberal government thinks they're giving seniors the best thing since sliced bread. Bull. It's not happening. There are more seniors living in poverty in the province of Ontario under your Liberal reign than ever before.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Oh, no.

Ms. Laurie Scott: For sure. If the member from Peterborough wants to come to Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, I can give lots of examples of seniors who need real assistance, seniors who need real home care. Yes, they need some modifications in their homes to be

able to stay in them, but they can't afford \$10,000 to even initiate this home tax credit. So I call the member from Peterborough's bluff. This is not helping the majority of seniors in the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Obviously, we want to take care of seniors. Obviously, we want to do whatever we can to assist seniors to stay in their homes. So the idea of a tax credit has some benefit. But there's a deeper question here. It's a question of affordability. Seniors are faced with fixed incomes. The idea is that if they have a limited pool to draw from, one issue is mobility, sure, but what about their hydro rates, like another member indicated? What about their cost of living in terms of food? What about medication? There's a whole slew of other issues that aren't being addressed here.

At a deeper level, we really need to look at the question of affordability. Life is more and more expensive. Auto insurance is a huge issue. Seniors want to get around, particularly in rural communities. Seniors want to get around in communities in the suburbs. We're paying the highest auto insurance rates in the country. There are a number of issues that we're faced with. So let's look at those issues.

Let's look at the fact that our seniors on fixed incomes can't afford to pay their heating bills. Many people across Ontario live in regions where they literally have to decide between putting food on the table—buying groceries—and paying their heating bill. This is a real issue facing many seniors. Many seniors are faced with the issue of how they are going to access health care. How are they going to get the health care they need, so that they can stay well enough to be able to remain in their homes? A number of issues are present right now that need to be addressed, and this is one small sliver of the demographic of seniors.

1640

We need to really look at the heart of the question, which is affordability and what we can do to make seniors' lives more affordable so that they can live with dignity, so that they can afford the necessities of life. I think that's the question we should ask ourselves: What can we do to truly improve the lives of seniors and make it more affordable for them?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Thornhill has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Shurman: It's very interesting, listening to my colleagues, because they come from all sides, they wear all stripes, and in many ways, they said the same things, just using different words to say them. I want to thank the members from Timiskaming–Cochrane, Peterborough, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and Bramalea–Gore–Malton for their comments, and I'd like to address them specifically because, as I say, there is some interplay.

The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane immediately acknowledged that the bill could have done more: "We could have done more for seniors." He's absolutely

correct. But it's a lot like the budget: Your party sits on its hands because you'd rather take the crumbs than actually force these people to do something for the province of Ontario. For that, while I respect the position you find yourselves in, I say you have to do more as well. You come to this place to take a position.

As far as my friend from Peterborough is concerned, what he likes to do is tie the truth to a desk and walk out those doors, it's being stretched so far. Yes, it's true, you can walk into a Home Hardware in Peterborough or anywhere else and you can buy the various things that you need to renovate your house. But this bill doesn't apply to those people. They're driving their cars to the Home Depot, they're getting out and walking in and they're buying lumber to build a renovation. That's not the healthy homes tax credit; that's people who have the money and the mobility and don't qualify.

My friend from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock talks about staying in the home for a period of time. In deference to my colleague from Leeds–Grenville, that was addressed by the bill that failed, the one that was sponsored by all parties and still was voted down by the Liberals and adopted for their platform, which was my property tax deferral bill.

Finally, my friend from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, same thing: You're talking about all these different costs that beset seniors. Don't vote for this bill; make them go broader.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to stand down the third party lead.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Unanimous consent: Agreed? Agreed.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I rise today to speak on Bill 2, the healthy homes renovation tax credit. I also want to thank and acknowledge all the previous speakers to this bill for their comments and insights. For many of us with aging parents, this bill provides an opportunity to set aside our political agendas and really take our time to get it right.

As it stands now, this bill is well-meaning but only moderately successful in addressing the financial burdens faced by seniors who are wishing to stay in their homes. I hope we can all agree that our seniors deserve to live with dignity. For me, this means looking at the whole picture and asking the right questions, questions like, who does this bill help and who does it exclude? What are we doing to address the seniors who are shut out? How can this bill be improved to help as many seniors as possible?

The reality is that far too many seniors are living in poverty. Back in 2008, Statistics Canada put the number of seniors living in poverty at 5.8%, and the number of single elderly women living in poverty was 17.1%. Most important to note is that the statistics were produced before the global recession hit. We all know that the numbers we have have only gotten worse.

So my question is, how bad does it have to be before we implement meaningful strategies that address the needs of our society's most vulnerable? I say the current data shows us that we are already there.

The fact is, in 2012, seniors 85-plus years of age have become the fastest-growing segment of Canadian society. The number of seniors in Canada is projected to increase from 4.2 million to 9.8 million between 2005 and 2036. The seniors' share of the population is expected to almost double, increasing from 13.2% to 24.5% during this period.

We do know that the number of seniors living below Statistics Canada's low-income cut-off jumped nearly 25% between 2007-08 to 250,000 from 204,000, according to Campaign 2000.

Economists say that women make up as much as 80% of the increase in seniors' poverty, according to the *Globe and Mail* on November 25, 2010. Roughly 40% of seniors live in households with incomes below \$30,000, according to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. More than 150,000 eligible seniors across Canada do not currently receive the guaranteed income supplement designed to help low-income seniors, according to the *Perspective on Labour and Income*, July 2009, Statistics Canada. Finally, 6.3% of households assisted by food banks report that a pension is a primary source of income, says HungerCount 2009, Food Banks Canada.

The numbers paint a very dismal picture for the seniors of Ontario. As our community ages, there is greater strain on our social service agencies but, more importantly, many of our seniors opt to go without services they need and supports they are entitled to. Some go without due to the lack of family support; many have disabilities; and others simply cannot navigate the cumbersome eligibility process required to access many programs.

Back in December 2011, I read an article entitled "Contest Unravels Hidden Tragedy of Impoverished Seniors" by CTV that I want to share with all of you today.

"The founders of a Toronto agency were so struck by what they say is a hidden crisis of Canadian seniors living in poverty, they decided to hold a contest to do something about it.

"Peter Cook, who runs Seniors for Seniors, an agency that hires younger seniors to run errands for older seniors, is the mastermind of the contest, along with his wife. A few weeks ago, they put out a call to social workers to nominate needy Toronto-area seniors who could benefit from a prize of \$1,000 a month for a year.

"The stories they got back were heart-wrenching.

"The company has already received dozens of submissions and will announce the 'winner' on Friday.

"Loucia and Andrew Linkert make up one couple who was nominated for the contest. The couple has been married for almost for three decades, getting by for many years with his work as a jeweller and her work as a truck driver.

"But a few years back Loucia, 59, was diagnosed with liver cancer, and then Andrew, 72, had a heart attack and

was diagnosed with Parkinson's. They became embroiled in money woes.

"These days, the couple survives on pasta and bread.

"We can't afford milk. He should have milk every day,' Loucia says of Andrew. 'I go to food banks, I try to get food vouchers.'

"The couple struggles for money every month. After they pay the \$1,000 rent and pay for utilities and other expenses, there's little money left for extras. There are months when Andrew can't afford the \$50-a-month dispensing fees on his Parkinson's drugs, so he goes without.

"I can't afford it. I am embarrassed, I am hurt and I am mad,' he says.

"The couple tried taking in a tenant, but the tenants refused to pay their rent and then robbed them of the last of their money."

I cannot begin to tell you how moved I was reading this article. These are our parents, our grandparents, our aunts, our uncles. How could it be that we have so many stories of indignity and shame after a lifetime of hard work? And yet, here we are debating a bill that intends to help only those seniors who are in their own home.

I read this bill, and I see a baby step that shuts its eyes to the real challenges facing seniors in Ontario. Sure, this bill proposes to keep seniors in their long-time family homes, but fails to address the real issues that are forcing seniors from them. With so many of our seniors living in poverty, skyrocketing property taxes, soaring electricity and home heating costs due to an unfair HST, this bill offers them no reprieve.

The bill makes a small contribution in terms of providing financial assistance to seniors with increasing mobility problems who wish to remain in their homes. For this reason alone, I am prepared to support it.

1650

I think many people believe that seniors have the right to stay in their long-time family homes, and it is our job to help them achieve that right. But the reality is that most seniors can't afford \$10,000 to renovate their homes to make their homes more accessible.

This bill also does not include any provisions to assist with affordability of upfront costs of renovations. As it's currently proposed, this bill allows eligible seniors a tax credit of up to 15% of eligible costs, to a maximum of \$10,000 per year. This translates to a maximum credit of \$1,500 per year. In the case of a couple, both of whom claim a house as their principal residence, it can only be \$10,000 annually and does not include a lifetime cap. In other words, it would be possible for seniors who can afford it to receive a maximum of \$10,000 per year per household of eligible expenses and a tax credit of \$1,500 that can be claimed each year. As a refundable tax credit, seniors who pay no taxes would be entitled to receive the full refund.

While I agree that seniors need financial assistance, I am unsure if we can achieve effective and appropriate financial support through a renovation tax credit. I suggest we look to other provinces like Quebec, who

have gone beyond the tax credits by including programs that offer financial assistance to low-income earners age 65 or over who need to make minor adaptations to their homes or apartments in order to continue to live there safely, independently and, most importantly, with dignity. Their program does not limit itself to 15% of costs but rather provides full reimbursement of costs up to \$3,500 if the work is done by an approved, licensed contractor.

A program like this would be far more useful for low-income seniors struggling with affordability, and yet the bill before us today offers much, much less. I am genuinely eager to understand why this government would not propose a funding program patterned along the lines of the Quebec legislation that is aimed solely at low-income seniors before proposing legislation that severely compromises their participation.

Low-income seniors are not the only group left out of this bill. Ontario businesses will now find themselves on the outside of this opportunity. The government is happy to boast about stimulating \$800 million in home renovation activity and that it will create 10,500 jobs throughout the Ontario economy annually, but the government isn't listening, once again, when it comes to proactively investing in the province. Here is another clear opportunity to prioritize buy-Ontario strategies that has been ignored.

I and my NDP colleagues are quite eager to bring this government around to the idea that buy-Ontario initiatives are the right way forward for this province. Ontarians are looking to this Legislature for more than leadership; they are looking to be valued. Buy-Ontario strategies are more than an important financial tool. They send a clear message to the people of this province that we are prepared to invest in them. If the government claims this program will drum up 10,500 jobs, why not include buy-Ontario options on either the construction materials or medical assistance devices to increase that job creation number even higher?

Or how about including a strategy that takes into account soaring property taxes? It seems to me that many seniors are facing the choice of leaving their homes, not because of their inability to afford the renovations but because of their property tax bill. This tax credit also does nothing about the long-standing problem seniors have with soaring property taxes, which is a greater factor in seniors not being able to stay in their own homes. I've received emails from my riding of London-Fanshawe from seniors who are immediately in need of financial relief from their property taxes and fear losing their homes. Once again, this bill is silent—silent to those who need our voice the most.

The rising cost of home heating is another financial hurdle that seniors have expressed that prevents the ability to stay in their homes. With increases of more than 8%, it is not surprising that seniors are feeling more financial pressure to leave than ever before.

The NDP has been calling for removal of the HST from home heating costs for some time. My colleague

Mike Mantha, from Algoma-Manitoulin, proposed Bill 4, An Act to amend the Retail Sales Tax Act to provide for a rebate of the Ontario portion of the Harmonized Sales Tax in respect of certain home heating costs.

The HST costs the average family budget hundreds of dollars more a year, yet who does it hit the hardest? Seniors. It is seniors who have the worst options when life's essentials become unaffordable. It is the New Democrats who have demonstrated that the HST is actually adding to the costs that Ontarians are facing.

In fact, we know that in 2009 the Liberals had a secret document that showed that the HST was going to cost Ontario families an average of \$1,500 more every year. While the Liberals would like to pretend that the HST comes from discretionary spending alone, New Democrats know that home heating is not discretionary.

Turning the furnace off just isn't an option; it's a choice. Taking the HST off home heating would save a family with two kids an average of \$100 per year. Imagine what we could do for seniors. Perhaps with these kinds of real financial supports, Ontario seniors could afford renovations to keep them in their homes. We know it will put more money back into the pockets of those Ontarians who need it the most.

I ask each member present to think about how frequently they turn on the heat in the winter and the air conditioner in the summer. Now I ask each member to think about the number of seniors in Ontario who are forced into going without. These are not choices of dignity. These are not choices we want our mothers and fathers making in their retirement.

Sadly, in many parts of the provinces, the HST takes millions away from families and is not offering one penny back in health care or reinvestment in their communities. I recall a headline from during the election that read "Unfair HST Takes \$70 Million from Windsor Families—and Not One Penny to Health Care." The people of Ontario are all too familiar with the cash grab policies of this government, and the HST is the worst of them all.

This healthy homes renovation tax credit represents a major plank in the Liberals' platform, a platform that is built on half measures for seniors. Like many bills we have seen from this government, it is rife with half measures and minimal effectiveness, and it excludes more people than it helps.

Finally, I understand that this bill, as well-intentioned as it is, is lacking in addressing the real needs of seniors in this province who are struggling to stay in their homes. Speaker, I know this because my parents are elderly, and they've struggled to keep their heat on. My dad, especially, was very much conserving the water he used, because the water bill was so high. I saw one of his bills one time. We had the opportunity and the pleasure—maybe not his pleasure, but we were buying a home, and we had a transition period when our other home closed, so we had about three months where we were kind of in limbo, and we had our things in storage. My dad was gracious enough—at the time, my mother was in a

nursing home, and my dad was living alone—to let us stay with him. I remember opening his mail. My dad's not a privacy person; he didn't mind. His water bill was \$46 for a month. I couldn't believe it.

So my dad is very cognizant, like most seniors of that generation, that—they pay cash for everything, they don't spend it if they don't have it, and they try to make every penny stretch as far as they can. They want that little nest egg, even though my dad probably doesn't have to worry about it. He's got six children who can contribute to his elderly years, when we can support him financially should there be that need. He always, always worried about being independent and having that financial stability.

My dad would not spend \$10,000 on a ramp. He would do without. His income wasn't exorbitant. He couldn't afford to do that even if he had that opportunity. He wouldn't do it. He would keep that money for his little nest egg—retirement; even though he's 82, he still thinks he's in retirement.

1700

This bill does help a small portion of the population of seniors, but not the vast majority that are on a low income and are really watching every penny so that they can remain in their home. If this bill does pass—and I will support it, because the intent of the bill is there—I hope that when it does go to committee, we really try to make it have some impact on more than just accessibility issues. The Quebec legislation that they have there seems to be something that will also be extended to helping seniors who don't have that extra money that they could spend on accessibilities but maybe need the medical devices that we talked about—or the buy Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm certainly happy to rise today, obviously in support of Bill 2, and make a few comments in relation to what the member for London–Fanshawe had to say.

First of all, it is Bill 2. It seems extraordinary that this was the second bill presented to this House, and yet we're still here, months and months later, still talking about this bill. Happily, we will see the end of this debate shortly. But as it relates to the senior home renovation tax credit, I must say that back in September or October, last summer, when we were going through my riding, consulting with seniors at the door, at the community centres where seniors spend quite a bit of their time—very close to my constituency office, I have a wonderful relationship with the Water Street seniors' community centre—this particular proposal in our platform was something that was extremely well received. It was looked upon as something that would certainly assist seniors in staying in their own homes, and of course from the perspective of also providing a little bit of stimulation to the economy in terms of the renovations required.

Our government certainly has done a great deal for seniors, and this is why I talk to so many of our seniors about their issues. Our Aging at Home strategy has made

a dramatic impact in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham. People are being assisted. The frail elderly are being given assistance. They are certainly aware of the financial constraints that we face as a government, and they feel that whatever we can do to assist them is of tremendous value.

I would certainly say that it's time to get on with this. Let's pass this bill and assist the seniors, which I think is what we should all be doing as much as we—

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to respond to the member from London–Fanshawe on Bill 2. I'm disappointed in this legislation, I have to say. The government could have done so much more and could have done so much better.

A few years back, the federal government came out with a tax credit for renovations that made a whole lot of sense. It was far less restrictive, it had a significant impact on the economy—because it allowed you to make the decision as to what you were going to do with that tax credit to improve your home. It might have been an energy-efficiency renovation. It may have done something for the infrastructure of the building itself. It may have done something to assist those with disabilities, so something that improved the accessibility. But it made so much sense because it froze no one out.

This bill—it's Liberal bill 52 or so since they got here, that is specifically designed to knock off a political domino in their agenda. It's about the 52nd or so since I got here in 2003 and since they've been government that is not designed, really, to help a broad segment of the population; it's designed so that the members opposite here can go in their constituencies, have a coffee klatsch at some club with some folks and say, "Look what we did for you," when really, if you want to help the economy, if you want to help seniors, if you want to help families, you bring in a bill that allows them to decide where they're going to put that tax credit.

I'm very disappointed. We should not be wasting our time on this. There's better things—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to join the debate, as always, on G2, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act. I guess I'll point to one of the measures that New Democrats took issue with. I am going to speak to the bill afterwards, so I'll go into detail a little bit further.

One of them is that the bill carries no provisions for any domestic procurement in terms of a buy-Ontario mandate. My honourable colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke referenced the home renovation tax credit implemented by the federal government in, I believe, 2010. It was a \$3-billion home renovation tax credit that also did not carry any domestic procurement provisions. The result was that in bordering areas across the country we had folks who were going across into the States and purchasing the materials that they needed to do the renovations on their home and actually spending

that money in the United States. It was a boon to neighbouring jurisdictions in the US.

Hon. James J. Bradley: That's the federal government's fault.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, but what I'm saying to you, Honourable Minister, is that you have a chance to actually enact some procurement measures here so that we ensure that—because we are at par. Our dollar is at par, and if you come down to Windsor today, you will be enticed to go to Lowe's there, because you'll see that there's cheaper materials. If you need to buy an accessible toilet, you might want to do it in the States, but that doesn't necessarily help the area of Windsor, where we have the highest unemployment rate in the province and, actually, in Canada. Free trade—you guys signed the free trade deals, every one of the trade deals.

Regardless, it's one measure that I'll elaborate on a little bit further, but one that I think the government could improve on.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: I did listen to the comments from the member from London—Fanshawe. We've taken a number of significant initiatives that help seniors in the province of Ontario. I think one of the most important initiatives that we took after we were given the privilege of forming government—in 2008, of course, we signed a landmark deal with AMO and the city of Toronto to upload a lot of costs from the property taxpayer that were downloaded in 1998-99. Madam Speaker, if you take the time to chat with mayors—or indeed, I recommend you talk to treasurers at the municipal level—they will give you some in-depth, detailed analysis on how the uploading of costs—of OW, ODSP, court security costs, matching land ambulance costs—on a 50-50 basis has indeed moderated the increases on property taxes across the province of Ontario since 2008. Then we introduced the property tax grant for seniors, which is a cash grant for seniors across the province of Ontario of up to \$900, and that complements the property tax credit that our seniors can also receive across the province of Ontario.

The last time I was up for two minutes, I did talk about the Home Depot at the corner of Park and Lansdowne. I'll take this opportunity to talk about Home Hardware, which is further on Lansdowne Street West. I had the opportunity to be there three weeks ago, and you see a lot of Canadian-made products, such as Crane bathtub equipment, which is made in Canada, made in Ontario. This tax credit helps seniors buy those made-in-Ontario products that they can put in their homes, improve their mobility to get access to showers and bathtubs, and indeed not only take advantage of the tax credit, but generate jobs right here in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for London—Fanshawe has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker. I didn't write down all the ridings of the members that spoke to my discussion, so I do apologize. But I want to thank them all for their response and their remarks with regards to my presentation.

Again, I don't think anyone here disagrees that we need to help seniors. I don't think anyone here disagrees that seniors need to stay in their homes as long as they can. But it's the tools that we have in place to make that happen for seniors. Part of it is, as I mentioned, the affordability piece.

1710

I think health is also an issue. The NDP has talked about having services for seniors while they're at home, like shovelling their driveways or running errands for seniors, as the gentleman in the Seniors for Seniors group is going to propose and promote that contest so that someone can have those services. Those are all part of staying in your home. And the piece we're talking about today, of course, is the renovations piece with regard to accessibility needs, physical needs for seniors to stay in their homes.

The question that comes to light is that the seniors who are most populous in Ontario—that we've got statistics on, which I read earlier—are making under \$30,000 a year. That's the higher percentage of seniors. So when we're talking about mobility tax credits for healthy home renovations, it's not going to help those seniors. We certainly want seniors who have worked hard but have a meagre pension to remain in their homes, and to do that, this has to be stretched out a little more, as I mentioned before with regard to medical devices. Quebec has that legislation. So when it goes to committee, I hope we're going to look at stretching this more to help more seniors remain in their homes longer.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Mr. Todd Smith: Good member. Very good member.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you, Speaker, and thanks to my colleagues for that warm welcome this afternoon.

I'm pleased to rise today to discuss Bill 2, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act, 2012. This bill was tabled way back in December of last year, I believe, and it would seem that it's an important topic to debate, because it's relevant to quite a few Ontarians.

On the surface, this piece of legislation sounds like a decent idea. The healthy homes renovation tax credit is a policy that seems to be helping seniors. It seems to be supporting families and supporting our communities. But if you look a little deeper at this piece of legislation, you realize that it's not all that good.

The Liberal government has argued that this legislation is about protecting the economy and helping the trades. Speaker, I disagree. This bill is not really about seniors; it's not really about helping the trades. What it's really about is Liberal politics. I find it strange, given the economic state of Ontario, that we are debating legislation that is in favour, at the end of the day, of more spending. It does not make any logical sense, but for some reason this government seems to think that increasing spending is something they should continue to do. Of course, I've been on the record many times, as have many of my colleagues, that overspending by this gov-

ernment is taking Ontario down the path of a \$411-billion debt.

We should be debating a plan to get the 600,000 men and women who are unemployed in this province back to work. This government should be introducing a plan to address the \$16-billion deficit and a plan to deal with this massive debt we currently have in Ontario and a plan to get our economy growing and back on its feet again. Yet we are here debating this bill that is completely ignoring the economic crisis Ontario is facing.

I refer all members to this great magazine that is sent out every couple of months, the Fraser Forum. They have a really good article in this month's edition: "Ontario Budget 2012: A Missed Opportunity" by this government and by our finance minister. I just want to read a couple of paragraphs:

"In March, Ontario Finance Minister Dwight Duncan had one of those rare opportunities of which politicians can only dream. With his province heading towards a fiscal crisis caused by out-of-control spending and mounting debt, an opposition sympathetic to the need to deal with the problem, a public that expects his government to tackle the deficit ... and a media that understands the need for significant fiscal restraint, the stars were perfectly aligned for" Dwight "Duncan.

"Call it his 'Paul Martin' opportunity. Unfortunately, unlike Martin, his friend and mentor, Duncan didn't seize the opportunity."

It's proof of what we've been saying since the budget was delivered: that the will of this government just isn't strong at all to deal with the fiscal crisis and the jobs crisis that we find ourselves in in this province.

Speaker, I've been serving my community as an MPP, as many others who were just elected, since October 2011, and I just cannot accustom myself to the reckless spending that's taking place in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario today. We have seen this time and again from the party opposite, and no matter how many times we tell them to stop, they just continue to call for new spending.

As politicians, we're here to serve the people and to take care of those in society who need a hand up. I think that everyone in this Legislature would agree with me when I say that that we all have mentors and family members who are now seniors, who live in the communities we serve, whom we owe a great deal to for the guidance that they have provided in our lives. We feel that we owe it to them to stand up for them when they are not able to. Helping seniors is an essential aspect for me in being a member of provincial Parliament in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and one that I think we all agree with.

Helping people who are most vulnerable is an important aspect for all of us, as legislators in Ontario. For me, that's both ends of the age scale. Seniors have less opportunity to go out and do this for themselves, and young children are in the same situation as well, so we have to provide help for them, as legislators.

This legislation that we are debating here today that was introduced back in December does not stand up for

seniors and it really doesn't help them. If you look beneath the surface of this bill, Bill 2—and I'm talking about looking beyond the title of "healthy homes tax credit," which is yet another attempt to make a bill sound like a good idea—you'll see that the bill, like almost every other bill introduced by this Liberal government, is essentially empty.

The government has become expert at catchy phrases and excellent titles but has failed at developing effective policy that would make Ontario a better place to live for our seniors and a better place to do business for businesses in this province.

We've had nine years of Liberal policies that have been little more than legislation with a good title, and look where Ontario has wound up. The only change Ontario has seen under this Premier and under this government is record-breaking debt and unemployment. That is a legacy of the Dalton McGuinty government.

Speaker, the PC Party, here in opposition, want to help seniors, but we want to be effective in the help that we provide. We want to be effective in everything that we do in this Legislature, and Bill 2 doesn't pass the test.

Let's take a look at this legislation and see how little it actually does. Let's consider how much of an impact, if any, Bill 2 could actually have on Ontario families and seniors as a mechanism to stimulate the economy.

First of all, only seniors—65-plus is the definition in Ontario—would qualify for the tax credit proposed by the bill, which equals about 13% of Ontario's population. That's about 1.8 million people. The broad base of seniors is 1.8 million people in Ontario. Of all the people living in this province, the tax credit could potentially apply to 13%. The median income for Ontario seniors is \$25,000 per individual or \$45,000 per couple. That translates into approximately \$2,000 up to \$3,700 of income per month, depending on whether you're single or living as a couple.

In order to qualify for the maximum tax credit of \$1,500—15% of the maximum expenditure of \$10,000. So a senior has to actually spend that \$10,000; a senior actually has to have that \$10,000. When the senior spends that amount, he or she, or the couple, is actually out of pocket \$8,500. That is a significant amount of money—nearly an unreachable sum of money for many, especially given the fact that a lot of individual savings have taken a serious hit in the past few years. As some of my colleagues who rose today in the House before me mentioned—and I hear this all the time in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, and I have calls from many seniors in Peterborough—the fact is that seniors in this province can't afford these outrageous electricity bills that we're seeing. The hydro bills have doubled, actually, under this government, and are due to go up another 46%. I hear very sad stories from seniors in Peterborough, and I'm sure the member opposite, the MPP for Peterborough, hears from the same people himself.

1720

Let's say that a senior was able to scrape together enough to pay for the renovations. But not just any reno-

vation qualifies; only renovations that the Liberal government has decided are acceptable or may decide through regulation are acceptable, so more of this “Premier Dad knows best for everyone in the province.”

A senior living alone in the province of Ontario has to spend nearly half of his or her annual income to get back \$1,500 as a tax credit. Any person who thinks about the legislation for even a second realizes that it’s not helping the people who need it and it’s not doing much of anything. We have to pass legislation that is meaningful and legislation that is really, truly going to help people. Bill 2 isn’t up to that test.

How many Ontario men and women, let alone seniors, do you know who can put up nearly half their annual income for a renovation? Not very many. The number of people this program would apply to shrinks again by a significant number. It begins with 1.8 million, but that drops based on income and drops based on marital status. As if that weren’t enough, seniors receiving ODSP benefits are excluded from qualifying for the tax credit, and that restricts people even further. Then, your renovations have to meet specific criteria—we haven’t gone there yet—which means that, of those who could afford to renovate their homes, an even smaller fraction of those would get the refund.

Do you see what is happening here, Speaker? Slowly, more and more people are being excluded with each requirement.

People who can afford to spend \$10,000 to renovate their homes don’t have to wait for a government cheque or a tax credit. They do the renovation in any event. That’s what they do. Meanwhile, those who need the help who cannot afford the renovations, who don’t have the cash to do what they need to do, are still left sitting in the dust. This bill, at the end of the day, like most pieces of Liberal legislation since I came to the House on October 6, is like a mean joke because it offers hope and then proceeds to deny the majority the help it promises to provide.

I believe that it is essential to manage your finances in a responsible way so that in return, you can help others. This is no different than a government structure. If government cannot manage their finances and ensure that all their bank accounts are in order, then they cannot be pursuing additional spending such as this tax credit.

Speaker, let me just reiterate again: I know I get up time and time again and talk about this, but it’s critical that all members, especially members on the other side of the House who are maybe blinded by their own talking points, remind themselves when they look in the mirror that their government is essentially bankrupting the province of Ontario. We have a jobs and a debt crisis. This needs to be taken very seriously. We’re talking about future generations of Ontarians who are going to be paying for the last nine years of total fiscal mismanagement on behalf of the Dalton McGuinty Liberal government.

This Bill 2 is purely political. This bill is aimed at tugging at the hearts of the people of Ontario in the hopes

of distracting Ontarians from the fiscal reality that this province is facing. This bill is meant to keep the government benches busy—keep the members from falling asleep, in some cases—but really it won’t do anything to change the course we’re on, the road that Dalton McGuinty has led this province down.

Again, let me remind this House that we are staring directly in the face of a \$30-billion deficit and a \$411-billion debt. We have 600,000 men and women out of work—a serious jobs and spending crisis right here today in the province of Ontario. There are billion-dollar scandals like Ornge unfolding daily, and this government is desperate to change the channel to make Ontario voters forget about the poor leadership and mismanagement coming from the Liberal government here in Toronto. Today they’re trying to do that with this bill, Bill 2.

There is no need for this province, once the shining light of Confederation, to be faced with a \$30-billion deficit. There’s no reason Ontario should be condemned to a continuing stagnant economic growth regime.

On our side of the House, the path we’re on simply, Speaker, just isn’t good enough, so I’ll continue, and my colleagues beside me will as well, to promote our plan, our Ontario PC plan to finally reduce the size and cost of government, to build and grow our economy with new jobs that will ensure that Ontario will lead again. This is our number one priority, Speaker, and it is the primary issue that we must address. Until the debt and spending is under control and jobs are returning to Ontario, the PC caucus cannot support any additional spending.

Speaker, we owe this to the people of Ontario. We owe this to Ontario businesses, the small, medium and large employers across this great province, and we owe this to all those who chose to make Ontario home as well as those born and raised here. They’ve invested their lives in this great province and they know, like we do in the PC caucus, what Ontario is capable of being, capable of actually becoming: great again.

In order to have the kind of social policy that we want and that the people of Ontario want, we have to make sure that we have the financial resources that are required to support our social services and provide the kind of government that Ontario families, including seniors, are asking for.

The Liberal government is again placing the cart before the horse, just as they always do with their policies. Speaking about great governments of the past, I do proudly stand up. The previous PC government, let’s not forget, created a million jobs in the province of Ontario; they created the environment for a million jobs to be created. Today, under this government, we’re faced with 600,000 people unemployed. I’ll tell you, Speaker, the members on the opposite side of this House should sit up, they should take note, and they should be listening to what our caucus members are saying here. They should actually put their Globe and Mail away and actually pay attention when we’re talking about 600,000 people unemployed. Of course, the minister isn’t listening. She’s still reading her Globe and Mail.

Interjection: Ottawa Citizen, actually.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Or the Ottawa Citizen. If she's not interested in learning something, then she can continue down that path—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Just a point: I'd ask the member to confine his comments to the bill and not the members present.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: As I was saying, if the party opposite really cared about the people of Ontario, they would address the growing fiscal crisis. They would get their books back in order, reduce the size of government and get out of the way so that business creators and entrepreneurs can create jobs and build our economy. We must get those 600,000 men and women back to work, Speaker. It is time that the party opposite, the government, addresses the real issues Ontario is dealing with and stops playing these political games. Stop spending and start truly helping the people of Ontario.

Again, I just can't support Bill 2. Our caucus won't be supporting Bill 2. We're in a fiscal crisis in the province of Ontario, and these bills are just adding to that debt crisis. Again, I just refer to the recent edition of the Fraser Forum where they talk about Canada's 2012 budgets, the federal budget and all provincial and territorial budgets, and they talk about a lack of leadership in Ontario in tackling the debt and jobs crisis. Again, as we've been saying many times in this House, the finance minister in this government is missing the opportunity to turn the ship around in the province, to get Ontario back on the right track and truly make this the greatest province in the great country of Canada.

1730

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Kenora–Rainy River.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you, Speaker. I would like to thank the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex for his contribution to this important discussion. I want to start off by talking about some of the things that I agree with. I agree that this bill, despite going to committee, where I was hopeful that we would flesh things out and improve the bill, hasn't really changed all that much. I agree with him that I don't think it goes far enough because, for those whom it's supposed to help, they have to have that money upfront. Unfortunately, a lot of people just don't have the money, and if they were to have the money upfront, chances are, as the member pointed out, they probably wouldn't need to take advantage of this tax credit.

Where I fundamentally disagree with the member—although I do appreciate, again, his contribution to this debate—is his notion of the deserving and undeserving; that somehow this bill was acceptable because it was going to help the deserving poor, being seniors and children. I think we have to go beyond that. I know that the Tories talk about exercising financial restraint, but I think in this case it's a matter of spending wisely. In many cases, it's not that we don't have the money; it's that we're not spending our dollars wisely and maximizing what we get in return for those dollars. In many

cases, if this were to be implemented properly in an effective way, it would actually be an investment; it would enable our seniors to stay in their homes longer, and that would free up some long-term-care beds, which we know are more expensive. So it's a case of spending a little to get a lot. Again, unfortunately, this bill fails dramatically on that mark. I do agree that it's merely a good sound bite, but to me, exercising this financial restraint would be spending wisely.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. I took the unique opportunity to listen to the speech from the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex from both sides of the House, and it was an interesting perspective. I must say, we talk about fiscal responsibility. The man that has always been described as one of Ontario's greatest Premiers—there's great respect for him—William Grenville Davis, Premier for 14 years, actually ran 14 straight deficits when he was Premier of the province of Ontario. I just think that's important to get on the record this afternoon.

As I said, I listened very intently to the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex from both sides of the House—a great perspective. About a week ago, I had the opportunity to be in Home Hardware on Simcoe Street in downtown Peterborough. Again, I'm talking to my friends, the seniors who are coming in and buying bathroom equipment, because they are saving their receipts to take advantage of this particular bill. I said, “Madam, don't chat with me; talk to my friends in the official opposition. They're slowing this bill down. Give them a call, tell them to speed up; collect your receipts and then you can make the application for your tax credit.”

Lowe's is also coming to Peterborough. They're another one of those home renovation companies. They looked at the Peterborough market and they know it's a great market to be in. And gosh, this bill is going so slow I'll be able to be there to cut the ribbon when Lowe's opens in Peterborough, to tell them to come on in, buy all that equipment, take advantage of the tax credit, and that will be another great addition to the retail community in Peterborough.

We're doing a number of things for seniors in the province of Ontario. The \$900 tax grant is very, very popular with our seniors because they know that we've made great progress in uploading those costs that devastated the property taxpayers in the province of Ontario.

Again, I want to thank the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex on a very thoughtful speech this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's interesting that the member for Peterborough spoke about—I think he has mentioned a Home Hardware and also a Home Depot. I think it's very appropriate that the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex spoke, because his family has run McNaughton's Home

Hardware Building Centre in Newbury for decades. He knows the business of home renovations, and I know that he spends a lot of his time on the weekend in his riding—not just at his family store, because I know that he sees a lot of constituents both there and at the many events he attends. He's a great new member and he has shown incredible enthusiasm since he joined us. He's done a tremendous job for the constituents of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. He's always seemed to be able to grasp the local issue and make sure that it's represented here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. So I want to commend him.

I'm glad that he quoted the Fraser Forum—I read that same article a couple of days ago—and I'm glad that he put those comments in the record, because there is a fiscal crisis here in the province. I do believe he was exactly right when he spoke about the fact that this government has failed to reduce the size and cost of government. They've also failed to remove the impediments on those job creators. I'm glad that he, in his capacity as critic for the ministry of industry, trade and economic development, was able to put those points forward, because I know that when I spoke to businesses in my riding, they expressed that same concern.

This bill does not address seniors on a broad basis. It's fatally flawed, as I mentioned earlier this afternoon, and I'm glad that he was able to put those comments forward on the floor this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes, the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd also like to once again add my voice to this debate, specifically on the comments of the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, but I'd like to focus on the member from Peterborough. The folks from Home Hardware in New Liskeard and Rona in New Liskeard and Tim-br Mart in Earlton haven't been experiencing the senior stampede that seems to be happening in Peterborough. It's not that we haven't been talking about this bill but, quite frankly, if you really want to keep seniors in their homes in northern Ontario, there's a lot of things we can do before putting grab bars on the bathtub.

I believe that the seniors' income in the north is actually slightly lower than the rest of the parts of the province. If their average income is \$20,000, then the maximum of \$10,000 or \$15,000 is just unattainable. Quite frankly, if you're going to get \$3 or \$4 or \$10—if you're going to make a program, make it so as many people can qualify as possible on as many things as possible.

I'm sure some of those things were put forward in the committee. Really, if the goal is to keep as many seniors in their homes as possible and save the economy as a whole, then the broader we can make this bill, the better it would be. From what I have read after it came back from committee, it hasn't really gotten any broader. That is from our perspective. Yes, it's a small step forward; we're not denying that. But it could have helped more people, and that would have helped the economy as a whole. Unfortunately, it's just a very small step.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you to the MPPs who added some comments after I did: the member from Kenora–Rainy River; from Peterborough of course, who had some pretty inspiring comments during his two minutes—

Mr. Steve Clark: Questionable.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Yes, some questionable comments—my good friend from Leeds–Grenville; and the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

I think the one thing that we did provide for some of these companies today across Canada is some excellent advertising. So for all those people who are watching the Ontario Legislature at home or via the legislative website, I'm sure they're rushing out now to some of the great stores we have in this province.

I will say I'm glad that my friend from Leeds–Grenville talked about Home Hardware, because it is one of the great Ontario stories. They're from St. Jacobs. There are about 1,000 stores now nationwide, and they really employ a lot of people.

1740

Speaker, back to Bill 2: The essence of what we're saying on this side of the House is that it's just a bill that really isn't going to do very much. It's a fluff bill. The title sounds good, but it really isn't going to help a lot of seniors.

What this government needs to focus on, and what all MPPs from all three parties need to focus on, is the debt challenge and the deficit challenge that this Liberal government has gotten Ontario into. I think we need a serious approach. I know we've been calling for a legislated wage freeze and we've been advocating initiatives to get the fiscal house in order. Again, with a \$30-billion deficit, a debt approaching \$411 billion, things need to change in the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Merci infiniment, madame la Présidente. C'est toujours un plaisir de me lever et d'ajouter mes commentaires à ce discours on G2, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act. I'll dispense with the obligatory partisanship and self-serving discourse that typically dominates some of the debate in here because I think we've got to get right to the facts, and it doesn't necessarily help the cause.

What I would like to begin with is just the overview of the bill, the purpose of Bill 2 and the intent. I like to look at intent and know what the intent is. But I believe the purpose of Bill 2, as it's written here, is to implement a major plank in the Liberal platform calling for a tax credit to assist seniors in making modifications needed to allow seniors to stay in their homes. So there it is, plain and simple: "We're going to offer a tax credit on renovations for accessibility measures implemented in a resident's home, a tax credit of up to \$1,500 on expenses of \$10,000."

I think it's a practical idea, a practical concept, given that we know that the longer seniors can stay in their own family dwellings, the longer they can stay at home, the better it is not only for themselves, their families, their own personal health, but also, ultimately, for our health care system. I believe that is the intent that the government is searching for, to make some steps towards that.

What we on this side, as New Democrats, are concerned about is the progress of the measures. We see this as a pressing issue, our crisis in home care and long-term care.

Interjections.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Madam Speaker, have we got a sidebar going on here? There we go. Thank you. I'll call them to order.

We do have a crisis in home care and long-term care that needs to be addressed, and it needs to be addressed in several ways, one of which is building more long-term-care facilities from the outset. But, secondly, it's finding ways to keep folks in their homes longer: providing access to care, in-home support, affordable drugs, affordable care and things that will make their lives easier.

That being said, New Democrats have proposed ideas to make this bill better. That's quite in contrast to what my friends in the opposition have been doing. During the hour and a half, two hours—how long have we been in here debating this bill?—I felt some heat from you guys. You're being critical of our party for even supporting this bill in the first place. At least we're here and at least we're showing up and doing what I think members of this province asked us to do, to be critical.

One of the reasons we haven't been able to talk about this is because the official opposition has rung the bell for the last four months in this House. Again, it angers me because it takes away from my ability as a legislator, as a member, to criticize them. I can't do it when the bells are ringing. I've got to walk out and mope that I don't get the opportunity to criticize some of the inadequacies in this bill. So here we are today; I'm pleased to do that.

One of the things that we've talked about are the rising costs just in terms of general affordability for seniors in this province. One of the measures supported by the Conservative parties federally and provincially, as well as the Liberal parties, has been the HST, and we know that's one measure that we've been critical about from its inception.

I am proud to stand as a New Democrat, standing against that real downloading of tax burden on to the middle class and particularly those on fixed incomes. We know that it is adding to their financial burdens: the increase on hydro and home heating and all the other issues that weren't actually affected by the HST prior to its imposition.

One of the reasons that we were proud to introduce as our first measure—my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin introduced his private member's bill to eliminate the HST on home heating and—

Ms. Laurie Scott: We're with you.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: And you're with us on that one. Well, you should have been with us from the beginning. You should have got your federal colleagues to not bring that measure about. We do this a lot in here—you guys do this; you guys do that. But the biggest one that I've ever seen was between Flaherty and the minister from Windsor-Tecumseh when they brought in that HST. That's where we had a chance.

Ms. Laurie Scott: The province's choice. The Liberals decided to do that.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm proud that provinces like Manitoba, an NDP government, did not impose the HST, even though that deal was offered to them, the \$2.6 billion, I think, that Ontario got—

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: —or \$4.3 billion; I'm sorry. But there was a payout there to take on the HST regime that Ontario jumped at, as well as British Columbia. Now they're feeling the effects, and there's a Liberal government that's going to be replaced by a New Democrat government there very soon, because we understood from the outset that the harmonized sales tax was going to hurt the people who could afford it the least. Ultimately, it's one of the measures that we talk about in how this bill should be improved, because it doesn't go nearly far enough.

Something also that we've talked about—there are references in here to a federal piece of legislation that was called the home renovation tax credit, just straight up home renovation tax credit. I think the premise of that federal bill, in conjunction with a similar provincial bill that offered up to \$10,000, offered a tax credit on purchases of up to \$10,000 on renovations around your home that I think essentially made a home more energy-efficient. That was cancelled not only from the federal government side, but the provincial program was cancelled as well. But it worked. It was actually a good program. It got a lot of good catchment, because not only did people understand that it was worthwhile to make those investments in their homes to make them more energy-efficient, but it also worked on the back end in terms of creating jobs. Obviously, people have to do that work to make those renovations. I understand that concept.

That being said, it's one of the measures that we think could be improved here in ensuring that we are recognizing that domestic work and domestic procurement actually makes more sense than just a blanket—you know, who knows where you order it from if you need an accessible toilet or an accessible bathtub or lumber from who knows where. We think, actually, the province should promote Ontario businesses and promote Ontario workers and ensure that there's a buy-Ontario strategy here and provisions in terms of procurement.

My friend from Elgin-Middlesex-London quite often references his family's ownership of the Home Hardware, which is wonderful. I'd love to ensure that we shopped exclusively at those small businesses within the

context of this program. I'm sure my honourable colleague wouldn't want to see the majority—I know he's going to vote against this bill, but if the majority of the money is flowing outside—

Interjection: Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. Thank you very much.

Let me tell you, just in Windsor, we've got a population of roughly 300,000 in Windsor, and when the dollar is at par, people, even though it's against their better judgment—they don't want to go over to the States, but when they see a bag of milk in the local grocery store at \$4 and you can go across the river at Kroger and get it for a buck fifty, they do it. They don't want to, but they have to. It's one of the things we should certainly be looking at in terms of ensuring that if we're going to entice people to make those renovations to their homes, we at least ensure that some of our domestic and small businesses are benefiting from those large purchases.

1750

There are also some other programs similar to this in other jurisdictions that have had some really wonderful results. Again, the goal or the intent ultimately should be—I hope it is, and it should be—helping seniors stay in their home and helping them to afford that life, being in their home, having it be accessible to them and to their family members so that they can receive the care that they may need. That means accessible beds. That means, again, fixtures, renovations to ensure that their kitchen is ergonomically correct. Those are huge costs that seniors could have to incur. In Quebec, they have a program that provides financial assistance to low-income seniors.

And there's another aspect that I think we missed. You're trying to help, you want to help, and I commend you for the intent. But should we help those who need the help the most right off the bat? I think you get maybe even a larger multiplier on it, because those who need the help the most are the ones that eventually cost us a lot as well. They need more assistance, and if we can help them and be proactive and preventive at the front end and ensure that we retrofit their homes to the maximum that we can afford, I know that the benefit on the back end will ensue.

In Quebec—let me talk about that again. Quebec has a program that provides financial assistance to low-income seniors aged 65 or over who need to make minor adaptations to their house or apartment in order to continue to live there safely and independently. Here's the great thing about the program: The program does not limit itself to the 15% scale on the \$10,000 investment but rather provides full reimbursement of costs up to \$3,500 if the work is done by an approved, licensed contractor. Such a program would be more useful for low-income seniors than the proposed credit but obviously would not benefit all other seniors. What they're doing in La Belle Province is they're identifying that there is a segment of seniors who need more help than others immediately. In that light, they are able to access

more money. That's what we're talking about here, resources.

The program here, in this case, under G2, is not income tested. I know there are other bills that have come through this House that do raise some concerns from time to time that those who don't need this type of program could actually access it. I think that would be worthwhile taking a look at. Again, there are so many different aspects in this bill that could add to its improvement.

One of the things that we have to realize here is that we are on the verge of a crisis within our aging population. All metrics, all demographics point to a scenario where we will not be able to afford to get old. That has a lot to do with some of the federal programs that are ongoing. We're talking about cuts to CPP, one of the most fundamental aspects of the framework of our country, our Canada pension plan, a scheme devised by New Democrats, ultimately, that provided assurance that when you got to your later years in life you were going to be able to afford the basics. Other federal signals coming out are that they're going to want you to work longer—work more for less and have less at the end. That doesn't bode too well for the confidence of people in this province and ultimately in this country to be able to live in a decent and respectful way.

We're talking about making this thing better because, ultimately, Madam Speaker, seniors built the very country and the very province that we stand on today. We owe it to them to ensure that, if their health degrades to the point their home is no longer accessible to them and no longer accommodates them, the province should and can—it can—do enough to help them live out their lives in the comfort of their own homes.

I'm proud to stand in support of the intent of this bill because it is something that I certainly, if I was on the government side, would support: the whole idea of ensuring that seniors could age with the respect that they deserve. But I would go a whole lot further in ensuring that we made those provisions that their homes were safe and comfortable, again, because we owe it to them. We can afford it.

I also believe that the provisions in terms of stimulative measures can work as well. I'm a little bit of a Keynesian follower, supporter, in terms of economic ideology. I understand the idea that the government can spend some money and actually stimulate more money in terms of revenue.

I also understand that a tax cut, in terms of revenue coming in—if we cut tax rates, that is an expenditure, when we forgo those revenues. That's rarely a point that's made here. We always see tax cuts as simply tax cuts. No; those are expenditures, ultimately. If we're going to go further down that road than we have, then we're going to have less resources to be able to work through the context of these bills and to provide some mechanisms for folks to live in decency and security, one of the reasons why we were so proud to have some of our other ideas adopted, some of our great ideas adopted that actually put the pause on those corporate tax expendi-

tures. You call them tax cuts; we call them expenditures. The government took that and adopted that as a part of their budget, and we're happy that they did.

Also, we understand that there are those in the province who have made it through these hard economic times relatively unscathed and potentially could afford to support the wonderful services we have in this province like our roads, like our schools, like our hospitals—all those systems that members of the official opposition labelled as socialist just moments ago: socialist amendments, socialist roads, socialist sewers, socialist water. Absolutely—and you drink a lot of it every day. Sometimes you flush it down the toilet, it's treated and it's put into lakes. If that's socialism, then we're all better off for it.

Madam Speaker, I think you can tell that our party certainly is supportive of the intent, as I am as an individual member, but it would be supportive of the measure to actually have a larger catchment in terms of folks that were supported by this type of bill. We know it's necessary and we know that it's only going to get more necessary as we go along. It's something that I hope we can implement quickly, and I hope we can have a lot of buy-in from those seniors that understand that. It's a half-measure. It is a stopgap. It doesn't go all the way.

As we've seen with many other bills from the government side, the intent is there, but the full mechanics and going the distance on bills that would actually solve problems are rarely evident. That's maybe what our job is: to point out some of the inadequacies in bills that could make them better and hopefully they'd be adopted, as we have seen from time to time in this House.

Madam Speaker, I'll end my comments there. As always, I'm honoured to speak in this House, and I look forward to hearing from my colleagues.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 39, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

ABORIGINAL LAND DISPUTE

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Haldimand–Norfolk has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Minister of Energy. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

1800

For those of you who wish to leave the chamber before we start, I'd like to invite you to do that now so the member can speak without the added distraction.

The member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Speaker. As you've noted, I requested this late show debate because of my dissatisfaction with the answer to my question given by the Minister of Energy and subsequently an answer shared by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

I actually asked the question of the Premier concerning this government's assigning of the land lease payments from crown land administered by the Ontario Realty Corp. at South Cayuga in Haldimand county—payments that are in the process apparently of being made to Six Nations.

Quite frankly, I note from the outset that my dissatisfaction results from the fact of the minister failing to even attempt to address my questions with regard to the government's involvement in the recently announced Samsung-Six Nations deal that will see government money laundered through the Ontario Realty Corp. and through Samsung and assigned to Six Nations, allegedly as a buyoff against a future protest against wind turbines.

Specifically I asked: "Is the government involved in the agreement or not? Is this about handing over lease money to Six Nations or handing over crown land, all the while sticking Haldimand county with wind towers and property devaluations?... Why has this land-lease precedent been set?" Again, no attempt was made to answer any of the questions.

I think it should be recognized that as the elected representative for Haldimand–Norfolk, these aren't just my questions; these are questions being asked across Haldimand county. When ministers ignore me, they are ignoring the people I represent. I find that unacceptable.

You see, Speaker, apparently the minister is willing to address the subject with others, as he was quoted in the media stating that "the agreement had nothing to do with the government." However, that statement seems to fly in the face of published quotes from elected Six Nations Chief Bill Montour, who noted in the Teka newspaper, the Tekawennake, that, "A letter from the Minister of Infrastructure states that the lease from the land surface will be turned over to Six Nations." Chief Montour goes on to characterize this as "unprecedented," adding that, "They have always maintained that we have no right to that land."

I asked the McGuinty government: Share this letter. Given that the chief feels it's precedent-setting, given the last six years of land dispute impacts, I would think something as important as this must be discussed with the people that it impacts. Just as it was with the original, secret, backroom \$7-billion Samsung deal with the Ontario government, so too with the most recent deal: The people in Ontario, and particularly those in my riding, are kept in the dark.

Six years after the land dispute began at Douglas Creek Estates in Caledonia, the scars of mayhem remain: a burned-out tractor-trailer; the blocking of home building, commercial and industrial development; and a continuing seeding of division within the community. A once-promising subdivision, Douglas Creek Estates, now features warrior flags, a hydro tower barricade and

occupiers. Of course, it was just as recent as this morning that Mr. McGuinty called the situation that I just described as an “alleged occupation.” I do ask the Premier to talk to someone like Sam Gualtieri, who was almost beaten to within an inch of his life. A statement like that is an insult to the Gualtieri family.

Nearby, yet-to-be-wired hydro towers stand untouched—they’ve been there for six years, stalling transmission from Niagara—that cost the Ontario government \$100 million. After six years, people are understandably nervous, skeptical and untrusting of the McGuinty government’s mishandling of any situation to do with either land disputes or the transmission of electricity.

The concern grows again. With the stroke of a pen, we saw the handover of Ipperwash Provincial Park, the handover of the 360-acre Burtch correctional property, again with zero public consultation. Now we hear the infrastructure minister has written a letter indicating that land-lease monies from properties within Haldimand county will be laundered through Samsung to Six Nations. Speaker, this adds insult to injury for people in my area. And the questions remain. Where is the letter? We wish to see that letter that said that these land-lease payments have been signed over to Six Nations.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The parliamentary assistant has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Earlier today, the member from Haldimand–Norfolk asked a question to the Premier with regard to assigning land-lease payments from crown lands at South Cayuga to Six Nations. I want to start off with a few quotes, Madam Speaker, from the Six Nations, which may put things in a better perspective for my honourable colleagues in this House.

A statement by Chief Bill Montour of Six Nations: “This agreement is a historic accomplishment for Six Nations as it demonstrates the success that can be achieved with Six Nations as a partner. The Grand [River] Renewable Energy Park is a template for how Six Nations can finally begin to realize benefits from the ongoing development within the Haldimand tract; the fact that the development itself is clean and sustainable simply adds to the overall attractiveness of the project.”

With regard to Samsung projects with Six Nations, our government has an agreement with Samsung, which is a landmark agreement, that is creating jobs and bringing investments to our province of Ontario. We are pleased with the progress that Samsung and the Six Nations elected council have made with respect to the Grand Renewable Energy Project. Samsung is comfortable investing in the Grand Renewable Energy agreement, creating Canadian jobs in the process of this investment.

Samsung has been consulting with various aboriginal communities, including Six Nations, for a number of years about this renewable energy project and the proposed land lease. Recently, Madam Speaker, it was the subject of 10 public hearings on the matter.

We are not worried about service interruptions in the area. There are sufficient transmission lines to support the project’s needs. The Grand Renewable Energy Project is predicted to generate \$55 million for the Six Nations groups over the next 20 years.

Samsung and partners worked together in a comprehensive community consultation process with Six Nations people to ensure their feedback was taken into consideration. K.J. Kim, vice-president of Samsung, made a statement saying: “Samsung, together with our development partner Pattern, welcomes the decision by the elected council of Six Nations to join with us in building a world-class wind and solar farm in Haldimand county. After almost two years of negotiations with Six Nations, we are proud to have reached an agreement for the first renewable energy partnership in Six Nations’ history.”

Mr. Michael Garland, the CEO of Pattern, made this comment: “Having engaged in a comprehensive community consultation process with the Six Nations people, Pattern and Samsung would like to recognize the efforts of Chief Montour, his colleagues on council, and staff who have taken a historic step forward.”

Samsung, through its \$7-billion investment in our province of Ontario, plan to bring in 16,000 jobs—manufacturing jobs and additional construction, installation, maintenance, engineering, operation, steel-making, financial services, facilities management and other jobs—to this province.

They’re building four new manufacturing facilities in Ontario. In Tillsonburg, they are manufacturing blades for wind turbines, where they are creating 900 jobs. In Windsor, they are building towers for wind power, with 700 jobs created. In Don Mills, for the solar inverters project and the factory, they are creating 200 jobs. In London, for a solar panel manufacturing plant, they are creating 200 jobs. These are the jobs which are created just by Samsung projects.

The land-lease issue which has been raised: Infrastructure Ontario and Samsung have been in discussion—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I’d ask you to wrap up because you have exceeded the five minutes.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Infrastructure Ontario and Samsung have been in discussion on the potential lease of lands to enable the Grand Renewable Energy Park for the past year. At this time, no final decisions have been made. Any potential land lease to Samsung, if approved, will be on standard government terms at market rates.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1812.

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CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 5 June 2012 / Mardi 5 juin 2012

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Wireless Services Agreements Act, 2012, Bill 82, Ms. Best / Loi de 2012 sur les conventions de services sans fil, projet de loi 82, Mme Best

Mr. Jim McDonell.....	2717
Ms. Cindy Forster	2726
Mr. Jeff Leal.....	2726
Mr. Steve Clark	2726
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	2727
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	2727
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	2727

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Jeff Yurek.....	2727
Hon. Laurel C. Broten.....	2727
Mr. Bill Walker	2727
Mr. Jeff Leal.....	2727
Mr. Tim Hudak	2728
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn.....	2728
Ms. Sylvia Jones	2728
Mr. Shafiq Qaadri	2728
Mr. Rob Leone	2728
Hon. Eric Hoskins	2728
Mr. Frank Klees	2728
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	2728
Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	2728

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Manufacturing jobs

Mr. Tim Hudak	2728
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	2728

Aboriginal land dispute

Mr. Tim Hudak	2729
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	2730

Power plant

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	2731
Hon. Christopher Bentley.....	2731

Local health integration networks

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	2731
Hon. Deborah Matthews	2731

Aboriginal land dispute

Mr. Toby Barrett	2732
Hon. Christopher Bentley.....	2732
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2732

Arbitration

Mme France Gélinas	2733
Hon. Deborah Matthews	2733

Anti-bullying initiatives

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	2733
Hon. Laurel C. Broten	2733

Air ambulance service

Mr. Frank Klees	2734
Hon. Deborah Matthews	2734

Horse racing industry

Mr. Taras Natyshak	2735
Hon. Dwight Duncan.....	2735

Economic development

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza.....	2735
Hon. Brad Duguid	2735

Air ambulance service

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	2736
Hon. Deborah Matthews	2736

Assistance to flood victims

Ms. Andrea Horwath	2737
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	2737
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2737

Skills training

Ms. Soo Wong.....	2737
Hon. Glen R. Murray.....	2737

Air ambulance service

Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	2738
Hon. Deborah Matthews	2738

Ontario Northland Transportation Commission

Mr. Gilles Bisson	2738
Hon. Dwight Duncan.....	2738
Hon. Rick Bartolucci.....	2739

Correction of record

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	2739
-------------------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover

Continued from back cover

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Accepting Schools Act, 2012, Bill 13, Ms. Broten / Loi de 2012 pour des écoles tolérantes, projet de loi 13, Mme Broten	
Third reading agreed to	2739
Notice of dissatisfaction	
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	2739
Visitor	
Mr. Bill Walker	2740

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. John O'Toole	2740
Mr. Vic Dhillon	2740
Mr. John O'Toole	2740
Ms. Soo Wong	2740

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Forest fire	
Ms. Laurie Scott	2740
Legislative staff	
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	2740
Bacardi Ltd.	
Mr. Vic Dhillon	2740
Acton-Georgetown Walk for ALS	
Mr. Ted Arnott	2741
Energy contracts	
Ms. Sarah Campbell	2741
Tim Hortons Camp Day	
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	2741
St Marys Cement	
Mr. John O'Toole	2742
Environmental protection	
Mr. Reza Moridi	2742
Health care funding	
Mr. Randy Hillier	2742
Special report, Environmental Commissioner of Ontario	
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	2742

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Government Agencies	
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	2742
Report deemed adopted	2743

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Human rights	
Hon. John Gerretsen	2743
Seniors' Month	
Hon. Linda Jeffrey	2743
Arts and culture awards	
Hon. Michael Chan	2744
Human rights	
Ms. Sylvia Jones	2745
Seniors' Month	
Mrs. Julia Munro	2745
Arts and culture awards	
Mr. Ted Chudleigh	2745
Human rights	
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	2745
Seniors' Month	
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	2746
Arts and culture awards	
Mr. Paul Miller	2746

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Environmental protection	
Mrs. Julia Munro	2746
Anti-bullying initiatives	
Mr. John Vanthof	2746
Automotive industry	
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	2747
Protection for people with disabilities	
Ms. Sylvia Jones	2747
School closures	
Mme France Gélinas	2747
Anti-bullying initiatives	
Ms. Helena Jaczek	2747
Invasive species	
Mr. Norm Miller	2748
Automobile insurance	
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	2748
Alzheimer's disease	
Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield	2748
Wind turbines	
Mr. Jim McDonell	2748
Tourism	
Ms. Sarah Campbell	2749
Highway improvement	
Mr. Bob Delaney	2749

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act, 2012, Bill 2, Mr. Duncan / Loi de 2012 sur le crédit d'impôt pour l'aménagement du logement axé sur le bien-être, projet de loi 2, M. Duncan

Mr. Peter Shurman.....	2749
Mr. Steve Clark.....	2752
Mr. John Vanthof.....	2755
Mr. Jeff Leal	2755
Ms. Laurie Scott	2755
Mr. Jagmeet Singh.....	2756
Mr. Peter Shurman.....	2756
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	2756
Ms. Helena Jaczek	2759
Mr. John Yakabuski.....	2759
Mr. Taras Natyshak	2759
Mr. Jeff Leal	2760
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	2760
Mr. Monte McNaughton.....	2760
Ms. Sarah Campbell	2763
Mr. Jeff Leal	2763
Mr. Steve Clark.....	2763
Mr. John Vanthof.....	2764
Mr. Monte McNaughton.....	2764
Mr. Taras Natyshak	2764
Third reading debate deemed adjourned.....	2767

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE / DÉBAT SUR LA MOTION D'AJOURNEMENT

Aboriginal land dispute

Mr. Toby Barrett.....	2767
Mr. Reza Moridi	2768