



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 27 August 2012

Lundi 27 août 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



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Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 27 August 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 27 août 2012

The House met at 1030.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Let us pray.

Prayers.

RESIGNATION OF MEMBER FOR VAUGHAN

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order, please. Good morning, and welcome back.

I beg to inform the House that, during the adjournment, a vacancy has occurred in the membership of the House by reason of the resignation of Greg Sorbara as the member for the electoral district of Vaughan, effective the first day of August, 2012. Accordingly, the Speaker has issued his warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for a by-election.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I beg to inform the House that His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following is the title of the bill to which His Honour did assent:

An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 / Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Merci beaucoup, monsieur le Président. Je tiens à souhaiter la bienvenue à M. Carol Jolin, qui est nouvellement nommé président de l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens, et M. Pierre Léonard, récemment nommé directeur général de l'AEFO. Ils sont accompagnés par M. Stewart Kiff. Alors, merci d'être ici aujourd'hui pour cet important événement.

Mr. Rod Jackson: I'd like to welcome my constituency assistant, Sue Christensen, who's down for the day here today. She works very hard for the people of Barrie, and I'm happy to have her.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome Brayden Darroch. He's going into grade 5 and hopefully will be attending class on September 4. He's here today to watch the happenings of Queen's Park. He's just coming into

the gallery there now. I'd like to welcome him for the first time to Queen's Park.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It gives pleasure to introduce Sam Hammond, head of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario; Fred Hahn, head of CUPE Ontario; and Ken Coran, head of OSSTF.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Introductions? There being no more introductions, it's time for oral questions.

Interjection.

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

Mr. Kim Craitor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me. I did want to introduce a special guest from my riding. His name is Craig Brockwell, and he's with the Ontario Teachers' Federation. Craig, welcome. It's a pleasure to have you here, buddy. Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: Before I address my question to the Premier, I want to take a moment to congratulate and thank our finance critic, Peter Shurman, of the Ontario PC caucus, for finally breaking through to the Liberal government that a legislated pay freeze is essential to getting our books back into balance.

Premier, we find ourselves in the Legislature with two additional weeks of the fall sitting, quite frankly because of the mess you've made in the public school system. You have failed to negotiate a deal. In fact, you started negotiating back in the spring. Only four out of 72 boards have agreements; that's about 4%. So, Premier, you've created a mess, but I want parents and students to understand that the Ontario PC caucus is going to bail you out. We want them back in school the very first day of school; they shouldn't pay the price.

My question for the Premier is, surely to goodness we're not going to have to go through this 3,999 more times. Will you support an across-the-board legislated pay freeze for all of us in the broader public sector?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's good to be back, Speaker. It's good to be back. There's a strange mixture of both support and criticism bound up in that question. Of course I welcome the support, and I see the criticism a little bit differently. But I think, in all seriousness, Speaker, there is an important matter before all of us. This afternoon we will be introducing a bill, a piece of legis-

lation, that will help us move forward both in terms of maintaining progress and stability in our schools and helping us achieve some of the goals we have set out for ourselves in our fiscal plan.

I do want to take this opportunity to thank the Progressive Conservative caucus for the support that they are showing as we move forward on this. I understand that they raised some initial concerns that we've tried to address, and we look forward to moving forward together on this particular matter.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Let me say back to the Premier: I know you had committed to getting a deal with the unions back in the spring. You failed to do so. You needed our support to bail you out of a mess. But, Premier, if we do have you finally understanding the gravity of the situation, the conversation you and I had back in November in your office, where I said that we needed a mandatory across-the-board pay freeze and we needed it immediately—if you're willing now to move on a partial wage freeze for teachers, surely there is a better way, one laid out by the Ontario PC caucus, that says we have 4,000 collective agreements in the province. This is but one; there are 3,999 more to go. Why don't we just cut to the chase? Will you support the PC call for an across-the-board wage freeze for all of us—teachers, doctors, firefighters, MPPs—that will save us \$2 billion a year?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: No, we won't do that, because it won't work; it's as simple as that. It's not constitutional. We've been given some pretty clear direction from the Supreme Court of Canada when it comes to these matters.

Speaker, I'll tell you why our bill strikes the appropriate balance. From a labour perspective—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order, please. I believe you asked a question and would like to have the answer, so it would be nice if we had a little bit of quiet while the answer is given.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleagues in both parties I know will be interested in understanding that the bill that we are going to introduce, which has been the subject of unprecedented scrutiny and publicity relative to the bills that we've introduced in this House in the past, Speaker, is in fact based on a memorandum of understanding that we've entered into with a number of federations. Building on that road map, it has already received the support of over 55,000 teachers and four school boards representing over 160,000 students, so I'd like to say that we're doing what we need to do both from a fiscal and a collective bargaining point of view.

1040

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's hard to follow the Premier's arguments. On one hand, he says some things are

constitutional, then he finds that they're not constitutional. He echoes arguments made by the union bosses that he says he's going to actually fight in court. I had hoped that the Premier had finally come aboard the Conservative boat, to understand that a mandatory public sector wage freeze for all of us, across the board, is fair, is reasonable. After two years and several months of negotiations, you've only brought half a deal forward.

Premier, are you fully on the boat or not? Are you going to jump back into the lake? Clearly, the way to proceed is an across-the-board wage freeze for all of us in the broader public sector. It will save us \$2 billion. It will help, then, to reduce the size and cost of government.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, again, I think we've said it. My honourable colleague has made this request of us on several occasions, and we've offered the same response in equal number. I don't intend to revisit that.

I think what's important as we speak to what is before this House—not yet by way of introduction of bills but by way of subject matter. I think we all have a shared interest in ensuring that we maintain the stability and progress that we have made in our schools. We all have an interest in ensuring that we achieve our fiscal goals. When it comes to that progress and stability, it is nothing short of amazing, Speaker. We have smaller classes. We're rolling out full-day kindergarten. We've built some 570 new schools. There are some 27,000 school renewal projects that we have completed. The results that we have for that: higher test scores, higher grad rates, peace and stability, certainty that parents have to be able to count on.

I think we've come a long way, and this bill embodies the very sentiment that informed our progress, and we look forward to keeping moving forward.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: I had hoped for better. I had hoped that the conversation I had with the Premier, a private conversation back in November, had finally sunk in, that you would understand the importance of an across-the-board wage freeze that gives you time to reduce the total size and cost of government.

So let me help, if I understand the Premier's position. He wants a partial wage freeze on some teachers, but he doesn't want it elsewhere. Specifically, since the spring, the government has signed a three-year deal with 6,000 CUPE members at Ontario Power Generation, OPG, that will see an annual wage increase of 2.7% a year, so almost a 3% pay increase.

Premier, why are you giving some workers, power workers, almost a 3% pay raise for three years, but you're freezing teachers? How do you distinguish between teachers and others? Isn't it better to be fair, reasonable and across the board?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me remind my honourable colleagues about how we got to this point with

respect to teachers. I know my colleague the leader of the NDP would want to pay attention to this as well.

We started some six months ago, understanding very well that there's a clock that's going to turn over at midnight on the 31st of August which will result in teachers getting an increase in pay. That's something that we can't afford to do at this point in time. It's not in keeping with our fiscal plan.

We awarded pay hikes to teachers during the course of the past nine years because those were suited to the times. They were responsible; they were reasonable. But these are different times, Speaker. There's a lot of uncertainty in the global economy that's affecting our rate of growth here in Ontario.

Our bill is designed to hit the pause button when it comes to teacher pay but at the same time continue to increase in smaller classes, continue to invest in the roll-out of full-day kindergarten, continue to make progress on test scores and graduation rates.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier seems to be talking out of both sides of his mouth here. I thought he was moving beyond that and had come aboard the PC position of an across-the-board wage freeze.

I'll ask the Premier again because I don't think I got an answer there. How do you distinguish between CUPE power workers and a partial freeze for teachers? On one hand, you say we need to freeze wages so we can get about reducing the size and cost of government, but when it comes to Ontario Power Generation, you're going to give the workers almost a 3% raise each and every year for three years. Premier, how do you distinguish between freezing teachers' salaries partially, but you're not going to do it for hydro workers, MPAC officers or anybody else? Help me understand your rationale. It kind of looks like you're panicking.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I know that my honourable colleague knows that that agreement was signed before the budget was introduced. What we're going to do now, of course, is deal with agreements going forward, and that's what this bill is all about.

From a student perspective, this bill hits the nail right on the head. It's going to continue to invest in the classroom; it's going to continue to roll out full-day kindergarten until finally it's available in all our schools, available to some 250,000 three-, four- and five-year-olds; it continues to invest in smaller classes; it continues to maintain our progress in test scores and graduation rates.

I know my honourable colleague has a real interest in a strong economy. The fact is that the foundation of our strength in the Ontario economy happens to be in our people. So in our schools we're doing a lot more than just imparting knowledge; we're building the strongest possible workforce. That is good for all of us.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, in this scramble around the teacher deal, you've forgotten what you used to say. In fact it was in the spring of 2010—Premier, I'll remind you of the 2010 budget, where you said you would have a pay freeze across the board. You failed to do so. The CUPE agreement for power workers is only one part of the deal.

Secondly, Premier, interestingly, in that 2010 budget you also exempted senior bureaucrats from the pay freeze. You said then that they would get merit pay increases. This was a loophole you put in schedule 24 of your bill. That has resulted in 98% of bureaucrats getting bonus pay—98%. You wonder what the 2% did wrong not to get Dalton McGuinty's handouts. Surely, Premier, by giving that exemption to senior public sector workers, you've undermined your credibility in negotiating across-the-board wage freezes. Our freeze includes that—everybody, across the board. It's fair; it's equal. Will you finally agree to fully come on board the Conservative boat and go about reducing the size and cost of government?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I remind my honourable colleague and his party that they were the authors of that pay-for-performance system that we have in place. They initiated that. It was a result of a consultation that they had done for themselves. They put it in place. What we have done is, we have acknowledged that the system they put in place is unsatisfactory. So I've asked the Minister of Finance to take a look at that and to report back to us with what we might do to ensure that we're being more fair both to the people who work within the public service and to taxpayers generally.

But again, Speaker, I want to acknowledge the support that we're receiving from the Progressive Conservatives when it comes to the bill we intend to introduce shortly, which will ensure both that we achieve our fiscal targets and maintain stability and progress in our schools.

TEACHERS' CONTRACTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Just a couple of short weeks ago, the Premier joined with New Democrats to defeat a bill that did pretty much the same thing as the bill that they're going to be introducing this afternoon. Back then, they called it reckless; they called it unconstitutional; they called it simplistic; they called it illegal. My question is a pretty simple one: Can the Premier pinpoint the moment that he decided he was okay with being reckless and simplistic and unconstitutional?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to take the question from my honourable colleague, the leader of the NDP. I would ask her to pay close attention to the facts connected with the evolution of the bill and a memorandum of understanding. We sat down with the federations. Those who chose to stay—we worked long and hard with them. We devoted more than 300 hours of bargaining and negotiation and we landed on a memorandum of understanding. That has been adopted, largely, by 55,000

teachers. My honourable colleague says that the labour community opposes this. Well, the fact of the matter is that 55,000 have said, "No, we support both the process and the result."

So, Speaker, we intend to move forward with this legislation. I ask my honourable colleague that she take the time to reflect upon the process that led to where we find ourselves today and that she consider seriously supporting the bill so that together we can send the right message to teachers, students and parents alike.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm merely saying what the Premier himself has been saying for years and what his own MPPs were saying just a few short weeks ago. Does the Premier have any evidence at all that he can produce in this House that this bill will do anything other than create expensive court challenges and turmoil in Ontario's classrooms?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, a few things: First of all, I would ask my honourable colleague to acknowledge what it is that we've been able to achieve by working so hard and well together in our publicly funded education system during the course of the past nine years.

To give credit where credit is due, Speaker, while we in government have the privilege of developing policies, appropriating funds and ensuring that the appropriate funding mechanisms are in place, ultimately it's teachers inside the classroom who deliver, and they keep delivering, the best-quality education in the English-speaking world. We didn't do that; our teachers did that. It's that same intent that informs this bill. We want to keep working with Ontario teachers, but we need to do so in a new fiscal context, one that says that we can't afford to give teachers their pay hike right now, not at this point in time. But we can continue to invest in full-day kindergarten, smaller classes and more academic progress inside every one of our schools.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the people who sent us here expect us to work hard on the challenges that they are facing. Instead, once again we see a Premier mostly focused on himself. The desperate drive for a majority government cost us \$190 million in Mississauga and who knows how much in Oakville. Now, after cynically forcing a by-election, the Premier thinks that he has found the path back to absolute power in this province, and he'll be campaigning on it, as a matter of fact, later on today. Can the Premier tell us how much kids in the classroom and families across Ontario are going to have to pay this time for his reckless quest for power?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I don't believe we can afford at this point in time to give teachers a pay hike. My honourable colleague sees things differently. She thinks we can afford to give teachers a pay hike right now. I say we can't. I think it's black and white: She wants to give teachers more pay; we're saying that we

can't afford to do so at the present time. We can't afford to give teachers more pay and roll out full-day kindergarten; more pay and maintain smaller class sizes; more pay and maintain progress when it comes to test scores and graduation rates. It's a time for us to make choices. Government calls for us to be responsible in that matter. We're making a responsible, balanced, thoughtful choice. And so far, we've secured the support of 55,000 Ontario teachers.

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. I want to ask the Premier about the government's priorities in this session. The Premier is showing today that he's happy to recall the Legislature when it comes to saving his job, but 600,000 people in this province without work are wondering when they're going to be able to be a priority for a change. We've put forward positive plans on this side of the bench, like our jobs creation tax credit that gives a hand to companies that are actually creating jobs in this province.

The Premier has made it pretty clear that his job is an urgent priority. When will the 600,000 people looking for work get the same kind of attention?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I'm delighted to speak to the issue of employment, and that brings us back to the matter of our bill. My honourable colleague knows that some of the advice that we received along the way was that we jettison some 20,000 people who earn a living in our schools: 10,000 teachers and 10,000 education support workers. We're not prepared to do that. Our choice instead is to hit the pause button when it comes to pay and use what little money we have available to roll out full-day kindergarten, to maintain class sizes at a smaller size and to continue to make progress in test scores and graduation rates. That's 20,000 jobs that are tied up in this bill that are a result of hitting the pause button on pay.

The other thing I'd ask my honourable colleague to keep in mind is that, were we to adopt the advice given to us by others in other quarters, those 20,000 who would lose their jobs would be the 20,000 youngest workers, those ones who are just starting up their families, those who are just dealing with mortgage payments. We choose not to fire those people.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: If the Premier was truly interested in taking a balanced approach to balancing the books, he could look at the bonuses that his government hands out to the top earners in the public sector. Can the Premier explain why that wasn't a priority for him? Is it simply because that's not an issue that he can exploit in the by-elections?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would ask my honourable colleague to remember that when we had our discussions about the budget, that was not an issue that she raised with us. It was never raised by my honourable colleague.

The pay-for-performance system was not raised by my honourable colleague.

Having said that, I think she has a genuine concern that we share. That's why I've asked the Minister of Finance to take a look at our pay-for-performance system. As I said before publicly, if everybody's getting it, it's not pay-for-performance, it's just pay, so we've got to necessarily make some changes to that. If my honourable colleague has any specific advice in that regard, we would welcome it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: If the Premier wants an urgent priority, maybe he should look at the fact that there are thousands and thousands of families in this province waiting for a family doctor. In Kitchener–Waterloo, where the Premier is going to be campaigning later on today, 20,000 families are waiting for a family doctor.

The Premier is ready to cut his summer short in a desperate bid to win these by-elections and get his majority government back. When are families who are waiting for a doctor or home care going to get the same kind of attention?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I'm proud to report that since we first earned the privilege of serving Ontarians in government, there are 164 more doctors practising in the Kitchener–Waterloo region.

There's always more work that we can and should do, but the fact of the matter is we have rolled out family health teams. We have nurse practitioner clinics. We have built new hospitals. Our wait times have come down. I think there are over 12,000 more nurses now working in Ontario.

All of that represents progress, but I am, of course, prepared to acknowledge that there is still more work to be done.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, the Ontario PC Party has been clear on the need for a mandatory public sector wage freeze for more than a year now to stop you from overseeing the hemorrhaging of taxpayer money as we head towards the government's looming \$411-billion deficit. I myself made this recommendation directly to you on several occasions, beginning last November in your office. So you knew where we stood and you knew what you had to do, but you just made excuses, sir.

We have since learned that your mismanagement of public money goes beyond what anyone ever imagined, with 98% of public sector managers receiving bonuses. Now you're scrambling, recalling the Legislature to try to implement what should have been in place a long time ago.

Minister, are you finally ready to admit that we were right all along, and will you now implement a wage freeze for the entire public sector for two years? Yes or no?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Could everyone sit, please?

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Speaker, in fact, this government began last December speaking actively, recognizing section 2(d) of the Constitution, laying out a path to be able to achieve this. On the one hand, as we maintain the important investments we've made in our classrooms—full-day learning, smaller class sizes—we've been able to achieve an agreement with 55,000 teachers. As the Premier has indicated, we are pushing the pause button, not just for teachers but for others, as collective agreements come due.

With respect to pay-for-performance, we agree that the system that that member's government set up is not working. It's broken, and we will fix it. I look forward to their support as we do that.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: Really, the minister seems to have forgotten the Public Sector Compensation Restraint Act, 2010. Your government is just as unwilling to learn from its mistakes as it is unwilling to take responsibility for them. You have been negligent with taxpayers' money. You are clearly ready to continue that negligence: 190 million taxpayer dollars to cover your political hide to cancel a Mississauga power station; \$35 million in bonuses to government employees when most Ontarian haven't even seen a 1% increase in their wages—not to mention Ornge, not to mention eHealth, which you continue to refuse to accept responsibility for—and colleges are preparing to strike. Now you won't work with our party to implement a wage freeze for all government workers.

Ontario PCs will do what is needed to make sure that Ontario kids go back to school in September. Why isn't your government doing what is needed to make sure that Ontario recovers? Why do you insist on backing down from a government-wide wage freeze when you know it's exactly what is required?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, the average rate of settlement over the last two years has been lower in the Ontario public service than it has been in the broader public sector as well as the federal government and the private sector, which helped us achieve the objectives we set forth in 2010.

1100

It's important, Mr. Speaker, to move forward, to push the pause button—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would the member from Pembroke—if you're going to heckle, I'd ask you to sit in your own seat.

Minister.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It is important to protect the gains we have made in the classroom: smaller class sizes, full-day learning. That's why we're pushing the pause

button, and we welcome the support of the official opposition.

We have others to deal with as time goes forward, Mr. Speaker. We intend to do that, because it is about classrooms, it's about kids and about getting back to balance in a responsible way that protects the interests of all Ontarians.

TEACHERS' CONTRACTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question to the Premier: The government has had eight months to negotiate, to engage in collective bargaining, with teachers and education workers. But instead of working to find real solutions, the Premier would rather create a crisis to win by-elections. Why is the Premier playing politics instead of looking after the interests of students?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: As the member opposite knows, teacher and support staff contracts are set to expire on August 31. We began our dialogue with our partners in education right across the province in February. We worked long and hard and we had tough conversations with our partners as we asked them to work with us, to put a pause on teacher pay increases, to move away from a system where sick days could be cashed out at retirement; rather, to move to a more modern sick leave plan, so that young teachers could have maternity benefits and we could live within our fiscal realities, so we could roll out full-day kindergarten and we could keep our class sizes small.

Speaker, we reached agreement with 55,000 teachers—those teachers who worked with us. It was an incredible challenge to work with those who walked away after less than an hour, but we have moved forward. We have a road map, and it is that road map that we seek to put in place right across the province so that school starts on time and so that it will continue and so that the dollars will remain in our classrooms.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Teachers and education workers have said that they will be in the classroom in September. Teachers and education workers have said that they would accept a wage freeze. Will the Premier admit that the reason we're here today has everything to do with seats in the Legislature as opposed to kids in the classroom?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Speaker, the contents of the legislation require a 0% salary increase for the next two years. All teachers will take a 1.5% pay cut in the form of three unpaid professional development days so that younger teachers can continue to move through the grid, and we will amend the grid over the long term with a view to sustainability. By removing the banked sick days we'll eliminate a \$1.7-billion liability from our boards.

It is not accurate to say that those whom we have not reached agreement with have agreed to a pay freeze,

Speaker. They have not. They have advanced a proposition where they would see a pay freeze for two years and increases for the following two years. They did not come forward with solutions that met our fiscal parameters, but there is still time to do so. We encourage OSSTF, we encourage ETFO, we encourage CUPE to have conversations with us. We have drafted a bill that would allow conversations to take place on provincial issues between now and August 31, and local issues between now and December 31. There is still time for everyone to put our students first.

TEACHERS

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, as we speak, teachers across the province are busy getting ready for the start of the new school year. For any teacher, especially for new teachers with little seniority, labour talks can be a stressful time. As caring educators, they just want to get back to the classroom, giving the students their best and helping to increase student achievement and well-being. But we know that there are many current practices in place that work against younger teachers. We know that new teachers face challenges when they start trying to gain exposure and experience in their chosen fields.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister update this House on what the government is doing to support younger teachers and increase opportunities for them?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Thank you to the member for Scarborough—Agincourt for giving me the opportunity to speak about how much this government values our young teachers and the work that they do. Young teachers are the fuel that keeps the engines of our education system running—constantly learning, adapting and improving every step. The McGuinty government's support for Ontario's young teachers has been shown in our labour discussions, the OECTA MOU and the proposed Putting Students First Act.

That's why we're committed to fair hiring practices in the education sector. We need to see fair hiring practices that are transparent, that are accountable to young teachers, so that everyone knows and understands the rules about being hired. It's particularly necessary in a system where accountability for public dollars is critical.

I want to be clear, though: It will be management that will still make the ultimate decision about who to hire, but that role comes with a responsibility to create a process that can be equally accessed and understood by all those young teachers who want nothing more than to get in front of a classroom in Ontario and teach our kids.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: My next question is also for the Minister of Education. Minister, everyone knows a qualified and keen young teacher who is eager to gain work experience, and I know my constituents in Scarborough—Agincourt will be pleased to hear that the government is committed to a level playing field for teacher hiring.

As a former school trustee, I have a unique perspective on just how valuable all our teachers are and also the energy that young teachers bring to our schools. Minister, what else is the government doing to support these new educators?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I, too, am very pleased to know that we will be taking steps to ensure fair and transparent hiring practices, and we will be introducing a regulation in the coming weeks.

But in addition, Speaker, we heard loud and clear how important it was for young teachers to be recognized for their qualifications and for their experience. In the agreement that we reached with OECTA and subsequently with AEFO, the experience of younger teachers will be recognized through partial movement through the grid in the coming years, and the costs will be offset by all teachers taking a 1.5% pay cut in the form of three unpaid professional days.

We're also putting in place new short-term sick leave benefits that support young teachers in cases of serious illness, and we're putting in place proper maternity benefits so that young teachers can have the supports that they need to be in the classroom every single day teaching our kids and know that we value the efforts and the role that they play in making sure our education system is one of the best in the world.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Nepean–Carleton.

TEACHERS' CONTRACTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Speaker. Welcome back.

My question is to the Minister of Education. It's clear that after nine years of mismanagement by this Liberal government you've put the province on a downward spiral. As a result, we're now facing record deficits and ever-increasing debts. This threatens the long-term viability of public education. Your own economic adviser Don Drummond stated that we would have a \$30-billion deficit and a \$411-billion debt if we didn't do something quickly. This means that every single dollar spent on servicing the debt and the deficit is one less dollar for kids in the classroom.

Will your government finally admit that Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus were right in calling for a legislated public sector wage freeze and that we're here at the 11th hour bailing your government out so kids can be in the classroom come September 1? We can stop wage increases that we cannot afford.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to acknowledge the support that we have received and the indication of support that we have received from the PCs in their desire to put students first. But I would say that we are not prepared to take a lot of lessons on how to rebuild and strengthen public education from them.

We're proud of the investments that we've made in education since we've been here for nine years. We've got our class sizes down. We've got our test scores up. We've got our graduation rates up, and we are being

studied from around the world as having an education system that speaks to the needs of all of our children, ensuring that they succeed regardless of their socio-economic demographic or their first language.

We've seen eight years of peace and stability in our schools, and we've worked with our partners in education to rebuild that system. What we are asking now is for more partnership, to take a pause when it comes to teacher pay increases so that we can continue to roll out full-day kindergarten, which the opposition would slash, and so that we can keep our class sizes down and we can keep that success rate of our students up.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

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Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, I hate to say this, but we told you so. We've said for a year that a broader public sector wage freeze was the only way to go. It was the fair way to go, the equitable way to go, and it was the way to go to get Ontario back on track so our public services wouldn't collapse under that debt and that deficit.

You've got to realize that your plan over the last nine years has put Ontario students at risk of not starting school in September. You signed rich, handsome agreements that we couldn't afford, that account for 5.5% salary increases on September 1, if not dealt with responsibly.

Will you admit that the PC plan on wage freezes was right all along, that your economic mismanagement has caused a crisis in education, and will you finally admit that you need Tim Hudak to bail your government out?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order, please. Can I have everyone sit?

Minister of Education.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important, as we have the debate in this Legislature, to recognize this is not about us, this is not about them. This is about the students in our classrooms and making sure we give them what they need.

The opposition would choose to cancel full-day kindergarten. There are no parents that I've talked to, in the many conversations that I've had, who would choose a teacher pay increase over full-day kindergarten. We need to roll out full-day kindergarten.

I know that they would choose to fire 20,000—10,000 teachers and 10,000 support workers—and let our class sizes go up. That is not the choice that we are making. We need their support to see this legislation pass, and I hope that every single member in this Legislature who has the privilege to sit here will stop thinking about them or us and think about the students they are privileged to represent.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. New question.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Speaker, 560

good-paying jobs will be lost in already hard-hit communities when this government closes the racetracks at Fort Erie, Sarnia and Windsor, and thousands more jobs will be lost as the slots-at-racetracks program is eliminated province-wide.

Late last week, your government received a report from your transition panel which concluded that the \$50-million government-proposed support industry transition fund is totally insufficient to build a bridge to sustainability.

Minister, when is this government going to finally start treating the men and women in the horse racing industry with the respect they deserve and put together a transition plan that will allow for real sustainability?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to thank the honourable member opposite for his question, Mr. Speaker. I did indeed receive last week the interim report from the expert panel of three former cabinet ministers of all persuasions. It was a good report. It was an excellent report.

The panel concluded that the government in fact made the right decision with respect to ending the slots-at-racetracks program, a program that cost taxpayers some \$345 million a year. The panel went on to say that it would in fact be a mistake to reinstate the program, going so far as to refer to it as “poor public policy.”

The panel also advised that a viable horse racing industry requires ongoing funding to maintain attractive purses, sustain tracks, support breeding and grow a robust system. I’ve asked the panel members to try to work with the industry to see if they can come up with one.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Here’s what the panel said: Without long-term financial assistance to the industry and given the withdrawal of over \$1 billion in slots-at-racetracks program funds over the same three-year period, the panel cannot deliver a model for sustainability or gradual exit for those invested or employed in the industry. When will this government finally table a transition plan that will save the thousands of jobs and horses that its reckless elimination of the slots program has put in danger?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I’ve asked the panel to continue to consult with the industry. Industry response to the panel has actually been quite positive. Here’s what OHRIA, the Ontario Horse Racing Industry Association, said:

“The OHRIA board has reviewed the OMAFRA panel’s report and OHRIA is appreciative of the effort of the OMAFRA panel for providing a report which has provided a path forward....”

They go on to highlight a number of positive comments in the report:

“The horse racing and breeding industry is worth saving,” they said, as did the panel.

“The horse racing and breeding industry is a valuable contributor to Ontario’s economy....

“The horse racing and breeding industry is worthy of government investment.

“The horse racing and breeding industry is a valuable social, cultural and community asset.”

I appreciate OHRIA’s comments, I appreciate the work of the expert panel and I look forward to their continuing to work with the industry and bringing in a report.

YOUTH SERVICES

Mr. Michael Coteau: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Mr. Speaker, I know that we’ve made significant progress when it comes to crime in this province. The overall youth crime rate in Ontario is 23% lower than it was in 2000. The youth violent crime rate is also down by 17% over the same period—better than the national rate.

However, many youth continue to face significant challenges and multiple barriers to success. The recent high-profile shootings in Toronto show that there’s a lot more work to be done. Following tragic incidents in Toronto this summer, the Premier asked the Ministers of Children and Youth Services and Community Safety and Correctional Services to consult with stakeholders to develop a balanced action plan that focuses on ensuring that young people have the support they need to make positive choices.

Speaker, I ask, what action is being taken as a result of this plan?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I’d like to thank the member from Don Valley East for this question, but also for his leadership and, frankly, the leadership of the member to my right, the member from Scarborough–Guildwood, and many others in this government on this important issue.

I want to say that I’m very pleased that we are taking immediate action, with the Roots of Youth Violence report as the foundation for our action moving forward. As part of our youth action plan, we’re expanding the summer jobs programs for disadvantaged youth to provide part-time jobs throughout the school year. We are also working with the private sector to create more employment opportunities for young people. We are also increasing the number of youth outreach workers, these very important individuals who work deep in the communities, supporting vulnerable youth. We’re increasing them by more than 50% right across the province, and we’ll be supporting communities’ programs through a new annualized youth opportunities fund.

I’m also pleased to announce that Alvin Curling, a former Speaker of this Legislature, has been appointed as my strategic adviser to help guide the implementation of our youth action plan.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Coteau: My next question is also to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. You’ve been very busy over the last 30 days, meeting with young

people and their families; community organizations that serve and support youth; representatives of social services, education, justice and business; and members of the public. It's apparent that your hard work has paid off by bringing forward a youth action plan that will benefit an additional 13,000 young people by implementing over 20 initiatives.

Job programs and youth outreach workers can only be a piece of the puzzle. Relationships between communities and the police will go a long way in preventing and fighting crime. How does your youth action plan focus on building a stronger relationship between the police and the people whom they are there to serve and protect?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, enforcing the law is very important. We have made unprecedented investments to ensure that police have the resources they need.

However, community and police need to work together towards safe communities. The youth action plan focuses on building stronger relationships with the police, so we fast-tracked \$1 million in safer and vital community grants to community organizations. We are also fast-tracking the proceeds of crime program to reinforce coordination among police services and to support police and community groups working together in disadvantaged communities for the next two years. We have increased Crime Stoppers' rewards for gun tips and we're supporting additional gun amnesty programs.

The youth action plan is a balanced approach, and I want to thank everyone who participated.

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TEACHERS' CONTRACTS

Mr. Todd Smith: My question is to the Minister of Finance this morning. Minister, in the 2012 Ontario budget it states that freezing the salary grid is necessary if the government is to meet its commitment to balance the budget. Minister, if freezing the salary grid is necessary for the government to meet its commitment to balance the budget, as you told the House back in the spring, then why did you bring in legislation that fails to freeze the grid? Should Ontarians take this as a sign that this government can't do it, that they're incapable of doing what they said they would do, or that they have no intention of actually balancing the budget on schedule?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The budget went on to say that we need to negotiate with our partners, and that is the path we took. I want to thank the 55,000 teachers in Ontario who have recognized that. So in fact we're able to keep young teachers working and moving up the grid while all teachers have agreed to take three unpaid PD days. That's precisely what we needed to do in terms of maintaining small class sizes, keeping those 10,000 young teachers and support staff working and taking a pause. In fact, this achieves the fiscal numbers that are laid out clearly in the budget and I believe will help us

keep our education system growing, keep our education system strong and keep our education system the best in the world.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Minister, we all know that you and your government are pretty skilled when it comes to playing a shell game with the government's numbers to put the best face on your abysmal fiscal track record. It's terrible.

But let's deal with the facts here. The bill that you've put forward punches a \$300-million hole in the government's fiscal plan—\$300 million. In April, Standard and Poor's said that Ontario could face further downgrades if the government shows an inability to rein in spending, and that's what you're doing here. You're incapable of doing what you said you were going to do and what needs to be done.

Minister, are you prepared to compromise Ontario's credit rating because you and your government failed to get serious about wage restraint when we gave you the opportunity last spring?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, the agreement that has been reached helps us achieve the numbers we laid out. The number the member put forward, I don't know where he got that. It's simply not accurate.

I will also say this: It is important to work with our partners moving forward, and to make sure that we take a course of action that will survive court challenges. Interestingly enough, the federal government had a recent decision at the appeals court which upholds the process that they entered into, which is very similar to this. The BC court decision was clear. We have to get this right precisely because of the reasons he stipulated. It's about better education, about getting back to balance and doing it in a fair and responsible fashion that takes into consideration the interests of all Ontarians, particularly the young men and women in our schools who are very much a part of the future of this great province.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITY EMPLOYEES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. As the Premier knows, the Hamilton-Wentworth Detention Centre is in a state of crisis these days. Today, hundreds of correctional officers are here at Queen's Park showing their support for their co-workers and expressing their frustration with this government's handling of the situation. The corrections workers at the Barton Street jail are highly trained professionals whose personal safety concerns matter, and they should not be ignored.

Is the Premier telling them today they can't exercise their right to refuse unsafe work or else they'll be punished for it?

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

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all I want to thank the members of the Hamilton-Wentworth Detention

Centre who are here today for the good work that they're doing all year around, and I'd like to thank the managers who have been working diligently to maintain operations at the Hamilton-Wentworth Detention Centre. I will be, after this question period, meeting with the president of the union.

However, I wanted to say to the member opposite that the Ministry of Labour attended the institution on two separate occasions and spoke with the institution on the third occasion to address the officers' concerns. The rules of the protocol proposed by management were safe and there was no right to refuse to work.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There is no reason that this dispute had to escalate to the level that it is now at. I spoke to the minister over a week and a half ago, asking her to intervene in this situation. On Friday, the government rejected the union's request for an arbitrator and refused to negotiate.

The people in my community are the workers in this facility, and the people in my community, along with those workers, want to make sure that this dispute is dealt with. They also want to make sure that these workers are able to do their work with the proper health and safety precautions in place. They want the dispute ended. Everybody wants the dispute ended.

Will the Premier commit to these workers and all Ontario workers that they do have a right to refuse unsafe work and that their employer—even if it's the government of Ontario—cannot discipline them for doing so?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It would be inappropriate to comment on the details of the negotiations as I, an Ontarian, would hate to see a discussion in this House interfere with getting things back to normal. I hope that they will get back to the table and negotiate a return to work.

However, I just wanted to comment on what—yes, that's true; we spoke last Friday. But she asked me one thing. She asked me to convey to the management that the person who was negotiating was not welcome by the union and if I could ask that we change that person, and we did. That's the only thing she asked me, and I delivered on what she asked me.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order, please. The member for Ottawa Centre.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, the responsibility for child care falls under your ministry. As a new dad, I'm continuously gaining further insight on how important quality child care and education are. Parents need to know that their kids are safe when they are dropped off in the morning. I know this government is committed to early learning and full-day kindergarten.

Some members of my community are concerned about the recent closure of Tiny Tots Montessori School, a private facility in the Ottawa area. Will the minister tell this House what the government is doing to ensure that residents of my community have access to reliable and affordable child care?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the member from Ottawa Centre for giving me the opportunity to address this specific issue in the House. I am aware that the facility has gone out of business, and I can understand how much anxiety and frustration that must be causing for parents. As a mom of young kids, I know how important safe and reliable child care is for parents and families.

That being said, Speaker, it's very important to highlight that private schools like Tiny Tots operate as businesses or non-profit organizations independently of the Ministry of Education.

Our government, though, is very committed to modernizing child care in Ontario. As part of that process, we recently released a discussion paper which seeks input on our long-term vision for child care. We are currently in discussions about ensuring that all parents have access to quality child care that they can count on.

Part of that discussion will include a very frank conversation with the sector about the grandfather clause that is at issue in this circumstance.

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you to the Minister of Education. Minister, I'm really proud of our government's commitment to early childhood education, and I'm proud of the choices our government is making by continuing to roll out full day kindergarten in our communities and protect the gains that we and teachers have made in our education. Ontario schools are recognized across Canada and around the world for educational excellence. Child care provides a strong foundation for our youngest learners, and as the MPP for Ottawa Centre, I'm happy to hear that this is an active file for the Minister of Education.

Minister, could you please tell this House what the government is doing to support quality child care in Ontario, more specifically in Ottawa?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: The member from Ottawa Centre is absolutely right: Our government has taken strong action to protect the huge gains we've made in education over the past eight years. The opposition has taken every possible position on full-day kindergarten: cancel it, keep it when it proved to be popular, cancel it again. It's hard to keep track.

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But in sharp contrast, we on this side of the House know that education is the best investment we can make in the future of this province. That's why we want to modernize early learning in Ontario. So on June 27 we released a discussion paper, *Modernizing Child Care in Ontario*. I encourage all interested parties to provide feedback, because we need their best possible advice. That's why we need the advice of the member for Ottawa

Centre in raising that on behalf of his constituents, and we need to have a frank conversation about how we can ensure we have a modern child care system that each and every family can rely on here in Ontario.

HYDRO CORRIDOR

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Premier. Premier, every time you show up in Kitchener–Waterloo you try to buy the support of local voters with their own money. Here's some evidence. You promised to build Highway 7—promise made, promise broken. You promised to fund the LRT—promise made, promise broken. You promised more GO trains—promise made, promise broken.

Clearly, you can't strike the right balance between your promises and keeping your word, so I'm going to give you another chance, Premier. Today when you go to Kitchener–Waterloo, will you promise voters that you will direct Hydro One to listen to the Progressive Conservatives and turn maintenance responsibility of the Mary Johnson and Keats Way hydro corridor over to the city of Waterloo, which has pledged not to use herbicides behind their homes?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would remind the member that in your opening statement you tried to indicate that there was a motive, and I would ask you to withdraw that.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask you to withdraw it.

Mr. Michael Harris: Withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Thanks very much. Just about a week and a half ago I was actually in Kitchener–Waterloo and I was walking the very corridor that my colleague is talking about. I won't be political, but I might have been walking with the Liberal candidate, Eric Davis, and a number of residents of the area who wanted to make sure—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister, you know the rules. I'd ask you to withdraw that and refrain from indicating—

Interjections.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I was walking the corridor with a number of residents, and they were telling me about the letters that they'd received from Hydro One. Hydro One has 150,000 kilometres of transmission and distribution corridor throughout the province. They need to make sure that they can keep the wires safe, replace and repair them where necessary, and make sure we have reliable power. They were concerned about the letters; they were concerned about the effect on vegetation. I understand that there are some follow-up discussions between the city and Hydro One and a proposed meeting

with the residents for the area. I'm very pleased that that discussion is going to be taking place.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Back to the Premier: Premier, this is your chance to show you care for the residents of Kitchener–Waterloo, not just during a by-election but in general. Residents next to the Mary Johnson and Keats Way corridor are concerned that Hydro One is preparing to use class 9 chemicals behind their homes.

Premier, the city of Waterloo has already offered to maintain this corridor without herbicides. After nine years of incompetence, financial mismanagement and broken promises, will you for once in Kitchener–Waterloo listen to residents and allow the city of Waterloo to maintain this corridor, just as the Progressive Conservative Party is demanding?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: It's sort of interesting. I was just reminded that I believe the party opposite actually voted against our pesticide ban generally in the province of Ontario. But that's a different issue.

As I already indicated, I was able to walk part of the corridor with the residents—very, very helpful residents. We went around some of the streets—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Huron–Bruce, come to order, please.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: There are meetings and discussions that will be taking place with the Hydro One people and the residents, and I'll be very interested in those.

They were also telling me, during our discussion, about some of the changes to the GO service in the Kitchener–Waterloo area—improvements there—and about the changes to Highway 7 and the improvements there. So there seems to be a lot going on there, but I'm very pleased to make sure that there are going to be some discussions involving the corridor.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, people from across northeastern Ontario have been upset with your government's decision to sell off the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission. People see this as a short-sighted decision that yet again demonstrates your government's lack of respect and commitment to northern Ontario.

You had originally announced that the sell-off of ONTC would not start until the spring of 2013. Citizens across the north have been organizing in opposition to this sell-off in hopes of getting you to reverse your decision and not sell the ONTC.

Will you admit that your recent announcement to speed up the closure of the Northlander train from the spring of 2013 to September 28 of this year is an attempt on the part of your government to shut down the opposition against the sell-off?

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

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The reality of the situation is that when we made the announcement in late March, we said that we would be shutting down the Northlander. The Northlander is not a sustainable entity. The Northlander costs this government approximately \$12 million a year. Its ridership is less than 50%.

As we move forward with the divestment of the ONTC, we will move forward in a very, very pragmatic way. We will ensure that as we move forward, at the end of the day, we have a far more stable, sustainable, efficient and effective transportation system in place for those along the Highway 11 corridor.

MEMBER'S PRIVILEGES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Newmarket–Aurora had previously given notice of a point of privilege. I will recognize the member at this time to state his point. I would also ask the member to give a brief synopsis of his very thorough written point, which has already been made available to me and, I note, delivered to the three House leaders as well.

The member for Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: Thank you, Speaker. On August 22, in accordance with standing order 21(c), I wrote to advise you that I intended to raise a point of privilege at my first available opportunity. This being it, I do so.

Speaker, this point of privilege relates to a disparaging document that was sent to MPPs, the Queen's Park press gallery, numerous other media outlets and, as of yet, an undetermined number of businesses and community organizations. The document, which is unsigned, impugns my integrity and reputation and is clearly intended to intimidate and obstruct me from carrying out my duties as a member of the Legislature, specifically as those duties relate to my responsibilities as a member of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

In addition to being riddled with false and misleading information, the document accuses me of having been involved in criminal activities. A copy of that document, which was first distributed on July 30, was delivered to you with my notice to you on August 22.

I have referred this matter to the Ontario Provincial Police with a request that this document, which I believe falls under the Criminal Code of Canada's definition of defamatory libel and intimidation of a justice system participant, be reviewed in the context of sections 289, 299 and 423.1 of the Criminal Code of Canada, and that this matter be investigated and that every effort be made to determine the source.

There can be no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that this document was created and distributed with the express purpose of damaging my reputation and intimidating me in my role as a parliamentarian.

Parliamentary privilege is defined by Erskine May as "the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House

collectively ... and by members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions...." O'Brien and Bosc further describe "peculiar rights" as the rights members share collectively and the rights each individual member has.

In particular, I draw your attention to a member's right to be free from "obstruction, interference, intimidation and molestation." I emphasize these privileges because I feel that this document has unduly interfered with my work here in this chamber, with my responsibilities and duties as a member on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and in general with my role as a parliamentarian.

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Parliamentary authority states that "It is impossible to codify all incidents which might be interpreted as matters of obstruction, interference, molestation or intimidation and as such constitute prima facie cases of privilege. However, some matters found to be prima facie include the damaging of a member's reputation ... the intimidation of members and their staff and of witnesses before committees...."

O'Brien and Bosc also note that "Speakers have consistently upheld the right of the House to the services of its members free from intimidation."

Furthermore, O'Brien and Bosc state that the unjust—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I ask the member to summarize? I was looking for a brief synopsis, not a complete synopsis.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, with all due respect, this is incredibly important to all members of the House. I beg your indulgence.

Further, O'Brien and Bosc state that "The unjust damaging of a member's good name might be seen as constituting an obstruction if the member is prevented from performing his or her parliamentary functions."

They illustrate this using a 1987 ruling from Speaker Fraser that states that "The privileges of a member are violated by any action which might impede him or her in the fulfilment of his or her duties and functions. It is obvious that the unjust damaging of a reputation could constitute such an impediment."

The document in question was created in an attempt to impugn my reputation and in an attempt to impede my work as a parliamentarian, my duties here in this chamber and my work on the public accounts committee's investigation of the scandal at Ornge. It is evident from the very first sentence of the document in question that its contents and distribution are directly tied to my work on the investigation into Ornge.

As you know, I've spoken on this issue numerous times during debate and question period. I have raised the issue through questions to the Premier, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Health and the government House leader, and I have examined numerous witnesses in my duties as a member of the public accounts committee investigating the Ornge scandal. It is in the context of my work on this file that the document calls into question my ability "to question anyone else's integrity." It is

obvious that this statement is referring to my questions relating to the Ornge scandal in the Legislature and the examination of witnesses who have come before that committee to testify concerning their involvement at Ornge. It is clear that this defamation campaign was designed to intimidate me from carrying on with that work.

Speaker, I draw your attention to a recent case of precedent involving Public Safety Minister Vic Toews and the group Anonymous. The group published videos on the Internet which made various allegations about Mr. Toews's public life and also made specific threats, all of which was in reaction to Mr. Toews's introduction of Bill C-30.

On February 27, 2012, Mr. Toews rose on a point of privilege, arguing that the threatened actions of the videos constituted an attempt to intimidate him in his role as a member of Parliament. House of Commons Speaker Andrew Scheer ruled that this case constituted a prima facie question of privilege because the language used in the videos "does indeed constitute a direct threat to the minister in particular, as well as other members. These threats demonstrate a flagrant disregard of our traditions and a subversive attack on the most fundamental privileges of this House."

Speaker Scheer stated in his ruling, "When duly elected members are personally threatened for their work in Parliament, whether introducing a bill, making a statement or casting a vote, this House must take the matter very seriously."

In addition, former Speaker of the House of Commons Lucien Lamoureux stated in a 1973 ruling that there is "no hesitation in reaffirming the principle that parliamentary privilege includes the right of a member to discharge his responsibilities as a member of the House free from threats or attempts at intimidation."

Mr. Speaker, it's evident that this document was created and distributed with the explicit purpose of damaging my reputation as a parliamentarian, in an attempt to discredit my role as a parliamentarian in the investigation of the scandal at Ornge. I appreciate the fact that vigorous debate can and does occur in this House. However, there is a fine line between freedom of speech and this document, which was designed with the sole purpose of intimidating me as a member of this Legislature and damaging my reputation.

Joseph Maingot, in *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, offers insight into the delicate balance between critical speech and a breach of privilege or contempt: "[A]ll interferences with members' privileges of freedom of speech, such as editorials and other public comment, are not breaches of privilege even though they influence the conduct of members in their parliamentary work.... But any attempt by improper means to influence" or obstruct a member in his parliamentary conduct may constitute contempt. Using the criteria set out by Maingot, it is apparent that this document is the latter. It was meant to influence my parliamentary work on the public accounts committee and here in this chamber.

Lastly, former House of Commons Speaker Gilbert Parent on March 24, 1994, stated, "Threats of blackmail

or intimidation of a member of Parliament should never be taken lightly. When such occurs, the very essence of free speech is undermined. Without the guarantee of freedom of speech, no member of Parliament can do his duty as is expected."

Speaker, I've had the privilege of serving as a member of the Ontario Legislature since 1995 and over the course of those years have often been on the forefront of contentious issues. Vigorous debate is not unfamiliar to any of us, and as parliamentarians, we accept that from time to time we'll be subject to attack and ridicule. We learn to cope with that dimension of our calling. This document, however, crosses the line, and I am compelled to bring it to your attention and to the attention of this House and to request that you review this matter to determine whether a prima facie breach of privilege has occurred. I also ask that every effort be made and that the necessary resources be made available to determine the source of the document.

As parliamentarians, we must be able to investigate and study issues freely without being intimidated. If we do not deal with this issue and we leave these tactics unaddressed, we put the rights and privileges of all members of this Legislature in jeopardy.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Everyone sit, please.

The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I rise as the House leader for the New Democratic Party. I'm not going to go through all the points that were made by the honourable member; I think those were made, they're written to you and you have a chance to review them. But I want to add a couple of points to what was said.

First of all, I think that when we see these types of attacks on individuals, it's not only when the member rises in his debate that's at question; I think it's politics in general. It seems that we're more and more these days, rather than talking about ideas and about how we can build a better province and a better country or a better municipality—politics seems to be devolving to "gotcha" kind of politics and these types of attacks which, I think, are more an American style of politics than a Canadian style of politics.

As the Speaker, I think you have to take a look at this from that perspective. There are many, many people who may be thinking that they want, one day, to run for the municipal council, their school boards, their federal or provincial government, and they're looking at instances like this and saying, "Why would I get involved when it's not about ideas; it's about how you attack the other person and put them down?" In that light, I think you need to take a look at this to send a very strong message to say that, in fact, these types of attacks should not have any place in Canadian politics.

We tend to be, as parliamentary systems, contrary to our American brothers and sisters, a system where, yes, we have very vigorous debate in these Legislatures; yes, we have differences of opinion, but that's where the

debate should happen. It should be on the opinion and on the ideas, and not against the actual individual. I would ask you to keep that in mind when making your ruling.

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

Mr. David Zimmer: Speaker, I would like to speak to this too. I found out about this a couple of days ago. I'm obviously a Liberal member of the chamber, but I, too, am a member of the public accounts committee.

While the member opposite and I have very differing views regarding a whole host of political issues in this chamber and we do have a difference of view of various issues that are before the public accounts committee and we have debated and indeed sparred at that committee, but in the best parliamentary tradition and within the traditional bounds that we carry on that sort of debate and sparring.

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Having said that, I have read over the anonymous—anonymous—letter, and I stress the word “anonymous.” I read over the details of it, and I am appalled that that sort of a letter would be sent out by someone out there in the community on an anonymous basis to members of this chamber, to all of the various people that the member for Newmarket–Aurora spoke to. There's a list of people to whom this document has gone out.

If this can happen to the member for Newmarket–Aurora, it can happen to me, it can happen to any of the 107 members in this chamber. What it does is put a chill on how a member might conduct himself in the hot and heavy of political debate. Because these allegations are so over the top that you would not want to—I can understand someone would not want to do anything to further the circulation of those. But they're already out there, and I think, Speaker, that the member opposite has made a compelling argument for a case of privilege.

I think, and I ask every member in this chamber to think—regardless of your political affiliation, regardless of the issue, you should take a few minutes and read the letter over and ask yourself if you would want something like that out there floating around in this hypermedia world, the world of emails, the world of Twitter, the world of Facebook. At some point we have to draw a line, and I think, Speaker, that you should rule that there's a breach of member's privilege here.

I'd take it a step further, Speaker, and I'd suggest that you might want to refer this to the legislative committee on the assembly here to root out this; have the committee look at it and have the committee issue its findings in a clear statement that we will not tolerate this kind of conduct that puts a chill on our responsibilities here as members.

I'm quite prepared to debate any member of this chamber in committee or in this House, but always within the parameters of the facts of truthfulness and of respectful opinion. But these anonymous drive-by slurs—you know, it used to be in the old days somebody would put a rumour out there and it would fester and it would do harm. It would do harm to your family; it would do

harm to the work that the members do here. But now people put these things out and it's more than just a rumour, it gets out there in that great media world, and the potential for damage and chill on the work that all of us here have to do as members is dramatic.

I've got the greatest of differences with my federal Conservative colleagues in Ottawa, and I have my opinions on matters that public safety minister Vic Toews has taken up. But he got involved in that drive-by when some anonymous group put out something on the Internet and the Speaker made a ruling, and I'm very sympathetic to that ruling. I think he made the right ruling. Similarly with Speaker Parent back in 1994, there were rumours that somebody had put out there anonymously, and he said, “Threats of blackmail or intimidation of a member of Parliament should never be taken lightly. When such occurs, the very essence of free speech is undermined. Without the guarantee of freedom of freedom of speech, no member of Parliament can do his duty as expected.”

Speaker, I think there is a breach of privilege here. I think we might want to refer this to committee and just find out what is going on here. It's a forum; it's a way that we can protect ourselves and protect the traditions of this Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Speaker, because the honourable member from Newmarket–Aurora has made a thorough submission to you, and we had the opportunity to hear the points this afternoon, I just want to congratulate one of the most highly respected members of this Legislature, Frank Klees, the honourable member from Newmarket–Aurora, for having the courage to come forward. Not everyone would have heard the original news report, but by Frank coming forward again, he's willing to put his neck out there on behalf of all of us so that this does not happen or be allowed to happen again.

I thank the member for Timmins–James Bay on behalf of our caucus and all members and the honourable member from Willowdale for their support and, I assume, their caucuses' support. Somebody out there or some people out there did a dirty, evil thing and I agree with the member from Willowdale that perhaps in your ruling, Mr. Speaker, you could refer this matter or suggest the matter be referred to a legislative committee or a special committee so that we can get to the bottom of this and put measures in place to ensure that this is minimized in the future and that the public out there gets the message that there are certain privileges that we need to have in order to represent them properly and freely in a free and democratic society.

Mr. Klees should be applauded for his bravery in bringing this forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Member for Haldimand–Norfolk, on the same point of privilege?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes it is. Further to comments by Mr. Klees, Mr. Bisson, Mr. Zimmer and Mr. Wilson, late last month I wrote the Speaker a letter highlighting other forms of intimidation that have taken place during the

public accounts study of the Ornge scandal. I'd just like to highlight a few.

In April, I received a letter from a lawyer representing Don Guy attempting to intimidate me with a lawsuit after I questioned the Deputy Premier about Mr. Guy's involvement in the Ornge scandal, on April 19, 2012. I subsequently raised this letter in the House during question period on April 26. I feel this was an attempt to intimidate me from asking further questions on this issue and from performing my duties and my role as MPP.

On Twitter, Grahame Rivers, the Premier's former social media coordinator, attempted to intimidate Norm Miller, chair of the committee. I do know, and the House knows—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I asked the member if his standing up was on the same point of privilege. The information you provided is on a totally different issue. So unless you want to stick to this particular issue—

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Speaker. I won't talk about the other examples of intimidation.

Just to again focus most recently, the reason we are discussing this, as you have pointed out, is that my colleague on the public accounts committee Frank Klees, MPP for Newmarket–Aurora, became subject of the smear campaign that has been discussed in this Legislature. As we know, letters about Mr. Klees were sent to MPPs and the Queen's Park press gallery in an attempt to impugn his character, an attempt to intimidate him from participating in the study of Ornge. The timing of the letter, Speaker, one day prior to the reconvening of the public accounts committee, demonstrates the direct attempt by someone—someone anonymous—to discredit and impugn Mr. Klees. Most recently, Mr. Bruce Wade, a whistle-blower pilot, was suspended. You may rule this out of order, but there are many other examples of intimidation, Speaker, beyond what is happening to our colleague Mr. Frank Klees—or all of us in this House.

Obstructionist tactics demonstrate an overarching campaign of intimidation. You've asked me not to talk about the other examples. This must be addressed. This must be investigated.

Again, parliamentary authority states that all of us in this Legislature have the freedom from obstruction, interference, intimidation, molestation. O'Brien and Bosc has been quoted, and I bring out another quote: "Members need to function unimpeded" regardless of our work.

As such, I as well respectfully request you look into this trend, these intimidation tactics that are being employed during this very important study of the Ornge scandal.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a separate point of order, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Let me finish with this one first.

I just want to thank Mr. Klees for his very thorough written point that he submitted to the Speaker's office. I also want to thank the member for Timmins–James Bay, the member for Willowdale, the member for Sim-

coe–Grey and the member for Haldimand–Norfolk for their input.

We will take all this information, and I reserve my decision, to be rendered at a later date.

The member for Pembroke—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke on a point of—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Earlier today, during question period, in response to a question from the member from Kitchener–Conestoga—and we recognize, Speaker, that the constituents of Kitchener–Waterloo do not currently have a member in this Legislature, but they have the right to have their issues raised in the Legislature. In response to that, the Minister of Energy used the name of the Liberal candidate in that riding in a by-election. That has specifically been ruled out of order in the past, and I would ask that you would make a specific ruling condemning that practice on the part of the Minister of Energy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I accept your comment. If you would recall, at the time I asked the minister to withdraw the name in his comments, and he so did.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I did not notice you rise, Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Well, I did. We could check the Hansard. I'm definite that I did that.

There being no deferred votes today, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1201 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to welcome to the House today Larry and Mary MacDonald from Strathroy, Ontario, and their family. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Introductions? There being none, members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LARRY MacDONALD

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you again, Speaker. I am pleased to share with the Ontario Legislature today my congratulations to a constituent and a friend of mine, Larry MacDonald. Today I presented Larry with Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee Award here at Queen's Park.

Larry has been a long-time resident of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, and I am very thankful for all the contributions he has made to his community.

Larry graduated with a bachelor of commerce degree from the University of Ottawa in 1965. From there, he

made his way to the town of Strathroy in Lambton–Kent–Middlesex for work, and there he met his lovely wife, Mary.

In 1973, Larry became the dealer principal of the Chevy Oldsmobile GM dealership in Strathroy. He owned that business until he sold it about 30 years later, back in 2002.

While having a successful career in business, Larry always made time for his community, volunteering for VON, as a board member of his church diocese, and fund-raising for his local hospital.

Larry is also the former chair of the Ontario Waste Management Association, and was also involved in fund-raising at the Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital.

I'm very proud to have presented this prestigious award to Larry and to welcome him, his family and friends to Queen's Park today. Congratulations.

EVENTS IN HAMILTON MOUNTAIN

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to welcome all members back to the House—earlier than we expected, but so be it.

Like other members, my summer was filled with many events: barbecues such as the one hosted by the Filipino community of Hamilton Mountain; celebrations like the 20th anniversary of the Stoneworth Co-op, a model of affordable housing known as one of the greenest co-ops in Hamilton. I enjoyed morning prayers celebrating Eid at the Hamilton Mountain Mosque in the celebration of Ramadan. These are just a few of the events that I had the great pleasure to attend over the past couple of months, events that demonstrated to me what a wonderful community the group of Hamilton Mountain residents are.

My summer also gave me the opportunity to deal with many of my constituents, with the desperate lack of affordable housing that I heard of, and people who are confused about the change of payments in the Trillium benefit plans. I visited with corrections officers outside of the Hamilton–Wentworth Detention Centre who only want a safe workplace that we can provide. I heard from constituents who had surgeries cancelled and rescheduled thanks to ministry cuts in health—patients suffering from chronic pain.

The list goes on and on, Mr. Speaker. You know, if I had the time, I could go on about many concerns that I heard from Hamilton Mountain residents, but that is my time for today.

SIKH TEMPLE SHOOTING

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart to condemn a horrific tragedy that happened at the Oak Creek Sikh Temple in Wisconsin on August 5. Seven innocent worshippers were gunned down by a supremacist.

My heart goes out to the victims and their families. I have struggled to understand the deviant mind of the heartless killer who attacked innocence, civility and

tolerance. There is no place for racism and intolerance in a civil society. Violence in any way, form and shape is unacceptable and must be condemned.

No words can express my thanks to the police officers for their swift and heroic action to prevent further tragedy and save lives.

I share the views of President Barack Obama that together we must condemn all acts of violence with a powerful and strong voice but in a peaceful manner.

May I ask that this House observe a moment of silence in the memory of those who were killed in a senseless shooting.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested unanimous consent for observing a moment of silence. Agreed? Agreed.

The House observed a moment's silence.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: There is outrage in northeastern Ontario over how this government is proceeding with the dismantling of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission. Despite the indisputable evidence I have presented that this fire sale at Ontario Northland will achieve no savings, the Minister of Northern Development this month announced he is proceeding with the shutdown of the Northlander passenger rail service.

It's obvious to northerners that this government had no plan going into this fire sale, and it still doesn't. There has been no effort by this minister to consult northerners about this. My colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka and I took the time this summer to travel 1,600 kilometres up north and back to discuss with the stakeholders across the north their very concerns. We heard from them loud and clear. They said to us, "We want to be at the table." They said to us, "Tell us what you're doing. The uncertainty is creating economic instability in the region." Those are their words, not ours. One forest products company did tell us that they are halting a \$10-million expansion due to the uncertainty that has been created by this government. That was \$10 million cancelled this summer.

This minister does not have the confidence of the people of northern Ontario. The president of the North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce has called for him to resign. The unions that represent the men and women who work at Ontario Northland call for him to retire—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Time is up. Thank you.

CASINOS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I've spent much of the past summer talking to my constituents door to door about the proposal to put a casino in downtown Toronto, and frankly, one of those casino sites that is discussed is in the port lands, in my riding, Ontario Place and the CNE surely have more coverage, but I have to tell you, residents of

my riding have been recruited to focus groups run by OLG to test arguments as to why the port lands would be a good location.

Speaker, we already have significant traffic problems in my riding. People know that any casino development will not be transit-oriented, but will be car-oriented. We have a thriving film industry down there. It needs an infrastructure built out that will support film, not casinos. We also have substantial social problems related to addiction; we don't need more of them.

Premier McGuinty needs to understand that he is facing a huge number of people, a vast majority of residents in my riding and across downtown Toronto, who reject casino-based development. I urge the Premier to rethink his plans, withdraw the proposal, support the towns that do want to retain their racetracks, and address the needs that we, the people of Ontario, have.

1310

OLYMPIC ATHLETES

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It's a pleasure to start the session on a positive note. This summer, we had the opportunity to cheer on our Canadian athletes during the London 2012 Olympic games. We watched Olympians test their strength in sports as they competed for a spot on the podium. Canada had a strong performance, with 18 medals in total: 12 bronze, five silver and, I am proud to say, one Olympic gold medal, earned by Rosie MacLennan, a constituent of mine from King City in the great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, for her performance in women's trampolines. Oak Ridges–Markham's presence in trampolines was enhanced by three-time Olympic medallist Karen Cockburn from Stouffville, who successfully placed fourth, and Jason Burnett from Nobleton, who represented Canada in the men's competition, placing eighth.

Oak Ridges–Markham is home to a number of athletes who participated in the games, and I would like to congratulate all of them on their achievements. Congratulations to Eric Lamaze, 2008 gold-medal-winning equestrian rider from King City, who competed with his new horse, Derly Chin de Muze; and Michelle Li of Markham, who battled in a bronze medal badminton match with her partner, Alex Bruce.

The opportunity to compete in the Olympics is a result of passion, commitment and perseverance, and we are proud of all our athletes. I look forward to celebrating Canadian successes during the London Paralympic games from August 29 until September 9.

ANNA LEIBENKO

Mr. Peter Shurman: Over a week ago, Anna Leibenko, a 24-year-old York region resident, was rushed to a hospital in Split, Croatia, after suffering serious injuries in an accident during an excursion on the Adriatic Sea. She has been put into a medically induced coma and is in critical condition, and her family is desperately trying to find a way to transport Anna home

so she can receive care in Ontario. Fundraising efforts are under way to raise enough money to cover the costs of Anna's care in the hospital and the cost of transport. Transporting Anna back to Ontario alone will cost about \$93,000.

In these difficult circumstances, Thornhill and York region residents have yet again shown how tightly knit and committed our community is. York region residents and businesses, as well as Ontarians from many corners of the province, have answered the call and made donations to this important cause. This is yet another example of what makes the York region community the great place it is in which to live.

I wish to recognize the efforts of all those who have made donations and encourage all members of this Legislature, as well as all Ontarians, to make their contribution to help bring Anna home. Anna's family is on the way to raising the funds needed, but there is still more to be done. To get more information on how you can donate, please go to help-anna-leibenko.org, or visit my own website, petershurman.com.

EDUCATION

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: It's my pleasure to rise today to share with this House the result of our government's continued investment in student success. Mr. Speaker, while the economy is still facing tremendous uncertainty, the McGuinty government has seized every advantage to bring a strong future for Ontarians and our students. Our educators, teachers, students and their parents in my riding of Pickering–Scarborough East and across the province deserve immeasurable credit for this success. It's because of their hard work that graduation rates are up 14% from 2003, to 83% in 2012. That's 93,000 more students who graduated thanks to our student success strategies. I'm proud that the Pan Canadian Assessment Program showed that Ontario students are the only ones in this country who have achieved above the national average in math, reading and science—and they lead the country in reading. PISA, an OECD organization, confirmed that Ontario students are among the best in the world—definitely something to celebrate.

Through programs such as specialist high-skills majors, expanded co-op education and dual credit, we've worked hard to give Ontario students the chance to develop strengths, interests and goals. That means students in my riding of Pickering–Scarborough East and throughout Ontario will have the education they need to compete for highly skilled jobs. We recognize that investing in our school system is important to publicly funded education, and in investing in student success, we will continue to make students and education a top priority for Ontario.

McKENNA MODLER

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a privilege to rise today to celebrate McKenna Modler, a remarkable, courageous girl from the village of Lansdowne.

Eighteen months ago, 12-year-old McKenna was diagnosed with a brain tumour and has since undergone a grueling series of 70 chemotherapy treatments. McKenna's brave and tenacious fight makes her an inspiration to those facing a serious challenge in life. But by transforming her personal battle into something much larger, McKenna has become a hero.

While undergoing her treatment, McKenna was moved to action by what she saw in the hospital. As she told a newspaper reporter, "When I saw some of the kids, you know, especially the little kids, they're crying and upset. You see some of the parents; they are just stressed out."

Determined not only to beat her cancer but to make a difference in the lives of kids and families on a similar journey, she launched her McKenna's Dream fundraiser. With the support of her parents Erin and Scott and her brothers Bryson and Cole, McKenna quickly rallied the community to her side. I was honoured to attend her fundraising event at the Lansdowne fairgrounds this summer, and earlier this month she presented a cheque for \$96,000 to the children's cancer fund at the Cancer Centre of Southeastern Ontario in Kingston. She has since surpassed the \$100,000 mark, and this incredible journey just keeps getting better. She recently won the regional round of the Scotiabank Game Changers contest, putting her one step closer to a national award and another \$100,000 donation to her cause.

I urge everyone to get behind this determined little girl by voting for McKenna at scotiabankgamechangers.com. Let's help make McKenna's dream come true.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Jackson assumes ballot item number 51 and Mr. Milligan assumes ballot item number 53.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment, the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated August 15, 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.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr. Michael Prue: I beg leave to present a report on the committee's request for documents from the Ministry

of Energy from the Standing Committee on Estimates and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Michael Prue: Briefly, Mr. Speaker, this was a contentious debate around this issue. It took some seven hours before it was finally decided on the recommendation itself. It took place over many days, but ultimately the decision was made, and I ask that the Speaker rule on the recommendation. And I move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Prue moves the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PUTTING STUDENTS FIRST ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 DONNANT LA PRIORITÉ AUX ÉLÈVES

Ms. Broten moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 115, An Act to implement restraint measures in the education sector / Projet de loi 115, Loi mettant en oeuvre des mesures de restriction dans le secteur de l'éducation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would inform the audience that there shall be no signs or placards in the House. Can I have the Sergeant-at-Arms take action?

The Minister of Education has moved An Act to implement restraint measures in the education sector, and that it now be read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion be approved? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Does the minister wish to make a statement?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'll make my statements during ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

TEACHERS' CONTRACTS CONTRATS DES ENSEIGNANTES ET ENSEIGNANTS

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today on behalf of the Ontario families and students who are already preparing for the school year. I rise on behalf of Ontario taxpayers looking to our government to be responsible stewards of the province's finances. It is acting in their best interests, and in the

public interest, Mr. Speaker, that today our government introduces the proposed Putting Students First Act. If passed, this legislation would ensure that labour agreements between unions and school boards reflect the province's fiscal reality while protecting this government's investments in our publicly funded education system, a system that is among the best in the English-speaking world.

The gains we have made by working together over the last nine years are extraordinary. Class sizes are smaller. Full-day kindergarten is rolling out and will be in about 1,700 schools this September. Test scores are up, and more students are graduating than ever before. We are preserving these gains while protecting 10,000 teaching positions.

Face à cette conjoncture financière difficile, nos choix donnent la priorité aux élèves en protégeant leur expérience de classe et en maintenant les enseignants et le personnel de soutien dans les écoles.

If passed, this legislation would ensure that the school year starts on time and continues uninterrupted, with the tools in place to prevent labour disruptions.

We did not make the decision to introduce legislation lightly. It is a tough but necessary step. After six months and 300 hours of sincere discussions held in good faith and significant give and take on the government's initial position, we were able to sign a memorandum of understanding with the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, OECTA. This agreement served as a road map for future deals, resulting in more memorandums of understanding with the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens, AEFO, and the Association of Professional Student Services Personnel, APSSP. Four school boards have passed motions to sign on to these memorandums. These are important agreements signed by 55,000 teachers and at boards with 162,000 students. But still, taken together, these agreements represent only 34% of Ontario's teachers and four of 72 school boards.

Ontario families need certainty that the school year will start on time and be free from labour disruptions. More importantly for the future, all of us who depend on the health of Ontario's public finances and our economy need certainty that, come September 1, a significant number of teachers will not receive an automatic 5.5% pay increase and accumulate two million more bankable sick days that could be paid out upon retirement.

We should make no mistake: All of us who depend on and benefit from our public services and all of us who pay for them have a stake in the government's fiscal plan towards a balanced budget. The implementation of the fiscal plan is important for the health of our public finances and our economy and for the maintenance of our public services now and into the future. The long-term sustainability of our public education system depends on us making tough but important decisions that will ensure we are on a balanced, sustainable pathway forward.

This proposed bill ensures that compensation within our school system, a \$17-billion public sector wage bill

every year representing 85% of education spending, responsibly and fairly accords with the fiscal plan. That is why, after six months of difficult discussions with our partners, we are left with no other responsible choice but to proceed to introduce legislation that would ensure fair, balanced and responsible labour agreements and civility in our schools.

Before we introduced this legislation here in the House, we took the rare step of releasing the Putting Students First Act publicly and to the opposition. We did receive constructive feedback from Her Majesty's loyal opposition, and that's why the bill you see now has changes that reflect their advice, without amending the memorandum of understanding we signed with OECTA after over 300 hours of discussions. We incorporated these changes into the bill before introduction to help speed the bill's passage.

Je demande avec insistance aux députés des deux côtés de cette Assemblée de prendre le temps d'examiner attentivement ce projet de loi. Je leur demande avec insistance de défendre les intérêts supérieurs des élèves et de tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes qui dépendent d'un système d'éducation public viable.

If passed, the Putting Students First Act would ensure labour and employment contracts fit the government's fiscal and policy priorities and contain measures to secure two years free from labour disruption.

If passed, the act would require that local agreements include provisions and parameters consistent with those in the OECTA memorandum of understanding, including a 0% salary increase in 2012-13 and 2013-14, and the freezing of retirement gratuity entitlements for the payment of unused sick days moving forward. If passed, the Putting Students First Act will save the province \$2 billion, will avert an expenditure of \$473 million, and at the same time will ensure that we don't take our foot off the pedal of student achievement, that we continue to see progress in our schools, and that we roll out full-day kindergarten and keep our classes small.

Mr. Speaker, we have been fair, balanced and responsible in our discussions with our partners. We have fully engaged in the process of good-faith consultation and consideration. The proposed act reflects the culmination of that process. But we are running out of time. We must take strong action, and we must take it now, to give students, parents and taxpayers the certainty they deserve while being fair to our education partners.

L'adoption de la Loi donnant priorité aux élèves avant le 1^{er} septembre apporterait cette certitude et cette équité. Passing the Putting Students First Act before September 1 will deliver that certainty and fairness.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Response?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I want to say thanks, Mr. Speaker, to Tim Hudak for giving me the opportunity today to respond on this legislation. I want to first do something—I know that there are two gentlemen in the assembly right now who we may not agree with but who I've always

maintained a very open relationship with on where we stand in the Ontario PC caucus. I know we may not agree, but I certainly respect Ken Coran with the OSSTF, and Sam Hammond, who is here for ETFO. I want to say thanks for coming here today. I know that legislation can be quite heated and controversial, and I know that from time to time in this assembly we may agree and we may disagree, but we have debate.

I received an email from one of my constituents today, and the title was "I put students first every day." Now, I will say this: I know that. I suspect every member of this assembly knows that Ontario's teachers put students first. And I suspect every member of this assembly will do the same.

About five weeks ago, maybe six weeks ago, the official opposition started hearing rumblings that the House may be recalled. We were told there may be legislation in the offing as a result of the OECTA agreement. At the time, we had reservations, and we still were not told whether or not we would be coming back to the assembly early in order to debate legislation. We kept an open mind, in the official opposition. We waited to see if it was true. A couple of weeks ago, I received an email, or a phone call, from the Minister of Education. At that time, I indicated on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus that we would keep an open mind; we would look at this legislation and we would put the interests of students first, and what the economy would be, and what the government's end goals on debt and deficit would be. At the time, we made sure that we conveyed our concerns regarding the OECTA road map, the \$300-million hole that we saw as a result of the movement on the grid for about 40% of the teachers. We also, at the time, shared our concerns about stripping and usurping the rights of school board trustees who were duly elected in their communities, as well as the role of principals in our system.

1330

We had been calling, Speaker—and this is no surprise to you—for a legislated wage freeze for over a year now, across the board, throughout all the broader public service. Our deputy leader, Christine Elliott, has been standing strong on that initiative for over a year now, as a lawyer, explaining to this government that it can be done. Our critic for finance, Peter Shurman, has stood in his place asking questions to the Minister of Finance, demanding that we bring in these extraordinary measures for such extraordinary times. Our leader, Tim Hudak, not only has been calling for this in the assembly, he has met with the Premier, telling him that we need an across-the-board wage freeze for all public servants, regardless of what they do in public life, because we are in financial difficulties in this province. He met with the Premier last November. My colleague Jeff Yurek put forward a private member's bill in May that would have dealt with this issue. The Liberals voted against it. Now we are at this point, two weeks early to the assembly—which should have started in September—because this government didn't get the job done.

Well, we're happy to bail them out, and we're going to continue to call for our legislated wage freeze across all government. There are still 3,999 collective agreements to be dealt with this year. This is a small part of a broader problem we have as a province, a province that is facing a \$30-billion deficit, a \$411-billion debt. This province is sick because this government didn't do anything about our finances for the past nine years.

So we're at this point at the assembly. We are talking with the government. I have made a commitment on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, to the Minister of Education that we would work with them, but we still have concerns. We have concerns about their gap, their \$300-million hole. We have concerns that they're stripping the rights of boards and trustees, and, Speaker, we have concerns that students aren't going to be in the classroom on September 1. That's why the Ontario PC caucus will stand up, look at this legislation, and we will make sure that kids are in their classrooms come September, because that's what the official opposition should do and that's what the government should have done a long time ago.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can everyone sit, please?

Response?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, as everyone in this chamber is aware, strange things happen in Ontario when Liberals get close to an election day. Strange things happen. In 2011, this government faced problems in Mississauga and Etobicoke. It was not going where it wanted to go in terms of votes. The Premier, who had commissioned the construction of a gas-fired power plant, decided, "You know what? I need those seats. I know the people of Ontario will pay. I'll cancel this plant, I'll roll the dice, and frankly, we'll go forward and we'll win those seats." Well, he won the seats, and we got stuck with the bill.

Fast-forward to today. What is it, 10 days to the September 6th election? Something like that. A government facing difficulty with two by-elections decides that it needs to create a crisis and that it needs to show that it can solve the crisis that it created. It decides that the parents, the students, the women and men who educate the children of our province, who look after the schools—they're all expendable, because in the end, all that matters is winning that by-election. All that matters is winning that by-election.

We have said that this bill poses huge financial risk, that we asked the minister to bring forward the legal opinion showing that, in fact, there wouldn't be a constitutional risk, that we wouldn't be put in the same position as the government of British Columbia when they had to put out \$100 million for acting this way.

I listened to the government earlier this year when they condemned the official opposition for their wage freeze bill, told us it was reckless, unconstitutional,

damaging. That was then; this is now. They have an election to win and they don't care. They don't care what happens to parents, they don't care what happens to students, they don't care what happens to teachers, custodians, school psychologists—any of those people. So that is what we're facing today.

A few weeks ago, Speaker, I got a call from the minister. I heard from Lisa MacLeod, the opposition critic. The government was bringing forward a bill to make sure that the schools opened at the beginning of the school year. Well, I hadn't heard that there was going to be a strike or a lockout happening at the beginning of the year. It was news to me, so I phoned trustee friends. They were beside themselves: "Are you kidding me? We're getting ready to negotiate." Their approach was a practical one: roll up your sleeves, recognize there's a problem, figure out how the parents, the students, the people who work in our schools can come out of this with an agreement that makes sense for the whole of Ontario.

That isn't the direction that this government decided to take. This government decided, solely because it needs to win these by-elections, that it would frighten the parents and people in Ontario by saying that the school year was in jeopardy. This government turned its back on discussions, turned its back on trying to find agreements with the people who work for us, and brought in this bill.

Yesterday I had an opportunity to talk to some high school students who, first of all, I have to say, find the title of the bill outrageously funny, because they are students. They deal with situations where they rely on guidance teachers, whose numbers are being cut in their schools, the people they rely on to deal with psychological counselling, to deal with bullying. They couldn't believe that a government that had done what it had done in education had the gall to use the title "Putting Students First."

Speaker, it is clear that this bill will not serve the people of Ontario well, will not help our children, our students, our families. It will not help the people, the women and men who work in our schools. It will help a government politically. This bill needs to be defeated.

VISITORS

Mr. John Yakabuski: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Pembroke-Nipissing-Renfrew.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much. I'm asking you all these points of orders because I want you to get that riding right.

In the gallery today, Speaker—and I apologize; I was in a meeting and I couldn't introduce them at the appointed time, but I'm begging your indulgence. From Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, my county of Renfrew, I have with us today Allison Ryan from the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario; Jeff Barber from the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation; Colleen Mackin, also from ETFO; Joan Bradley from ETFO; and

Sherri Madore, a teacher from Renfrew county. Welcome to Queen's Park. Thanks for joining us.

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

As the member knows, that's not a point of order.

PETITIONS

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition from a number of residents in Leeds-Grenville, and also residents next door, from Mr. McDonnell's riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the member churches of the Seaway Valley Presbytery are subject to the provisions of the Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario regulation 319/08; and

"Whereas these churches and other non-profit organizations in eastern Ontario's rural communities cannot afford to pay for the expensive testing required by this regulation or the volunteers to transport water samples to provincially accredited laboratories in urban centres hours away; and

"Whereas public health laboratories have the equipment necessary to conduct the testing required under Ontario regulation 319/08;

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

"That the Minister of Health amends Ontario regulation 319/08 to allow non-profit organizations to have water testing done at existing public health laboratories at no cost."

I'm pleased to sign the petition and send it to the table with page Roberto.

1340

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM OFFICE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Petitions? The member for—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Beaches-East York.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): — Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. No, sorry; I've got the wrong one.

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Speaker, what about rotation?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Elgin-Middlesex-London.

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

"Whereas the government of Ontario" has "decided to close the Ontario disability support program office in St. Thomas, an office which serves over 3,245 ... of our

most vulnerable population throughout St. Thomas and Elgin county;

“Whereas the government of Ontario made this decision without consultation;

“Whereas the majority of clients don’t have access to transportation to London to attend appointments with their caseworker, which may result in loss of benefits;

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

“That the Ministry of Community and Social Services consult with the city of St. Thomas and Elgin county to find a solution to keep the ODSP office open in St. Thomas.”

Speaker, the minister met with the delegation from Elgin county and St. Thomas. We hope that he responds to our request as soon as possible.

I agree to this petition and I sign my signature to it.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): My apologies to the member for Beaches–East York.

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

I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints into the areas of hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children’s aid societies, police, retirement homes and universities; and

“Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate any of these areas; and

“Whereas people wronged by these institutions are left feeling helpless and most have nowhere else to turn for help to correct systemic issues;

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

“Grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children’s aid societies, police, retirement homes and universities.”

I am in agreement, will affix my signature thereto and send it with page Louis.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Northumberland–Quinte West.

Interjections: Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): They’ve shifted all the seats on me. Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. Sorry.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. He’s a Milligan.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas the partnership that was created between government and the horse breeding and racing industry has been a model arrangement and is heralded throughout North America, with 75% of revenues going to the provincial government to fund important programs like health care and education, 5% to the municipalities and only 20% goes back to the horse business; and

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

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

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

I support this petition, will affix my name and send it to the clerks’ desk with page Katie.

AIR-RAIL LINK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I support this petition. I’ll affix my name to it and give it to page Gopi.

INFRASTRUCTURE ROUTIÈRE

M. Phil McNeely: « À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Attendu qu’il y a actuellement une étude de l’évaluation environnementale des liaisons interprovinciales en cours afin de trouver l’emplacement d’un nouveau pont traversant la rivière des Outaouais à l’est du centre-ville d’Ottawa;

« Attendu que la province de l’Ontario investit 220 millions de dollars pour améliorer l’échangeur 417/174 et élargir la 417 de l’échangeur à la rue Nicholas;

« Attendu que ces améliorations ont été autorisées afin de répondre à un besoin urgent des navetteurs d'Orléans et des régions environnantes;

« Attendu que le gouvernement fédéral a déménagé près de 5 000 emplois de la GRC du centre-ville à Barrhaven;

« Attendu que le gouvernement fédéral va déplacer 10 000 emplois du ministère de la Défense nationale du centre-ville à Kanata;

« Attendu que plus de la moitié de ces emplois étaient occupés par des résidents d'Orléans et des communautés environnantes;

« Attendu que le déplacement de ces emplois aura un impact drastique sur l'économie d'Orléans;

« Attendu que le besoin en infrastructure routière est requis pour les résidents qui devront traverser notre ville pour se rendre à leur travail;

« Nous, soussignés, demandons à la province de l'Ontario et au ministère des Transports de faire leur part pour mettre fin à cette étude environnementale; et, bien entendu, que les améliorations aux infrastructures routières en cours sur les autoroutes 174 et 417 bénéficient Orléans et ses environs; et, bien entendu, que la province de l'Ontario supporte la ville d'Ottawa dans ses démarches pour convaincre le gouvernement fédéral de financer le prolongement du train léger du chemin Blair au chemin Trim, lequel est encore plus nécessaire depuis le déplacement des 15 000 emplois accessibles aux résidents d'Orléans vers l'extrême ouest;

« Nous, soussignés, supportons cette pétition et apposons nos noms ci-dessous. »

Moi, je supporte la pétition. J'ai signé et je vous l'envoie avec Georgia. Merci, monsieur le Président.

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 ... 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 complete agreement, I have affixed my signature to this to give it to page Safa.

DOG OWNERSHIP

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

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

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

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

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

I sign this in the name of the over 1,000 dogs that have been euthanized because of this bill.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Toby Barrett: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has changed the availability of epidural injections for quality pain control for people with pain from whenever required by the physician prescribing it, to only being allowed to have 12 epidural injections" over "12 months, amounting to one every four weeks to the date of the previous injection, regardless of the level of people's pain requiring the injection and without regard for the quality of the people's lives who are living with this pain;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario....

"To return the time frame for epidural injections for pain control being administered by the pain specialist physician to the previous allowance of being able to receive these injections when required by the attending physician."

I affix my signature to these petitions.

1350

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Phil McNeely: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is presently an interprovincial crossings environmental assessment study under way to locate a new bridge across the Ottawa River east of the downtown of Ottawa;

"Whereas the province of Ontario is improving the 174-417 split and widening Highway 417 from the split to Nicholas at an estimated cost of \$220 million;

“Whereas that improvement was promised to and is urgently needed by the community of Orléans and surrounding areas;

“Whereas the federal government has moved almost 5,000 RCMP jobs from the downtown to Barrhaven;

“Whereas the federal government is moving 10,000 Department of National Defence jobs from the downtown to Kanata;

“Whereas over half these jobs were held by residents of Orléans and surrounding communities;

“Whereas the economy of Orléans will be drastically impacted by the movement of these jobs westerly;

“Whereas additional capacity will be required for residents who will have to commute across our city to those jobs;

“We, the undersigned, call on the province of Ontario and the Ministry of Transportation to do their part to stop this environmental assessment; and further, that the new road capacity being built on 174 and 417 be kept for Orléans and surrounding communities in Ontario; and further, that the province of Ontario assist the city of Ottawa in convincing the federal government to fund the light rail from Blair Road to Trim Road, which is much more needed now that 15,000 jobs accessible to residents of Orléans are moved out of reach to the west.

“We, the undersigned, support this petition and affix our names hereunder.”

I agree with this petition, sign it and will send it up with Katie.

ONTARIO HEALTH INSURANCE PLAN

Mr. Victor Fedeli: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the McGuinty government has announced plans to change a number of Ontario health insurance plan (OHIP) services; and

“Whereas these changes are the result of a provincial debt crisis created by nine years of out-of-control government spending; and

“Whereas these changes will affect the ophthalmology, cardiology and radiology services that are currently crucial to many Ontarians’ quality of life;

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

“That the McGuinty government release its patient health impact study on the recently announced Ontario health insurance plan changes, or, if such a study has not been conducted, that one is immediately undertaken and made public.”

I affix my signature to this.

MEMBERS’ PRIVILEGES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Cambridge has filed notice of his intent to raise a point of privilege. I’m prepared to recognize him now to state his point. The member for Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of privilege after providing you with the notice required under the standing orders. This point of privilege relates to events that occurred during the estimates committee over the past number of months. I wish to provide a synthesis of those events and cite some precedents, which I hope that you consider in deliberating over this matter.

On Wednesday, May 16, 2012, the Standing Committee on Estimates passed a motion that required the Minister of Energy, the Ministry of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to provide the committee with documents relating to the Oakville and Mississauga power plants.

The Minister of Energy responded to the committee on May 30, 2012, and stated, “In light of the confidential, privileged and highly commercially sensitive nature of these issues, it would not be appropriate for my office or the ministry to disclose information that would prejudice these ongoing negotiations and litigation.” The Ontario Power Authority provided similar reasoning in the response, which was simply one letter—one letter from the minister and one letter from the Ontario Power Authority with respect to documents that we were requesting from that committee.

As a result of the minister’s refusal to deal with this matter at the Standing Committee on Estimates, the committee has just sent a report to the House advising the Speaker that a possible contempt of the Legislature has occurred.

On July 11, 2012, the minister did provide some documents to the committee. However, the documents provided were far from complete. The energy minister stated in a letter attached to the documents that, “Certain information remains subject to ... privilege” and that it has not been included. The Minister of Energy also failed to provide any documents pertaining to the Oakville power plant, as requested by the committee on May 16, 2012, with a deadline of a fortnight from that date.

Parliamentary authority is unanimous in acknowledging that the Legislature has an undoubted right to obtain information. Certainly, Speaker Milliken suggested that when he ruled on the Afghan detainee issue. Let’s cite some of those authorities.

Bourinot’s Parliamentary Procedure and Practice in the Dominion of Canada states, “The right of Parliament to obtain every possible information on public questions is undoubted, and the circumstances must be exceptional, and the reasons very cogent, when it cannot be at once laid before the Houses.”

O’Brien and Bosc provide a list of instances that amount to contempt in the Legislature, and they include in that list, “without reasonable excuse, refusing to answer a question or provide information or produce papers formally required by the House or a committee.” The simple point here, Mr. Speaker, is that the minister hasn’t provided the documents that we were requesting, which is the reason why I’m standing here today.

Look at standing order 110(b), which states that “each committee shall have power to send for persons, papers

and things.” This is one of the rights that we have as legislators in this assembly.

On this point, O’Brien and Bosc state that, “The power to send for persons, papers and records has been delegated by the House of Commons to its committees in the standing orders. It is well established that Parliament has the right to order any and all documents to be laid before it which it believes are necessary for its information.”

They further state that, “The standing orders do not delimit the power to order the production of papers and records. The result is a broad, absolute power that on the surface appears to be without restriction. There is no limit on the type of papers likely to be requested; the only prerequisite is that the papers exist—in hard copy or electronic format—and that they are located in Canada.”

O’Brien and Bosc illustrate the House’s right to obtain documents by citing a report from the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections in 1991. The committee concluded that, “It is well established that Parliament has the right to order any and all documents to be laid before it which it believes are necessary for its information.... The power to call for persons, papers and records is absolute, but it is seldom exercised without consideration of the public interest.”

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the public interest in this case rests upon the foundations of accountability and transparency, which is our role as members of the committee and members of this Legislature: to hold the government to account. We must preserve that right to accountability and transparency so we can hold the government accountable.

In 2011, we have an instance in the House of Commons in Ottawa. It was the finance committee, which had requested documents from the government regarding the cost of some of the bills before the House. The government refused to table all the documents and cited cabinet confidence. The committee sent a report to the House, and MP Scott Brison rose on a point of privilege, much like I’m doing today. The Speaker ruled that the government’s failure to produce the documents constituted a prima facie breach of the House’s privilege. In his ruling, former Speaker of the House of Commons the Honourable Peter Milliken said that “The standing orders state that standing committees have the power to order the production of papers and records, another privilege rooted in the Constitution that is delegated by the House.

“Thus, the power of committees of the House to order papers is indistinguishable from that of the House.”

What is the purpose of the estimates committee? The mandate of the committee is to investigate and to find out, through estimates, what is happening in government ministries. To achieve this goal, the committee should not be obstructed from receiving documents that it orders. The documents were ordered by the committee from the Minister of Energy to help get to the bottom of potential pitfalls with the estimates in the Ministry of Energy. Each year, the government introduces the estimates for the year. When hundreds of millions of dollars

have not been accounted for in those estimates, the committee has the right to know how this will affect the estimates being tabled in the House, which is the reason why we requested those documents.

Another federal example, one that has received quite a lot of media attention, is the Afghan detainee issue in the federal House of Commons. The government refused to provide the documents, citing reasons of national security. MP Derek Lee rose on a point of privilege and charged that the government’s refusal to provide documents constituted a breach of privilege, and Speaker Milliken ruled that a breach of privilege did, in fact, occur. He stated in that judgment that “procedural authorities are categorical in repeatedly asserting the powers of the House in ordering the production of documents. No exceptions are made for any category of government documents, even those related to national security.”

His finding of a prima facie breach of privilege ultimately came down to the Legislature’s ability to request documents to hold the government to account.

1400

Speaker Milliken also discussed, in his Afghan detainee ruling, that the House has a right to the documents that they request and that “the government understands the House’s undoubted role as the ‘grand inquest of the nation’ and its need for complete and accurate information in order to fulfill its duty of holding the government to account.”

He further stated that, “In a system of responsible government, the fundamental right of the House of Commons to hold the government to account for its actions is an indisputable privilege and in fact an obligation. In this case, the House of Commons’ efforts to hold the government to account have been unduly frustrated by the government itself.” That, Mr. Speaker, is again something that we’re seeing in this case.

Speaker Milliken further discusses in the Afghan detainee ruling that there “is no doubt that an order to produce documents is not being fully complied with, and this is a serious matter that goes to the heart of the House’s undoubted role in holding the government to account.”

Mr. Speaker, the role of the opposition parties is to hold the government accountable, and it is clear that the minister and the ministry’s failure to provide the requested documents has obstructed a standing committee of this Legislature.

Speaker Milliken ruled in the Afghan detainee case that there “is a difference between the practice of the House which allows a minister, on the sole basis of his or her judgment, to refrain from tabling a cited document for reasons of confidentiality and national security and an order, duly adopted by the House following notice and debate, requiring the tabling of documents.” Mr. Speaker, this is the exact point that we’re making here today: that we require these documents to be able to understand what’s going on on the government side.

Further, in his ruling on the Afghan detainee issue, Speaker Milliken said that “the authorities I have cited

are unanimous in the view of the House's privilege to ask for the production of papers, and many go on to explain that accommodations are made between those seeking information and those in possession of it to ensure that arrangements are made in the best interests of the public they both serve."

There are a number of different avenues and forms in which we could see these documents, Mr. Speaker. The reasons that have been laid before us are simply, in our opinion, subject to question.

The committee understands that the government has a job to do. However, the opposition's job is to hold the government to account, and the government's refusal to provide the documents that the committee requested is blocking us from our undoubted role as members of the opposition.

The two cases that I've highlighted demonstrate that precedents exist regarding the issue before us. In both scenarios, the federal minister's failure to provide complete documents exemplified a *prima facie* contempt of Parliament.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, my point of privilege is based upon the simple fact that members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should have the same access to documents that it requests as members of the House of Commons have in Ottawa.

The government has laid out a number of reasons for not wishing to release documents. I wish to argue that the excuses being used by the government to withhold information from the committee are no more severe than matters of national security. If we accept the government's central arguments against the release of these documents, namely the *sub judice* argument, the commercially sensitive argument and the solicitor-client privilege argument, the government could use such arguments to restrict virtually all information from the Legislature's committees. This would be a precedent that would run against the spirit of openness, accountability and transparency in our democratic institutions.

I respectfully request that you examine this summary, the authorities I have cited and the precedents that speak to the issue at hand. At the heart of this point of privilege is a desire to see our committees do the job that members of this House expect and that all Ontarians would appreciate. I hope that you would deliberate on this matter and rule whether the minister's reluctance to divulge all of the documents does in fact constitute a *prima facie* breach of the House's privilege and contempt of this Legislature. I thank you for looking into this matter.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Response? The government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise on this point of privilege. I think members would recognize that my colleague from Cambridge has raised a very complex issue. Mr. Speaker, at the outset, although I'm prepared to submit some oral arguments today, I would also ask your permission that we be allowed to provide and file materials with the Speaker—a written submission, which, of course, as is

tradition, we would provide to the opposition parties as well. We're prepared to do that forthwith.

Mr. Speaker, I think we have to begin with the facts of the case, a summary of the case that's under discussion right now. Between May 9 and July 11, the Minister of Energy appeared before the Standing Committee on Estimates for the purpose of answering questions regarding the 2012-13 estimates for the Ministry of Energy. While the minister answered questions relating to a number of issues, the committee members from the official opposition spent considerable time asking the minister questions relating to the two gas plants which were to have been built in Oakville and Mississauga respectively. As I'm sure members of this House are aware, the OPA contracted to have these two facilities built to meet energy demands at the time.

In the case of the Oakville facility, the OPA contracted with TransCanada Energy in September 2009 to design, build and operate, over a 20-year term, a 900-megawatt natural-gas-fired electricity generating station. In October 2010, the government determined that it no longer required a facility in Oakville to meet energy demands, and announced that the project would not proceed. While no formal litigation resulted from the government's decision, the government and TransCanada have been engaged in formal arbitration and confidential settlement discussions since the decision was made not to proceed with the facility. The matter remains outstanding.

In the case of the Mississauga facility, in April 2005 the OPA contracted with Greenfield South Power Corp., known as Greenfield, to develop and operate a 300-megawatt natural-gas-fired electricity generating station in Mississauga. During the fall 2011 general election campaign, the Ontario Liberal Party made a commitment in response to mounting community opposition that, if re-elected, the government would relocate the Mississauga facility to another location. I would note, Mr. Speaker, that the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party and the Ontario New Democratic Party made the same commitment during the course of the campaign. Shortly after being re-elected, the government announced its intention to relocate the Mississauga facility. The government's decision to relocate the Mississauga facility caused the commencement of civil proceedings in both the province of Ontario and the state of New York. These lawsuits, as well as confidential settlement negotiations, were ongoing at the time the Minister of Energy appeared before the Standing Committee on Estimates.

While before the committee, the Minister of Energy was placed in a difficult position. He was repeatedly asked to answer questions relating to the Oakville and Mississauga facilities. The overwhelming majority of the questions related specifically to the ongoing outstanding legal proceedings and confidential negotiations. The Minister of Energy attempted to strike an effective balance between the committee's authority to ask those questions and the need to protect the public interest in the midst of highly sensitive commercial negotiations and litigation.

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I think members will want to hear this next section; it's very important.

The Chair recognized the precarious situation of the Minister of Energy and repeatedly ruled that while committee members were permitted to ask such questions, the minister was able to exercise his discretion and respond to such questions in a manner that protected the interests of the province.

On May 16, the member from Cambridge moved a motion pursuant to standing order 110(b) directing the minister, the Ministry of Energy and the OPA to produce, within two weeks, all correspondence between September 1, 2010, and December 31, 2011, relating to the decision not to proceed with the construction of the Oakville facility, and all correspondence between August 1, 2011, and December 31, 2011, relating to the relocation of the Mississauga facility. The member from Windsor West challenged whether the motion was in order. While the Chair ruled the motion was in order, the Chair also stated the following—Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote; it's very important—"Notwithstanding the learned position put forward by Ms. Piruzza, there was one point in which she stated that the minister, of course, has every right to decline. I think that that is perhaps the saving grace to allowing this to proceed.

1410

"I would have to rule, in my opinion, that this motion is in order because the committee has the right to ask for documentation, as Mr. Leone has pointed out in his counter-argument. They have the right to ask for the documentation." This is very important, the next phrase, Mr. Speaker: "The minister has the right to decline either giving that documentation or giving voice to that documentation during his answering of the questions."

The Chair went on: "I would advise that I'm going to allow the motion to proceed, but I would also advise—and I think the minister, being a lawyer himself, knows full well that he may choose to answer the question in such a way as not to prejudice the province in any way, and I would expect him to do so. That would be my ruling."

That's Hansard, May 16, 2012, page E-39.

The minister relied on the Chair's repeated statements and rulings that the minister was permitted to respond to questions and document requests from committee members in a manner that protected the interests of the province.

As a result, the minister wrote to the committee on May 30 and advised the committee that he was exercising his discretion and would not be able to produce the requested documentation as they were confidential, subject to solicitor-client privilege or litigation privilege, or highly commercially sensitive.

The committee appeared to accept the minister's response. It was open to the committee to dismiss the issues raised by the minister and demand production of the documents by passing a second motion to this effect. The committee did not do this. Rather, the committee simply resumed its questioning of the Minister of Energy.

On June 5, the member from Cambridge moved a motion to report to the House the minister's failure to produce all responsive records pursuant to the motion of May 16, and ask the House to order the minister to produce the previously requested records, failing which the motion asked that the minister be found in contempt of Parliament.

The member from Cambridge's June 5 motion was inaccurate in a number of respects. Most significantly, the motion did not accurately reflect the repeated advice and rulings of the Chair that the minister was permitted to decline to answer questions or to produce documentation relating to the Oakville and Mississauga facilities if he felt that was necessary.

On July 10, the minister announced that the OPA had reached an agreement with Greenfield to relocate the Mississauga facility and that the government had accepted the OPA's recommendation to relocate the Mississauga facility to the Lambton station in Sarnia. In addition, the minister announced that it had settled the related civil proceedings in the state of New York.

The following day, on July 11, the minister wrote to the committee to advise the committee of the OPA's settlement of all outstanding matters relating to the Mississauga facility. The minister provided the committee with settlement details, including the total relocation costs. The legal matters relating to the Mississauga gas plant having been settled, the minister advised the committee that he had requested his ministry to provide the committee with all correspondence relating to the Mississauga facility that was responsive to the motion of May 16, except for records that are subject to solicitor-client privilege.

Here again, it was open to the committee to consider the minister's request and either accept the claim of privilege or confirm its order for the production of the documents, notwithstanding the claim of privilege. The committee did not respond in any way to the minister's July 11 letter and request that the committee continue to respect solicitor-client privilege. Rather, the committee simply passed the motion of June 5, thereby referring the matter to the House and giving rise to this point of privilege.

While, Mr. Speaker, there is little doubt that a legislative committee has absolute authority to compel the production of records, a legislative committee has an associated responsibility to ensure that it is clear and unequivocal when a responding party seeks, in good faith, to safeguard documents that are highly sensitive, confidential or subject to solicitor-client privilege.

The minister was placed in a situation where he was being asked to fulfil competing obligations. On the one hand, the committee had absolute authority to and did ask the minister to produce thousands of pages of highly sensitive confidential and solicitor-client privileged documents. On the other hand, the minister had an obligation to protect those same documents, documents which were highly sensitive, the vast majority of which were protected by solicitor-client privilege.

Mr. Speaker, solicitor-client privilege is fundamental to the Canadian legal system and to the administration of justice. The importance of solicitor-client privilege has been repeatedly recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada. As such, the minister sought to achieve an effective balance between the authority of the committee, the need to protect the public interest in the midst of highly sensitive commercial negotiations and litigation, and the need to respect solicitor-client privilege. The evidentiary record confirms this.

This is not—and I stress that—a case where a minister of the crown was simply refusing to comply with an order of the committee. The minister was repeatedly advised by the Chair of the Standing Committee on Estimates that he was permitted to respond to questions as well as requests for documents in a manner which protected the interests of the province. In fact, the Chair specifically advised that he expected the minister to respond in this manner.

Relying on statements and rulings of the Chair, the minister reviewed the documentation requested by the committee and determined that it was confidential, subject to solicitor-client privilege or litigation privilege or was highly commercially sensitive. The minister then exercised his discretion—discretion that he was told by the Chair that he had—and advised the committee that he was unable to produce the requested documentation. The committee accepted the minister's position and resumed its questioning of the minister.

Despite having taken no action to inform the minister that the committee was not satisfied with his response, the member from Cambridge moved a motion on June 5 to refer the matter to the House.

On July 11, the minister again wrote to the committee to advise that the legal matters relating to the Mississauga facility had been resolved, and therefore he was able to release documents relating to this facility that were not subject to solicitor-client privilege. The minister asked the committee to continue to respect solicitor-client privilege. The committee did not respond in any way to the minister's July 11 letter and request that the committee continue to respect solicitor-client privilege. Rather, the committee passed a motion on June 5, thereby referring the matter to the House and giving rise to this point of privilege.

Simply stated, there has been no clear and unequivocal request by the committee for documents. The committee has requested documents and the minister has responded to the committee's request by raising significant concerns with this request. It was open to the committee to pass a second motion compelling production of the documents, notwithstanding the minister's concerns regarding confidentiality, solicitor-client privilege and the best interests of the province. The committee did not do this; the committee did nothing.

The issues raised by the member in his point of privilege are matters of parliamentary procedure, not matters of parliamentary privilege. The committee report giving rise to this point of privilege was not only premature

from a procedural standpoint but has resulted in gross unfairness to a minister who has attempted at all times to respond in good faith to a legislative committee's request for the production of highly sensitive, confidential and privileged records.

When a minister responds to a request for the production of records by raising flags in an effort to protect the public interest and long-standing constitutional principles, the committee has a responsibility to respond by clearly articulating its will. In this matter, the committee has failed to do so. The government takes the position that a breach of privilege cannot arise in the circumstances giving rise to the member from Cambridge's point of privilege, and the Speaker should therefore find that this matter does not give rise to a prima facie breach of privilege. The government respectfully submits that in the absence of a clear and unequivocal order from the House or the committee for the minister to produce all records that are responsive to the motion of May 16 despite the public policy and legal considerations that have been raised by the minister, the Speaker should find that no prima facie case of privilege has been made out. The point of privilege is premature. The committee has not followed the proper procedural steps.

Mr. Speaker, I close by saying that in the alternative, should you find that a question of privilege does indeed arise in this matter, the government requests that the Speaker consider the steps taken by Speaker Milliken in his 2010 ruling regarding Afghan detainees and defer any further steps in this matter to allow the House leaders an opportunity to resolve this issue in a way that strikes an effective balance between the public policy considerations that have been raised by the minister and the committee's desire to receive documentation relating to the Oakville and Mississauga facilities.

Once again, despite the length of the presentation I put forward today, I do feel there are a number of very complex issues that need to be more fully addressed. I close with the same request in the beginning: that we be allowed to make a written submission forthwith to you to complement what I've said today in my oral submission. Thank you.

1420

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you, Speaker. I can promise you I will not quote out of Bosc; I will not quote out of Beauchesne's. It has all been done. I want to make a couple of points to tie this all together.

First of all, I appreciate the point that was raised by Mr. Leone. I think he makes a good argument procedurally in regard to what the precedents say and what the standing orders say our rights are as members, but more important, what the rights of the committee are.

Let's review why we're here. In the last election, the government decided to reverse itself on a major policy decision. They, unlike New Democrats, decided to go ahead and to build gas plants in those communities and

decided, in the middle of the election, because seats were in danger, that they were going to reverse that policy decision, the result of that costing taxpayers in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

Let's be clear: Liberals wanted to build gas plants. New Democrats didn't want to build gas plants in those communities. We did not have the same policy. So when I hear the government House leader get up and say that we agree—we would never have put them there in the first place, because we thought there was too much community opposition to those projects to start with and that you should move them into communities that are willing, not unwilling communities. I just want to be clear.

Number 2: We then have the general election. As a result of the general election, the government decides to go forward with their announcement as made during the election, which is to cancel those particular projects. All right, the government made the decision; the cabinet made that decision. So from that, a whole bunch of discussions took place with the various players in order to figure out, how much is it going to cost the taxpayers to get out of this mess? What does that do? It affects the expenditures of the province of Ontario, hence the estimates process.

The government of Ontario had to come up with that money somewhere. They didn't pull it out of the air. The \$180 million—or the \$186 million I think is what the number is—that so far has been spent just on the Oakville plant, and God knows how much on the Mississauga one that's coming up—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —or the other way around, for another couple of hundred million dollars—the government has got to find that money somewhere. They can't just pull the number out of the air and say that magically the money is going to appear in the right account to cover the costs. They have to pull it out of some appropriation somewhere.

Guess what, Mr. Speaker? We all know there's a process in the budget called estimates, and this is a very powerful role that the committee has and a very important one. The estimates committee has the ability to review the expenditures of the government of Ontario. That means to say that the estimates committee, when a particular ministry comes forward, such as the Ministry of Energy, can say, "All right, where are you spending your money? How have you spent that money? Does it make any sense?" It can ask all of the questions in regard to what the function of the spending of the money was. To be able to get the answers behind all of that, the committee had to ask for certain papers, because what's clear is that the committee is in the dark, the public is in the dark and this Legislature is in the dark when it comes to all of the details about how they came up to the \$186 million, what the conditions were that led to that particular negotiation and what all the numbers are about.

The committee did what any good committee should do. They said, "We want to find out why it is and how it

is and how it took place—and all of the five Ws." I forget what they all are now, which is kind of sad, because it would have been so much fun.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Who, what, when, where and how. W5 used to do that. I used to be so good at it.

But the point is, the committee did what a good committee should do and wanted to get all the information in order to take a look at and report back, by way of its votes to the House, what the expenditures of the government were when it came to Ministry of Energy. That's why they asked for the documents.

I'm not going to go through, reading all of the standing orders and precedents, but it's clear that the committee has the right—first of all, the House has the right—to ask for any witness or any document that they choose to do their job. In our standing orders, we have given the rights from the House directly to the committee. It's not as if the committee sort of did this on their own. Our standing orders contemplate, as they do in Ottawa, that the committees have the same right to call witnesses and to ask for documents and papers to appear so that the committee can do its work. It's something we conferred by way of the standing orders. This is not as if the committee decided on some whim to do this. It's not as if they were overreaching their authority. The House gave that right to the committees, and it has been that way for many a year, so the committee has requested that information. The first point I want to make is, the committee was perfectly within its right to ask for that information.

I was listening to the government House leader go on to talk about how it was that the Chair had made some rulings that, in fact, said that the minister didn't have to provide that information. That's not what the Chair said. Come on. That was a stretch, my friend, as my good friend Mr. Kormos would say. I think I had the inflections right there.

What the Chair said was that a member can ask a question to a witness, but if the person chooses not to answer, that's quite another thing. That's essentially what the Chair was saying.

Now, if we as committee members are unhappy with the information that is being withheld by a witness, or by a minister in this case, or by documents not being provided, the standing orders allow the committee to deal with that. So the only thing that the Chair was saying, Speaker—and this is important because you have to put this in the context of what it is. The Chair was stating the obvious: If a minister comes before the committee and decides he doesn't want to give a particular answer, well, you know, the minister will do what the minister's going to do. But that does not trump the right of the committee.

If the committee is prepared to accept the bad answer or the no answer from the minister, as has happened before, that's the committee's choice. But if the committee decides—and this is what's happened here—that in fact that is not acceptable and that we need this information and there has to be a clear accounting of

what's happening, the right of the minister to refuse to answer doesn't trump the right of the committee. Therefore, the committee did what I think essentially is correct. They said, "All right. We request that the minister provide this information," and did so by way of a motion.

The motion is now before the House and now allows you, as the Speaker, to make that particular decision. I just want to say that it is fairly clear in the standing orders and the precedents that the committee has this right.

Now, my good friend Mr. Leone raises the point in regard to the Afghan situation. The minister, through the House leader, argues this is all about solicitor-client privilege. Well, imagine if that was the case. Imagine if you could hide behind solicitor-client privilege every time something came up in the House or anything happened in the public. The minister would be able to hide behind that each and every chance. The rights of this Legislature are as the rights of the courts: Essentially, because a lawyer goes to court and argues a case on behalf of a client doesn't allow them to withhold evidence. If evidence is withheld, what happens? You're held in contempt of the court. And there's no difference when it comes to the Legislature or a committee. Solicitor-client privilege is not about withholding evidence. It never has been. That's not what it's all about. I'm not going to get into the definition of it, but you understand as lawyers, those of you who have that affliction, what solicitor-client privilege is. But I just say, if a person went to court as a solicitor and said, "I'm not going to provide evidence," or "I'm not going to provide information," or "I'm not going to provide documentation because I want to hide behind solicitor-client privilege," I think there'd be a pretty good case for contempt on the part of the judge and the jury against that particular solicitor.

So my point is, yes, I understand that there are certain rights that are afforded solicitors when it comes to going to court, but this is not a case of solicitor-client privilege. In fact, most of this is not even before the courts, so how can you even argue that? At this point, there's no lawsuits in regard to one of those particular dealings. So there's that to be said.

The other thing I just want to say very quickly—and I made the point here. Oh, yes, I wanted to get into the sub judge rule issue. That was the only other thing I wanted to get into. The term "sub judge" literally means under judicial consideration, and the rule governs what public statements can be made about ongoing legal proceedings before the courts. The rule applies where court proceedings are ongoing and through all stages of appeal until the matter is completed. However, as all the members know, the issue of the Oakville gas plant is not even before the courts, as I said earlier. And even if it was, sub judge is trumped by the parliamentary supremacy. So the argument that the government doesn't have to provide those documents by hiding behind the sub judge rule doesn't stand because at the end the Parliament has a

particular right invoked by way of our right as parliamentarians, both in Ottawa and in the provinces, to be able to do our job. And to do our job means to say we need to be provided with the documents. And in this particular case, I believe there's a strong case to say that the minister is in contempt because he's withholding information that this committee needs in order to do its work.

I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to rule in favour of this particular request that he be found in contempt, and I would argue that the arguments have been well made. Thank you.

1430

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Chatham–Kent–Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'll be brief, but I do want to acknowledge the insights offered by my colleague from Timmins–James Bay.

It is a pleasure to stand and debate in support of allowing my colleague's point of privilege. The member from Cambridge is not only a caucus colleague, but I sit with him in the estimates committee as well.

It's also important to keep in mind that former Speaker of the House of Commons Peter Milliken has spoken on this subject before. I think it's a bit rich for the minister's office to withhold information about a project being financed by the Ontario taxpayers on the basis of public interest when Speaker Milliken ruled in favour of a point of privilege during a debate about the war in Afghanistan.

There have been a number of issues uncovered in committee, issues that have a deep and abiding relevance to the families of Ontario. It's our job to scrutinize as deeply as possible the spending habits of this government, which have been suspect, in my opinion.

The member from Cambridge has already cited O'Brien and Bosc and their argument that the ability to call for documents is of cornerstone importance to the open and accountable operation of this Legislature. Indeed, the former House of Commons Speaker spoke on the need for full and complete information, even in the case of the Afghan detainees. I cannot fathom a situation in which withholding information on this government's spending habits could be of more public importance than matters relating to Canadian involvement in the Afghan war.

Any member of this House who has sat in committee understands the process of questioning a minister and the effort sometimes required to get to the bottom of that question. These procedural rules are at our disposal to avoid, as much as possible, confusion about our rights as parliamentarians and the service we owe our constituents.

Therefore, Speaker, I ask that you consider the following point of privilege before the House and allow the members of the estimates committee to continue the work we were sent here to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On that same point of privilege raised by my colleague from Cambridge, I listened to all

of the addresses, and I want to particularly focus on the one of the government House leader at this point. I heard it said repeatedly about the minister retaining the right to act in the public interest. Speaker, I would contend that the minister does not have the right to act in the public interest; he has the absolute responsibility to act in the public interest. What seems to be a question here is, what is the public's interest?

The very crux of the matter of what the committee was trying to get at was all of the information and the costs associated with the cancellation of the gas plants, particularly the one in Mississauga, which we know there were some figures released on, but also in Oakville—to get all of the documentation associated with those decisions and the cost that the public would be left to bear.

The government House leader talks about the minister's right to refuse to provide information in the public interest. On whose decision, at whose consideration, at whose determination were those actions in the public interest?

I would contend that it did not have to be released to the Toronto Star—not to pick on the Toronto Star—but the members of that committee have an absolute right to know the answers to those questions. That could have been done in an in-camera session, and then they could have, on an all-party basis, decided what was in the public's interest, because the public's interest should be determined by the public and at least a representative group of the public itself. The minister is not acting in the public's interest when he determines that he should not answer that question in the public's interest; he is acting in the Liberal Party of Ontario's interests, because they're the ones who made the decision to cancel the Mississauga gas plant.

I would contend that the point of privilege is absolutely within the bounds of the rights of the committee to ask for, and I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that in the public interest, you would rule in favour of the point of privilege put forth by the member from Cambridge.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: We've been talking for about 15 minutes, and there are a couple of things that have stood out so far today. The first one is the revelation, from the House leader, that Mississauga was "cancelled because of capacity." He should be speaking with his fellow ministers because, in the last couple of months, we have learned from his own ministers that it was cancelled for political opportunity. That has come out time and time again in the estimates committee. So I would hope that he would look into that and correct that.

Secondly, to the very point, we're here talking about our struggle to get information from this government. In the presentation by the House leader, he spoke at length about Mississauga, Mississauga, Mississauga, Mississauga. But I ask: What about the documents for Oakville? None of those documents have been presented, yet they were equally asked for at the estimates committee. This goes to the very point. His own speech today

highlights our great concern that we are not receiving the information that we've been asking for. They are defying the committee's motion.

Speaker, I ask, I urge, that you join us in pushing for the information that we've asked for, been promised and have yet to see delivered.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to add a few comments. First, I want to commend the member for Cambridge for bringing forward this matter, and also all the work of the committee.

I want to make sure I put a few comments on the record in response to the government House leader's argument about solicitor-client privilege, this whole issue of sub judice and the whole commercially sensitive issue of making that an acceptable reason for a minister to withhold documents from a committee of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Rather than being accommodating, I think there are many of us who feel that the minister took the path of least resistance.

I appreciate the fact that the member for Cambridge has quoted Speaker Milliken when it comes to the Afghan detainee case. The quote that I would like to put on the record is part of his ruling: "There is a difference between the practice of the House which allows a minister, on the sole basis of his or her judgment, to refrain from tabling a cited document for reasons of confidentiality and national security, and an order, duly adopted by the House following notice and debate, requiring the tabling of documents." It's important to note that the latter is in hand in this case.

Parliamentary authority is very clear when dealing with sub judice convention. When determining this, the Speaker decides whether the reasons for refusing to table the document are reasonable, sufficient and exceptional.

Sir John George Bourinot states that, "It must be remembered that under all circumstances it is for the House to consider whether the reasons given for refusing the information are sufficient."

I know that there have been a number of quotations, but when you look at O'Brien and Bosc and the first report of the Special Committee on the Rights and Immunities of Members, it "recommended that the imposition of the convention should be done with discretion and, when there was any doubt in the mind of the Chair, a presumption should exist in favour of allowing debate and against the application of the convention. Since the presentation of the report, Speakers have followed these guidelines...."

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Jeanne Sauvé, former Speaker of the House of Commons, ruled that when considering a prima facie matter of privilege, "The House has never allowed the sub judice convention to stand in the way of its consideration of a matter vital to the public interest or to the effective operation of the House and its members."

In terms of the issue of being commercially sensitive, if the litigation on the Mississauga and Oakville power

plants is so commercially sensitive, why did the media have documents from court that show that the Ontario Power Authority tried to settle with EIG management, LLC for \$83 million? If those documents were available to the public, why wouldn't the minister and the Ontario Power Authority, at the very minimum, provide that same information to the committee? This article demonstrates that the minister's claim that he cannot provide the committee with documents is absolutely without merit.

Speaker, I have to ask you, are these excuses being used by the government to withhold information from the committee more severe than matters of public security? I believe, all members of this House believe, that they are not. If we accept these excuses, my opinion is that the government would use such arguments in the future to restrict virtually all information that committees would want to provide. So I ask you, Speaker, to support the member for Cambridge.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity, and all members, for providing their comments this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Mr. Speaker, I want to be very brief with my comments. I just want to reply to a couple of the statements made by the government House leader. It was of course my duty over those many months to chair that particular committee. I just want the record to be very clear that in my rulings, they were always to the effect that the committee had an unbridged and total right to ask for documentation, and I ruled that on many occasions. In fact, there were some 20 or 25 individual rulings that I had to break in a tied 4-4 vote, and it was a very difficult time. I think if the Speaker will look at the entire record, you will see how I attempted, I think very successfully, to be an unbiased Chair, giving both sides an equal opportunity.

The second thing I want to make very clear is that at the end of the procedure—and there were some seven hours of debate just on the letter that Mr. Leone had submitted; there were seven hours of full debate on the contents, with amendments made and everything else. But at the end, there were government members who appeared not to be satisfied with the motion. Again, it was on a 4-4 vote, and I was required to vote to break the tie. I gave them an opportunity—and you will find it in the record—to submit a minority report should they wish to do so. That opportunity was given. Letters were sent both by me and by the clerk of the committee to the government side when the minority report was not forthcoming, and it is my understanding that one was never submitted. I think that needs to be part of the record as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. I just want to thank Mr. Leone for filing his point of privilege in writing, and I want to thank Mr. Milloy, Mr. Bisson, Mr. Nicholls, Mr. Yakabuski, Mr. Clark and Mr. Prue for their input on this particular issue. I will reserve my decision and report back to the House at a later date.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ATTRACTING INVESTMENT AND CREATING JOBS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 VISANT À ATTIRER LES INVESTISSEMENTS ET À CRÉER DES EMPLOIS

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 11, 2012, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act respecting the continuation and establishment of development funds in order to promote regional economic development in eastern and southwestern Ontario / Projet de loi 11, Loi concernant la prorogation et la création de fonds de développement pour promouvoir le développement économique régional dans l'Est et le Sud-Ouest de l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): When Bill 11 was last before the House, the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound had completed his remarks but questions and comments still needed to be done. We will therefore proceed to questions and comments.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to put on the record that New Democrats, on this particular bill on the southwest economic development fund, had at the very beginning indicated our support. Not only that, we had put forward some amendments growing from the experience of what we learned in northern Ontario with the northern Ontario heritage fund.

The government had decided it wanted to create a slush fund originally, and they were going to give the minister the sole right to decide where the money was going to be spent, where the press events were going to take place and who was going to be at the press event—him and his staff, and maybe some of the Liberal members. We thought that was a bad idea.

We thought the model followed by the northern Ontario heritage fund was a good one. It says that a committee made up of people from the region will look at the applications. They will decide who is going to get the money, how and all the conditions, and then it's up to a non-partisan process to announce the money. It works extremely well in northern Ontario. It's something that all three parties have gotten behind, and New Democrats, through our critic, put forward amendments that allowed that to happen.

The bill went to committee. There were short hearings. We got the amendments that we wanted as New Democrats and we were looking forward to the bill passing last spring. For whatever reason, the government decided it was more important to advance their own political gain and make it look as if the opposition was holding this up than it was to actually get the bill passed.

I'm the NDP House leader. Imagine my surprise when we're negotiating what's called a programming motion last spring and at the end of the negotiations, I say, "Listen, we're willing to allow you to pass Bill 11 on the nod." What did government say? "No." It was the

government that said no; it wasn't the opposition that was trying to hold it up, from the New Democratic side of the House. I can't speak for the Tories because at that point, they were ringing bells and they weren't allowing anything to happen through the House at the time, but I can tell you we had offered it up as part of the programming motion, and the government is the one that said no.

This was clearly politics as usual—the Liberals doing what's good for the Liberal policy, not necessarily what's good for southwestern and southeastern Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm very happy to be able to make some comments on this legislation because, as many of you will know—and many of you were there. I was just recently at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario annual conference, the AMO conference in Ottawa. This is an issue that we actually heard a lot about. I don't know if many of you were in deputations where members of councils who are from eastern Ontario and from southwestern Ontario came and spoke about the importance of this legislation and the development fund, whether it's the southwestern Ontario development fund or the eastern Ontario development fund.

I know, for example, the eastern Ontario development fund—113 projects approved out of 132 applications; only two of the 113 projects have not been successful, only one of which, having received funds—a project success rate of 98%. There was \$53.5 million leveraged to 12,000 jobs. I think that money leveraged \$493 million in investments.

The issue here is that this is a very important piece of legislation. It's an important fund. It's being called for by municipal politicians and communities alike. We are very eager to move this ahead, contrary to what the member of the third party said.

I guess what's confounding to me is that the Conservatives are still blocking this legislation. As recently as today, Monday, August 27, what's reported by Gillian Wheatley in the London Free Press is that the "Provincial Tories ... intend to yank the hope out from under Liberals ... in a planned mass ... vote" against the bill, and that's Bill 11. That \$80-million regional job fund will once again attempt to be blocked by the Conservatives. My hope is that we'll be able to get it through, but I can't believe that they would continue to block it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Toby Barrett: A comment on Bill 11 and these funds: Anyone who's been door-knocking in Kitchener–Waterloo—I have noticed the Liberal brochures touting the southwestern economic development fund essentially being used to buy votes from the people in Kitchener–Waterloo with their own money. We made it very clear last year that PCs are voting against what appears to be very clearly a wedge issue. When you're staring down the barrel of a \$411.4-billion debt, when you're digging a hole that deep, it's important that you stop digging. Even

if it was a good program, and it's regardless of whether it's a good program or a bad program, the money is not there. You cannot suck this kind of money out of the taxpayer.

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You know, very clearly you can judge future behaviour by past behaviour. And again, figures that have come in on the eastern Ontario development fund rewarded business in Liberal ridings at the rate of two times that of PC ridings. Again, this is significant before these by-elections: 80% of taxpayer dollars from the eastern Ontario fund went to Liberal ridings. Most of the dollars in the eastern Ontario economic development fund went, by and large, to Liberal cabinet minister ridings. That's not only corporate welfare slush, that is also a Liberal slush fund.

The announcement down our way was made in London. I just heard you mention London, Minister. We know the finance minister has shovelled an awful lot of money into his hometown in Windsor. We look at this fund with a very jaundiced eye. We're not going to reverse our position on this vote. We're not going to vote in favour of this fund.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments? The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It has been many, many months since the original speech was made from the honourable member, and so I cannot pretend that I even remember what was said, but I do want to comment a little bit about this bill.

It is quite clear that New Democrats have supported this bill all along, and my colleague from Timmins–James Bay has said it exactly right. We wanted to see this bill passed. We understand what was happening in this Legislature last spring. A lot of bells were being rung and not much business was taking place. But, you know, he did go, and he went with the approval of our caucus, to try to see whether this bill could be brought forward, whether or not it could be voted upon in the spring session, and was rebuffed. He was rebuffed by the very government that is going out there today talking about how Conservatives are trying to stop it. Whether they are going to support it or not I think is not relevant. Had the government wanted this bill to go forward last spring, it clearly could have and should have.

We believe that the people of southwestern Ontario are in an economic bind. Although I represent a Toronto riding and live in Toronto, I do have a cottage down there. It's on Lake Erie. I go through a number of little towns to get to my cottage. I travel around. I see some of the despair of southwestern Ontario. I see factories that are shut. I see stores that are boarded up. I see homes for sale by the dozens on little tiny streets. People have moved away and there is no hope. We need a bill like this to be passed.

Will the government use it as a slush fund, as my friend from the Conservatives has said? Perhaps; perhaps not. But in any event, the money will have to be spent

where it can be best spent in order to protect or to establish new jobs, and we are asking that the bill pass, notwithstanding there may be those in opposition. The government has the muscle. We will support it. Let the bill pass.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. That concludes the time for questions and comments, and we return to the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, to Mr. Prue’s comment, it’s been a long time since we stood in this House talking about this, but I remain firm in my conviction. This is nothing more than a wedge issue. If the minister wanted to have this going, he had all kinds of avenues he could have pursued. He knew the NDP would vote for it, so he could have had it through. He could have put it in as a bill of cabinet and the money would actually be flowing already. He could have put it in the budget and it would have been passed. Or, lo and behold, it could have been like the Green Energy Act. They could have just taken the dictatorial process and said, “We’re going to do this,” and it’s in. So what’s the difference here?

We can’t continue, with a \$15.3-billion deficit staring us in the face, to try to pick winners and losers and think that we can micromanage across our province. A multi-million-dollar company in the Kitchener–Waterloo area was given \$44 million, I’m told, with no application. They didn’t want the money, they didn’t need the money, but they got the money just because, I trust, there were probably some handshakes going on behind closed doors.

Mr. Speaker, there’s no way that we’re going to do that in our riding. There’s no guarantee that money will ever come back to my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound until I see something in black and white absolutely guaranteeing that my riding will be represented equally. I cannot support this and I’ve told the people of my riding very specifically that.

If they wanted to do things that really would help the economy, they’d lower those energy prices that are going up 50% on their watch to every single business, not to mention the homeowners.

Mr. Toby Barrett from Haldimand–Norfolk said it best: 80% of Liberal ridings got the money from the eastern development fund. We’re not going to play that game. We’re in fiscal reality. We need to ensure that the money we have and that we’re giving out is going where it’s going to do the best good. We need something that’s fair across the board, that’s going to touch everyone.

If they wanted to do this, the money would truly be flowing. It’s nothing more than a wedge issue. They’ve sent speaking notes to all the Liberal candidates out there that have miraculously made it to the press. It’s not going to work for them. Ontarians are too smart for that to happen. We want the money to do good for Ontario people. We will not support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the

ballot list for private members’ public business such that Ms. Piruzza assumes ballot item number 57 and Mr. Flynn assumes ballot item number 77; and

Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings to announce that there has been six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader or his designate indicates otherwise.

I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. We would like the debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I’d like to say it’s a pleasure to be back in the House, but unfortunately we are under some extreme circumstances that don’t necessarily make it that. But of course, it is good to see my colleagues and to debate some of the business that we had prior to the adjournment of the last session, one item of which is before us today. As a couple of my colleagues have mentioned, it’s been debated thoroughly, it’s been revised at committee and it is ready to go out the door here. But the question is, why do we have a government that is stalling the process? I guess it’s up to them to answer to the municipalities and the people and the businesses in southwestern and eastern Ontario who are relying on this program for some assistance in probably one of the worst economic times we’ve seen in this province.

I come from southwestern Ontario—Essex county just outside of Windsor, the heartland of the manufacturing centre in the province and also, I would say, the epicentre of the effects of the global recession and the massive exodus of good-paying manufacturing jobs in this province and in the country. We know how bad it is out there because we’ve been feeling it for a very long time.

This bill, as it was presented I guess, took sort of a pretty standard approach: Let’s put a pool of money together, get it out the door and see what it does—some of the standardized approaches that the Liberals have done not only with programming, but also with corporate tax rates and corporate tax reductions, where a *laissez-faire*, blinders-on approach was the order of the day and hope that their programs would work was their major ideology.

What we’re saying and what New Democrats have proposed, not only in this bill but on a broader scale, is that you need government intervention, you need government action and you need a government that’s prepared to do the hard work in ensuring that there are job guarantees.

Let me point to a couple of things that, historically, we’ve seen fail in this government’s economic initiatives. One of them is right in my backyard in Windsor, a company called WindTronics that specialized in lower-kilowatt wind turbines. They were given \$2.7 million

from the province without any job guarantees and left that city, left Windsor, just a year after they had planted roots there, stating that they simply couldn't continue.

Now, there were about 20 or 30 jobs that were lost there—no clawback. We don't even know if that \$2.7 million has been paid back to the province. It's a similar story in Chatham at a plant called Navistar, which made large transport trucks, the rigs, the 18-wheelers. That's 1,000 jobs that were lost in that community with the federal and provincial governments putting in, all told, somewhere around \$30 million—again, no clawbacks, no job guarantees, no thresholds and without the province ever getting a dime back. We've heard the Minister of Economic Development state that potentially at some point in the future we were going to get some of that money back, but lo and behold, that has not transpired.

1500

We're back to the context of this bill. I'm four and a half minutes in, and I won't take up too much more time. I am allocated, I believe, 20 minutes, Speaker. I'm not going to take up any more time because we want this out the door. We've wanted it since the spring, so I will just simply point to some of the highlights.

Our party has proposed and had amendments to the bill, which is quite historic in the sense that amendments to bills in this House haven't happened, certainly from the opposition side, for nearly eight years. But some of the things that New Democrats proposed that make this bill better—

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Maybe a couple of commas and a couple of parentheses here and there, but nothing substantive like we see in this bill.

We're really pleased that some of our really fundamental amendments made it into the bill. There has been talk that this program could have potentially been a slush fund. We don't think that can happen anymore because of making funding announcements less partisan so that local MPPs are guaranteed an invitation to the funding. There's some collegiality there. That makes it a little bit more palatable.

Also, both funds will be housed in independent corporations, with boards of directors drawn from the southwestern and eastern Ontario regions. That's quite different from what the original intent of the bill was: that it would be solely by ministerial decree in terms of who received this funding. I'll point back to the WindTronics firm: \$2.7 million. That's nearly 10% of the total fund that we're talking about. We're talking about a \$20-million fund, which, as it is, New Democrats believe is not substantial enough to address the massive job losses that we've seen, but it may be a case of "better little than nothing" here.

Some of the other amendments: There will be local advisory committees that will represent sub-regions and possibly industry sectors. Also, strengthening accountability measures, including job guarantees and more transparency in contracts: That's really important, but it is yet to be seen. We've been told that those provisions

will be built into any of the contracts, but until we see a contract come out the door, we will hold our reservations. Also, there will be a one-year review of major provisions of the act to ensure that things are working as expected and to examine possible refinements.

We've done some pretty remarkable things, pretty historic things, to this bill, things that we think make it better, make it more accountable and make it maybe more successful. But the success will be in the expediency of the release of those funds, and to get this program out the door to help those regions in southwestern Ontario. I know I've spoken to various mayors—the mayor of Windsor, who has anticipated this bill.

There really has been no reason for it to be stalled in this process at all, but I am pleased to see it back on the first day as we've resumed. Hopefully, we will get through the remainder of the debate on this portion of the reading and try to get some of those regions back up on track. I know that certainly in southwestern Ontario, there are a lot of small businesses, municipalities and non-profit organizations that have wonderful ideas that could certainly add jobs. That's what the intent of this bill is: to add employment to those regions that have been so hard hit.

I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've taken eight minutes and 20 seconds. I certainly would love to speak more on it, but that will give the government 12 extra minutes to get it out the door. So, hurry up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for York Centre.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Mr. Speaker, I've been listening to the comments about the eastern Ontario development fund, and I can tell you that a couple of years ago I met with all the wardens, and they just couldn't stop raving about the benefits. I just want to give you an example: 113 projects approved out of 132 applications; an applicant success rate of 86%. Only two of the 113 projects have not been successful and only one of them has received funds, a project success of over 98%; \$53.5 million leveraged \$493 million in investments—that's an eight-to-one ratio—creating and retaining over 12,000 jobs. Funds have spread out to support over 13 sectors in 13 counties across eastern Ontario. KPMG reports that currently, the eastern Ontario development fund is exceeding job-growth targets and that these are sustainable jobs and not project-related.

There's the perfect example of a fund that has been very successful, notwithstanding that there are accusations by the opposition that it's a slush fund for Liberal-held ridings. That isn't the case if you take a look at it. The applicants came in from a wide variety of industries that were located throughout eastern Ontario. The vast majority of them were approved. They got funded, and they've been successful. It is really a precedent that we want to emulate in western Ontario.

This is something that I think we should all support, and I am pleased to be here to add my support to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I was in the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus when we did a thorough study showing why eastern Ontario needed this money more, over and above the other areas of the province. Our assessment is less than half of what it is in western Ontario. At that time, we had lost 3,600 jobs in my riding alone. This was pre-recession. After the recession, we were hit again as hard. We lost 3,600 jobs in 2005 when the rest of Ontario was booming because it hadn't seen the effects of this McGuinty government yet.

It's interesting that they talk about having put a bill through the Legislature. At that time, this was done through regulation and done fairly quickly. We've been talking about this since last year. It's clearly a wedge issue trying to make an issue.

In the meantime, we saw what they did through this fund: They gave 80% of the funds to Liberal-held ridings. How can you trust this government, which, I understand, recently in western Ontario gave \$44 million to a multi-billion-dollar company without an application? Are there no rules around how far into debt we can go?

But I guess it's an issue here because they don't want to be talking about the real issues. They don't want to be talking about the wasted money: Ornge, the power plants. We saw today from my seatmate that we're trying to find out just how much they've wasted on these power plants, but they do all they can to make sure that the public doesn't find this out. Imagine. Our estimates are \$1 billion per power plant. No wonder you don't want to talk about it. Now you're talking about taking money that was directed towards eastern Ontario and moving it to the rest of the province—just more announcements, more hand-shaking.

I think it's time that we saw some results from this government, and I think the people of Ontario are looking for them. I'm hoping that they're embarrassed by some of these numbers, and that's why we're not finding out about them. But we'll see.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm pleased to add my thoughts to the debate. I think our position has been very clear. Both of my colleagues have addressed the issues here.

We know very well that southwestern Ontario has been hard hit. I grew up in Windsor, and I was aware of the boom times when things were going very well with the automotive industry. Now things are quite different in Windsor, in the surrounding areas and Essex, and there need to be some steps taken.

We made it very clear that we are happy with some of the amendments we were able to achieve. Those amendments will work to make this fund more fair, perhaps less partisan, as my colleague indicated, and perhaps restore some of the trust back into the government. We're all skeptical about that, but with having a board as opposed to a minister appointing the funds, that's a step in the right direction. Inviting local MPPs shows less partisanship and would be one tool to prevent some of the

skeptical and cynical feelings that one would have looking at the track record of this Liberal government.

But I'm hopeful that we can move in the right direction with this fund, particularly given our amendments. Let's get down to the facts and the reality here: We need to pass this bill. We've been ready to do this, and now it takes some initiative on the part of the Liberal government side to follow through. We're ready. Let's make this happen, and let's stop dragging our feet. To make it clear: It's the Liberals who are dragging their feet on this matter. We are more than ready to pass this bill. There's no further reason to delay.

1510

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One more question and comment. I recognize the member for Ottawa—Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Speaker. This is one of the programs that I was involved in, even though the urban part of Ottawa was excluded in the original bill. I attended a couple of announcements. I think that they were west of Ottawa. We sort of didn't really know what party was in power in those two ridings I was at—I think Carleton Place. I'm not sure of the other place. But this was to assist those small businesses to upgrade their technology and upgrade their capacity to do work. They were both exporting products. One of them was exporting hydro water applications, and it was necessary for them to get into a larger size. They were very happy. And the part of the eastern Ontario development fund that was helping them was about 10% or 15% of the dollars. That's one of the things: The \$53.5 million that was spent leveraged \$493 million in investments and made it interesting for these people who wanted to take a risk. They needed government support; they got the government support. They went ahead and they created jobs.

Out of all the projects that were invested in, I think there were a couple that didn't pan out to provide the benefits that were expected. But this is just two in the whole thing. But for anybody to suggest that we're dragging our feet on it—we've heard from the opposition today that they're not interested in supporting this bill. Certainly the third party is. They like creating jobs. They want to see this happen in southwestern Ontario as well as eastern Ontario. Help these areas that really need support these days. We have to take those businesses, help them out, create the jobs and let them expand their expertise. They've got good expertise. Let them expand their expertise with investment in technology. That, we have done, and I hope this bill passes quickly. We need it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Okay. That concludes the time for questions and comments. We return to the member for Essex to reply.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the members in the Legislature who spoke to the bill today. The member for Ottawa—Orléans, I appreciate your comments. You touched on something in terms of leveraging investment and job creation. One of the programs that did that quite well was the slots-at-

racetracks program for the horse harness racing industry and the horse racing association. There was a program that took \$345 million from slots revenue and turned it into \$2 billion a year with 60,000 jobs. Now, this \$20 million program is not going to come anywhere near making up the massive loss of jobs that we're going to see in rural Ontario because of that decision. Also, the \$50 million in transition funding is going to—it's a pittance in terms of helping that industry transition to anything viable that may remain after that decision.

But regardless, we understand that there are opportunities for government to play a role in incentivizing and enticing entrepreneurs and existing businesses to expand, new research and development capabilities, as well as non-profit associations and municipalities, who we know have been feeling the pinch, as many have indicated here in this House, and who could use these.

What's great about this bill is that the NDP has been able to enact some safeguards that present more accountability, more transparency and more effectiveness ultimately when those dollars roll out. We certainly do have some concerns about the fact that the fund, at \$20 million, is small in terms of its size, in ratio and in relationship to the amount of jobs that have been lost. We just don't see it as being completely effective, but we will see I guess on an order of magnitude as to how effective it actually is once it's passed. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to rise to take a few moments to speak on Bill 11. I hope in my heart that I'm the last speaker today.

Just to give you a little history, back just after the election, I wrote Minister Duguid—in fact, it was in early November—asking about the issue of the eastern Ontario development fund, since it was a fund that certain communities in eastern Ontario were able to access. He chose at the time not to engage me in dialogue, but later on that month, on November 29, he tabled a bill. Since that time, leading up to second reading on March 5, I spoke and engaged with many mayors, the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus, about the fact that, because it was a wedge bill, there was really no need for this legislation. The fund operated quite easily without a piece of legislation for four years; it was included in the budget. I suggest that if the minister had taken my advice three weeks before he tabled the bill, back in the middle of June when the budget was passed, there wouldn't be an issue and there wouldn't have been an issue at AMO.

As you saw this afternoon, when the government was asked to bring forward its business, the government House leader stood up and indicated that Bill 11 was being called. I don't make that decision; the New Democrats don't make that decision; the government makes that decision.

When a bill is brought forward in November, on November 29—really, the die was cast on March 5. On March 5, the vote was 68 to 35. It pretty well indicated

what was going to happen with this bill, that ultimately it was going to pass.

The other issue was, it really collapsed and was voted on on March 5 because this party allowed it to collapse. We didn't belabour the issue. We had staked our position pretty clearly. I think it was an indication when the members of caucus voted against the bill that they had serious concerns with the way the bill was structured. The bill had the minimum time at committee. In fact, it was reported back to the House on April 17. So from April 17 to June 19, whatever the day was that we passed the budget—June 20 or 19, whatever—I think there was ample time for the government to call the bill.

Again, was the bill perfect? Absolutely not. That's why we're voting against it. Were there issues in eastern Ontario with the way the fund was structured? There were lots of ideas. The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus had ideas on changes to the bill at their meeting in January, and they've consistently communicated those to the government. Were there changes incorporated by certain mayors who came to the committee, who said—like Invest Ottawa, that more of Ottawa needed to be included? I think it was Durham region. There were a number of municipal politicians from Durham inquiring; people from Muskoka; all over the place. There were lots of ideas. I remember the mayor of Stratford bringing up an idea that perhaps it should be more of a loan-based program, replenishing itself by repayable loans. So there were lots of ideas, but there weren't very many amendments.

Our issue, obviously, was: The bill was flawed. Other than dramatically changing it or splitting it—it just wasn't procedurally possible for any amendments for us.

We're here today because of some of the comments from local mayors. I know the mayor of Brockville was quoted in the paper. I think the quote was, "We don't care about politics." There were some mixed messages though, Speaker, that came out of AMO, and I know there were a number of ministers—I'm not saying it was you, Minister Wynne—and representatives of the government who talked about this bill coming back in January or in the new year.

A mayor told me that there was a comment at one meeting about perhaps going back to committee, which to me would only happen if the government prorogued and this bill died on the order paper and had to be reintroduced. So I don't know. I obviously wasn't privy to some of those meetings that the local mayors in eastern Ontario had with the government. All I know is what they've told me, and those were issues that they talked about.

In terms of the map, I know the member for Wellington-Halton Hills, Speaker, yourself, received a letter on August 17 that the true—and a quote from I believe it was the minister. Yes, it was, Minister Duguid. His quote was, "It is true that geographic boundaries have not yet been defined. However, we believe that a small and focused fund"—and it goes on and on for southwestern Ontario. So there are a number of issues

that the mayors still have outstanding with the fund, issues that I think could have been dealt with long ago. So there still is this uncertainty on where the boundaries are and whether there are going to be changes on how it's operated. There are lots of suggestions that need to be done.

There have also been some suggestions in eastern Ontario about the federal program, and whether people agree with the federal program or not. It was divided up equally among all the regions so everybody got an equal piece. There weren't any winners and losers; everyone had the same piece. So there are other programs that other governments are administering on economic development with different criteria than this fund, and also different delivery models. Presently, the ministry does this delivery; in the federal program, it's the CFDC. So there isn't a bunch of bureaucrats or politicians; it's a community group. So there are lots of different programs.

I guess the reason why I hope that I'm the last speaker today is because I think everyone acknowledges that this has dragged on. We've made our points. I think we all know how the vote is going to take place. But we've got some big issues. Our leader, Tim Hudak, talked about three words today: freeze, fix and reduce. Members of our party have put forward a plan to reduce business taxes that we think is important in this province. We've released two white papers which we have shared with members in the industrial community, the manufacturing sector. I know I've shared them, and some of the things they've been very interested in. Obviously, on the energy white paper, affordable energy is something that they need to compete on. I know my community gets letters from across the board, from the St. Lawrence County Industrial Development Agency, extolling the virtues of the United States. The very last component is, "Some of the lowest-cost and most reliable electricity in North America (50% less than you might be paying now)." That's a big issue. Labour is a big issue as well, and I know many of the manufacturing sector have looked at our white paper and provided me with very constructive comments. So I think we've put some very constructive ideas on the table.

Again, we've got an issue where we've got a \$30-billion deficit on the horizon. We need to get our spending under control, we need to get our economic fundamentals right and we need to move forward on some other pieces of legislation. So I'm asking for consideration that—I don't need any comments or questions. You've all made some very good points today. If debate collapses and ultimately we get the vote, to vote however our caucuses and we want to vote, I think the mayors would be very impressed that, for once, we've put politics aside and just let our votes and the decisions speak for themselves. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You know, I was going to let the debate—I was not going to stand up, but something

that the member—it was the white paper thing. I haven't read the white paper thing, but it's the white paper thing that's been around for 30 years, I would imagine. But there was the one thing that the honourable member from Leeds–Grenville touched on—and I do agree with all the other things: Let's put partisanship aside; let's get this bill out the door. There are lots of issues that we have to deal with. But the reduce, reuse, recycle of the white paper—what was it? Reuse, fix—whatever. The last part was the tax cuts.

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I know. It all adds up to tax cuts, anyway, corporate tax cuts. Our combined corporate tax rate in the province of Ontario is 28.5%. In neighbouring jurisdictions that we compete with—Michigan, right across the border. I can drive a golf ball across the Detroit River; that's how close it is to Windsor, and I can do that, actually. I know it's a big drive, but I can. It's 38.2%; New York, 36.1%; Pennsylvania, 37.8%. The Great Lakes weighted average is 36.6%, and the US weighted average is 36.1%. What I'm trying to get at here is that the across-the-board, blind-faith, trickle-down economic models are not working. We're trying it here in Ontario. We've cut. We've slashed corporate tax cuts. We've still got to pay for roads; we've still got to pay for hospitals and schools. And if you want to continue—I mean, that's what I assume you mean by reducing—you're not going to get to the point of a cohesive civil society if you continue to degrade the quality of the society that you live in.

Corporate tax cuts and reductions are not distributed fairly under that type of regime, and they're profoundly regressive, okay? So find a different mantra, because what obviously the white papers that have been put out state is that they have not been working. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I agree with the member from Leeds–Grenville. I hope that his will be the last 10-minute speech, but I did want to speak to this just for a couple of minutes.

The southwestern Ontario economic development fund is something that I've heard about from my community, from my chamber of commerce, that they are very supportive of. They want to see us put that in place. I think of a retirement party that I was at for Lou Rinaldi, and there were a number of mayors from the Northumberland-Quinte area. As I spoke to the mayors through the evening and they got up to speak, mayor after mayor talked about the impact of the eastern economic development fund in that particular riding.

When I think about the southwestern economic development fund—Speaker, I don't know whether you recall, but the Minister of Economic Development and Trade did one of the consultations on the southwestern economic development fund in Guelph. I was amazed. I thought, "We'll have people from Guelph and Wellington, and maybe some Waterloo region folks." I was

amazed. People from all over southwestern Ontario showed up. There were people from Huron county. There were people from Waterloo region. There were people from Grey-Bruce. There were people from the Chatham-Essex area. There were people from the Stratford area. There were people from all over southwestern Ontario who came to Guelph. What was surprising to me was that this was the second or third meeting they'd come to, but they wanted a chance to talk to the Minister of Economic Development and tell him in person how important this economic development fund was to people all across southwestern Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: It's always a pleasure to listen to the member from Leeds-Grenville. He makes a lot of points, but he took me back to my youth. When I was in university, required reading was a little book called *The True Believer*. It was by Eric Hoffer. I still remember it. He was a longshoreman who was quite a philosopher, and he wrote a book called *The True Believer*. It was about somebody who believes something so strongly that all the rational thought in the world won't dissuade them.

You have a member like the member from Leeds-Grenville, who truly believes that if he cuts corporate taxes to the bone, if he makes the rich richer than rich, if he takes away all the money from ordinary people—the youth, the middle class—if he makes sure that all of our services are starting to suffer as they are in the United States, we will be like them.

I think that he ought to think about what he really wants. I think, even though he waves around and says that a foreign jurisdiction—I have to assume it's New York, being where he's from—can offer hydro at 50% less—really, is that what he wants to see?

Travel in the United States. Go to the cities that are hollowed-out cores. Go there and look, where you can buy a house in some of those states because they're all boarded up. Go to some of those places and see what the true belief of following Reaganomics really produced, because it's not something we should emulate here. If he hasn't read *The True Believer*, read it; or if he's read it, read it again.

He talked about a couple of things, though. He said that the mayors are unsure in eastern Ontario. I'm sure they're unsure, because this has taken a long, circuitous route and they don't know how much money is actually

going to come. But I'm sure that, as unsure as they are, if the money is forthcoming, they'll take it.

The last one is the federal programs. Yes, the federal programs may be a little bit more equitable. Maybe the government should look at them as well. But in the end, the money is needed in eastern Ontario and southwestern Ontario. People need it in order to produce jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? We'll return to the member for Leeds-Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank the members for their comments and questions. I want to be true to my previous comments. I've said what I'm going to say, and I hope that debate collapses and we put this issue behind us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Duguid has moved third reading of Bill 11, An Act respecting the continuation and establishment of development funds in order to promote regional economic development in eastern and southwestern Ontario.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

I wish to inform the House that I have received a deferral notice signed by the chief government whip. Therefore, the vote will be deferred until tomorrow after question period at the time of deferred votes.

Third reading vote deferred.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Orders of the day.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has moved the adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): This House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1531.

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Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

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

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Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre de Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
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Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
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Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
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Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Innovation / Ministre du Développement économique et de l'Innovation
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Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
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Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
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Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

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