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of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 28 August 2012

Mardi 28 août 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 28 August 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 28 août 2012

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HEALTHY HOMES RENOVATION
TAX CREDIT ACT, 2012
LOI DE 2012 SUR LE CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT
POUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT DU LOGEMENT
AXÉ SUR LE BIEN-ÊTRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 5, 2012, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

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

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Scarborough–Pickering.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Pickering–Scarborough East, Speaker, with respect.

I'm very happy to speak this morning on the healthy homes tax renovation. This is something we've been talking about for some time on the government side, and it really does give priority to the programs that address the needs of families. We want to strengthen the economy, but most importantly we want to help seniors who can stay at home, who want to stay at home, to stay there as long as possible.

Of course, we'll still continue to support seniors who need to be in a long-term-care facility—we'll still continue to make investments there, but this credit is to help seniors who can stay at home and want to stay at home. We know the demographics are changing. We know that the age span of seniors is much larger now. We know that many seniors prefer to stay at home, if at all possible, and that there are better health outcomes associated with that. That's why I think it's very important that we move forward with the home renovation tax credit. Not only will it help seniors stay in their home longer but it will help members sharing a home with a senior continue to keep the family together. I think everyone agrees that that's incredibly important.

There are other benefits, such as tax benefits that benefit taxpayers by relieving pressures on long-term-

care home costs. This home renovation tax credit is also estimated to support 10,500 jobs per year. That's very significant in this economy that we're in. This credit, if passed, will support about \$800 million in home renovation activities. That's the connection to the jobs and economy, Speaker.

If passed, effective October 1, 2011—so it's retroactive—seniors, homeowners, tenants and people who share a home with a senior relative would be allowed to claim a refundable tax credit of up to \$1,500 for expenses related to permanent modifications to their home. I was actually with the Premier of Ontario the day he announced that this tax credit would be retroactive to October 1, 2011. That has resonated very well in my riding of Pickering–Scarborough East, as well as with other Ontarians—with seniors, with families of seniors—who see this as beneficial, and quite frankly a lot of them are getting ready to file their claims under this. They've been collecting receipts. That's been the advice: Collect your receipts and get ready, because it is proposed to be retroactive. So the benefit will increase all the more, not just the day it passes here, but back to October 1, 2011. But we do need to get on with this. There's a gap developing between that time and where we are now. I think Ontarians expect us to move the passage of this forward.

People have also asked me, "Tracy, how are we going to pay for this program? You have a deficit. You're very focused on reducing the deficit in government," which we are, but I say that, yes, we have to reduce the deficit, but the program costs for this tax credit would be offset in other areas. So it's in the context of the budget that's already set. We, at least on the government side, firmly believe that the biggest threat to health care and protection of seniors and others is a deficit. So that's why we have to address the deficit at the same time. But the good news is that this program is fully costed out in the budget. If the take-up for this program is somewhat similar to what the federal 2009 home renovations tax credit is, up to 380,000 people could benefit from this credit every year—380,000 people. That's fantastic. That will provide some financial relief to seniors and, as I said, more importantly, allow seniors to stay at home—those who can—and family members who are having a senior live with them could also claim the credit.

I know many residents where I live feel this is important. Continued home ownership is important to them, and this tax benefit really is part of a bigger package of things we are doing for seniors and have been doing for seniors to help them stay at home, whether it's introducing more

PSWs at home, our aging strategy. I can speak to that in a moment. It's important to put this in the context of everything else—the family caregiver leave and other things like that; it's just part of a bigger strategy to help seniors.

The credit will help seniors stay in their homes longer and benefit the taxpayers and relieve pressure on long-term-care costs, as I mentioned earlier. Effective October 1, senior homeowners and tenants and people who share a home with a senior will be allowed to claim that refund credit of up to \$1,500 for expenses related to permanent modifications to their homes. Expenses would be eligible only to the extent that they improve accessibility or help a senior be more functional or mobile at home. An extreme example would be that hot tubs wouldn't be covered under this, but things that really help accessibility would be. They would have to be of a permanent nature.

From an accessibility point of view, I think everyone agrees that accessibility is good for everyone. When modifications are made to the home, they may well be an asset to the home later, when the house is sold. Removing barriers for everyone is so important. We have an aging population and we never know when any of us could be facing some sort of accessibility challenge, so removing barriers can have a bigger effect than what this tax credit will have immediately in terms of better access for seniors.

0910

People ask me what kinds of things are permitted under this tax credit. I'll just mention a few of those now.

Certain renovations to permit first-floor occupancy or secondary suites, such as granny flats or in-law suites: I see a lot of those happening more and more in homes where people want—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Excuse me. I'd just ask members to take their conversations outside or speak in a way that doesn't interfere with the speaker. Thank you.

You may continue.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate that.

We're seeing more creation of these in-law suites and so forth, so it's great that those expenses would be eligible under this tax credit.

Of course, grab bars and related reinforcements around toilets, bathtubs and showers: I think we're fairly familiar with those.

Handrails in corridors: This is again a small, often discreet thing that can make a big difference in terms of people moving from one place to another.

Wheelchair ramps; stairs; wheelchair lifts; elevators; bath lifts; walk-in bathtubs; wheel-in showers; widening passage doors: That's very important, because the building code provides for a certain width for doors, but people's wheelchairs can really vary in size. My husband, a paraplegic, has a certain size chair, but our friends in other chairs, especially powered chairs, have much wider dimensions to the wheelchair, especially those motorized chairs. Widening passage doors is often

something that needs to be done, even in fairly new houses, not just older houses. That's very important.

Lowering existing counters/cupboards; installing adjustable counters/cupboards; and also light switches and electrical outlets placed in accessible locations: We know that's important. We're talking about independence here as well, not having to rely on other family members or support people to do these basic things that allow us to function and allow seniors to function successfully in their home.

Door locks that are easy to operate; lever handles on doors and taps, instead of knobs, which a lot of people are doing anyway: Again, accessibility is good for everybody, and that's a good example of that.

Pullout shelves under counters to enable work from a seated position; non-slip bathroom flooring; hand-held showers or an adjustable rod or high-mounting brackets; additional light fixtures through the home: Lighting, of course, is so important to the accessibility of seniors as they age and have a higher incidence of falling and other risks, so those lighting fixtures could be quite beneficial.

Swing-clear hinges on doors to widen doorways; creation of knee space under the basin to enable use from a seated position; and insulation of any hot water pipes: The tax credit is quite comprehensive as it looks at the total costs of these kinds of renovations.

Relocation of taps to the front or side of a sink for easy access; hands-free taps; motion-activated lighting: Again, these are things you often see in new houses today, so everyone recognizes these things are beneficial to everyone, but in houses that don't have these features and for seniors who would benefit from that, the tax renovation will cover that.

Touch-and-release drawers and cupboards and drawers that pull out fully; modular and movable versions of a permanent fixture, such as modular ramps and non-fixed bath lifts: These are just some examples of what would be covered. This certainly isn't a full and complete list.

Expenses would not be eligible if the primary purpose were to increase the value of the home, such as roof repairs, redecorating, new flooring or landscaping. The attempt, as I said earlier, is to help seniors who can stay at home and who want to stay at home to do so. That's what this is all about.

As I said, this tax credit is really part of a broader number of measures, so it's important to consider this tax credit in that context.

We've had a number of achievements around supporting seniors. I'll just mention a couple of them that tie into this: the enhancements to energy and property tax credits for seniors. We have personal income tax cuts: On average, 93% of income taxpayers are getting personal income tax cuts and are now saving about \$200 annually.

We have the Ontario sales tax credit.

We have seniors in the north: Northern residents who pay rent or property tax for their principal residence are eligible for an annual credit of up to \$130 for a single person and up to \$200 for a family. That's a prime

example where this tax credit works hand in hand with other initiatives associated with seniors staying at home and aging gracefully and with independence at home.

We have increasing access to locked-in accounts. The government introduced reforms to the rules for locked-in accounts, to give seniors and other Ontarians more flexibility in accessing funds in these accounts.

We have the generic drugs. Of course, we've all heard about that, where the government reformed Ontario's drug system to facilitate lower generic drug prices, benefiting all Ontarians, but especially our seniors.

Pension and retirement income security, pension reform and the broader issue of retirement income adequacy are key priorities for the Ontario government. We're playing a lead role in a national effort to review the state of the current retirement income system, its future sustainability and options that could strengthen it for tomorrow's seniors. The government has modernized the Pension Benefits Act with two pieces of landmark legislation in 2009 and 2010 that received all-party consent. So, clearly, all parties are on board when it comes to pension and retirement income security for seniors.

On the health side, the government is strengthening the accountability of home care services among the service providers, community care access centres throughout the province, and introducing new quality measures to strengthen the way the CCACs make arrangements for home care services. I'm a recipient of that, and some of my elderly relatives are as well. I think that's fantastic. It again ties into helping our seniors stay at home if they want to and as long as they want to.

In terms of retirement homes, for the first time in Ontario's history, the care provided to seniors living in retirement homes will be regulated under provincial legislation. Now, that is just reinforcing the point I made earlier for seniors who cannot stay at home, who may not be able to take advantage of this tax credit. We are continuing to invest in seniors. It's not only at home, as some critics have suggested; we will continue to invest in retirement homes and long-term-care facilities.

In 2007, the McGuinty government launched the four-year \$1.1-billion Aging at Home strategy that I mentioned earlier. This is designed to provide support to seniors and their caregivers, to help seniors stay healthy and live with dignity and independence in the comfort of their own home.

Going back to long-term-care homes, we've taken steps to ensure that seniors who cannot live at home enjoy access to the very highest quality long-term-care services. Again, if a senior is able to stay at home and is able to take advantage of this tax credit, I think it is important that they know that we continue to make new investments on the long-term-care side, adding more than 8,200 new beds in long-term-care homes since 2003, increasing long-term-care funding by over \$1 billion since 2003, funding more than 6,100 new front-line staff in those long-term-care homes, including 2,300 nurses. In 2009, the government publicly reported through the Ontario Health Quality Council for the first time on quality

of care in long-term homes in the form of resident health outcomes and satisfaction. So again, for seniors who are anticipating making that transition from home to long-term care, it's important to look at that bigger picture.

We also have the Ontario strategy to combat elder abuse, whether seniors are staying at home or elsewhere. With \$900,000 in annual funding from the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat, the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse is working with local elder abuse networks and community agencies to implement the strategy's three priorities. First is the coordination of community services; second, training front-line staff; and third, raising awareness of where seniors can get help.

0920

We also have our affordable housing strategy, Speaker. We've also invested \$540 million under the affordable housing program extension, which includes \$307 million in dedicated funding for rental units for low-income seniors. This is very important because, as I mentioned, tenants are eligible under this healthy homes renovation tax credit as well. This affordable housing strategy goes hand in hand with that.

As part of the poverty reduction strategy announced in December 2008, the government is investing more than \$5 million annually to stabilize funding for all 47 service managers that operate rent bank programs across Ontario. Since 2004, Ontario has invested more than \$39 million in rent banks and has prevented more than 28,200 evictions. So again, affordable housing, combating elder abuse, long-term home care strategies, aging at home strategies in particular—all these things go hand in hand with the healthy home renovation tax credit.

We want seniors who can stay at home to be able to do that, and we want to support the families who support seniors. I can think of my own situation, where I had power of attorney for my grandmother and my great-aunt. The people supporting those people need the support too. That's what this tax credit does by allowing people who own the house and who have a senior with them to be eligible for that tax credit. We know about the impact on caregivers. We know about the financial and emotional challenges of caring for an elder person. So this tax credit provides some relief to those people who are taking care of a loved one at home and helping that senior continue to operate as independently as possible, with as much dignity as possible, through their golden years.

Just to sort of recap: Again, people ask me what the cost is. It's about \$60 million in 2011-12, and will be funded by lower spending on existing business support programs in the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, as well as lower-than-forecast costs for tax-related expenditures on the revenue side. These savings fully offset the cost of the proposed healthy home tax credit in 2011-12. As I said earlier, this tax credit creates many benefits from a jobs point of view and a construction industry point of view, but most of all, most importantly, it is to support our aging population, to support our seniors. It's part of a bigger strategy. It is important that

we get on with this. As I said, when the Premier announced the retroactivity of this proposed bill, it was very, very well received by people in my riding of Pickering–Scarborough East and many other ridings. I just would be a bit concerned if we don't move this along because asking people to save receipts further back—we all know how challenging that is, to keep track of expenses from the past. So I think it's incumbent on all of us to work together to pass this bill and move forward. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further debate? The member for Nipissing.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Questions and comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments: the member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm not certain that there are a lot of seniors with a spare \$10,000, but what I can tell you is what the seniors are talking to me about in Nipissing, and they are talking about their high energy bills. So when I'm at energy forums, as I've been through many throughout Ontario, they ask the question, "Why has my hydro bill doubled?" I take the time to explain to them that the Green Energy Act is the culprit of their hydro bill being doubled. I take the time to give them some details about what has happened.

What has happened is that we have a so-called green energy plan that takes wind power and forces it into communities. It takes the decision-making power of their local municipalities away and leaves it strictly in the hands of the provincial government. It gives the wind producers the highest possible FIT program, feed-in tariff program, payments in the world, and it has caused a tremendous pain to the seniors. That FIT program is overly generous, and it allows for wind turbines and solar farms in areas that have seniors against seniors, families against families.

This is what the seniors want to talk about: why their energy bill is so high, and why a 500-foot-high wind turbine is being placed in Powassan or Trout Creek or Mattawa in my riding; why, when you drive down the main street of Sundridge, there's a solar panel on Main Street. It's because the decision-making power of the municipalities is taken away. That's the issue that seniors want to talk about: their high energy bill. Thank you.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I would just like to say that, in my humble opinion, this is just another political smokescreen to boost popularity of the Liberal Party before an election. I'll have you know that if they really want to do something—\$10,000 does nothing. Some 90% of the people cannot afford \$10,000. So that's a smokescreen.

Secondly, they might want to do something about the HST on there and the hydro. Half the people, or three quarters of the seniors in this province, cannot afford to pay their hydro bills, so where are you going to find the \$10,000 that you have to borrow, Speaker—borrow—when you can't even pay your bills, to do something that

you can't get done? The only possible way that this could happen is if maybe the service clubs in their area step up to the plate, like the Lions Club or the Optimists. Service clubs might be able to come and help some of the seniors with some of their changes to their structures.

But, Speaker, these half-measure bills that I keep seeing day in and day out in this place are just not doing anything for the people out there. People are unemployed; people can't afford their bills. There are no jobs.

Everyone says, "Oh, everything's great, and waiting times are down in the hospitals." Well, I was in one yesterday: six hours before I saw a doctor—six hours. "Waiting times are down." Give me a break. It's not true. Everything is made out to make it look like honey and butter in this place, and when you get out in the real world, it isn't happening.

So, with all due respect, Speaker, this is just another one of these bills to make them popular, make them look good, and nothing will be accomplished again. Thank you.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: Let me say at the onset this morning, I thought it was an outstanding speech delivered by my colleague from Pickering–Scarborough East on the healthy homes renovation tax credit.

But let me tell you a little story. Just last week I had to visit Rona, which is on Chemong Road West in Peterborough. My wife, Karan, sent me out to get some white paint. In fact, I was to do the painting this week, but I'm back here; the Legislature was brought back.

So I talked to the manager at Rona—a great guy, a great guy. I said, "Can you take me over to the plumbing section for a moment?" I was getting white paint, but I went to the plumbing section, and I got to see those new bathtubs that have the special door that allows seniors to have accessibility to these new-design bathtubs, if they have mobility issues. I said to my good friend the manager of Rona—it's a great hardware store, just like Home Hardware and Home Depot—

Interjections.

Mr. Jeff Leal: But let me say, when I was chatting to the manager—they're very supportive of this healthy homes renovation tax credit. They can just see their customers lining up 10 deep, because when we pass this bill, they'll all be coming in to buy those new bathtubs that are designed for people who have mobility problems. Then I went into other sections of Rona, where they have other devices that could be acquired by a senior, to keep them in their home, through this healthy homes renovation tax credit.

The member from Pickering–Scarborough East highlighted some of these issues this morning: that we have a number of businesses out there that will significantly take advantage of this.

I don't know why the opposition wants to hold this up. Every seniors' group in the province of Ontario is supportive of this measure. I tell them today: It's time to get on board. Let's generate business for Rona, Home Depot and Home Hardware.

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

0930

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and provide a couple of minutes worth of comments on Bill 2, which the government calls the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit. I've been up several times, done some questions and comments, had my rotations both at second and third readings, and I have to agree with my colleague the member for Nipissing. We've had so many people respond since the election last October about hydro costs. I thought it was a big step for that first week that we met as a Legislature after the election that the opposition could move forward on Bill 4, which provided the relief that so many taxpayers spoke of during that campaign. The government, instead of moving forward with that legislation, instead of going with the will of the Legislature, presented this bill.

I have to tell you, unlike the member for Peterborough, I haven't had a lot of folks asking for this. In fact, most people in my riding have talked about their inability to spend \$10,000 on their homes. They don't have that type of money to be able to provide the renovations that the government offers. In fact, when I did my rotation on this bill, I talked about a gentleman who did call me. His name is Ron Stewart. He runs a small business in my community that helps seniors in their homes: helps cutting their grass, doing odd jobs around their homes, things that aren't covered by this bill. I know that there are many businesses like Ron Stewart's out there that try every day to do those little things that help a senior to stay in their home, to stay active, and don't include large expenditures that seniors don't have.

Speaker, I suggest this bill is not what seniors are asking for, and I'm glad to be able to provide those comments today.

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

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. I just want to clarify some of the myths and facts. This often happens with legislation. Under this proposed tax credit, seniors are not obligated to spend \$10,000 in renovations. No one is at all suggesting that. It's a tax credit for expenditures up to \$10,000. So there are seniors who will absolutely spend \$10,000, and there are others who won't. It's a portion of that that's the tax credit.

In terms of the members opposite saying people haven't heard about the tax credit, well, that is indeed my concern, too. If we delay further and the whole rollout of this legislation gets delayed, we lose opportunity. We lose the momentum of people who have said they are anxious to see this come forward as part of a comprehensive package of supports for seniors.

There is communication work to be done, if and when the tax credit is passed. So I encourage all members opposite to move this forward and recognize it's part of a bigger puzzle. This isn't about home heating; this isn't about other expenses. This is about renovating one's home to make it accessible for seniors, whether the sen-

ior or a family member owns the home, to allow seniors who want to stay at home, who want to age with dignity and grace, to stay at home.

It's part of a bigger puzzle. No one's suggesting that this is going to solve everything and every challenge that seniors face. That's why we have an aging at home strategy. That's why we have more supports for long-term care and retirement homes. So I strongly encourage members opposite to consider this bill in that context, and while not every senior is doing renovations, those who are at home may do it and may find this an extremely beneficial tax credit.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I suppose I'm supposed to say, "Great to be back." Great to be back.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thrilled.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thrilled. Why are we back? We're back to bail out the government from its own incompetence. That's the reality, folks. I know we're debating Bill 2 this morning, but I think it bears pointing out to the millions of viewers out there that the reason this Legislature has been recalled is to pass—interestingly enough, the education minister is the same one who came up with the Flick Off campaign a few years ago. Do you remember that?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Don't forget the garage mahal.

Mr. John Yakabuski: And the garage mahal—we all know about the garage mahal. I don't know where she's parking all her cars these days.

She originally called this bill the Putting Students First Act, but typical of Liberal principles, as soon as they get some kind of push-back, my God, they change the name: An Act to implement restraint measures in the education sector. Isn't that something? It is very difficult in this day and age, in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, not to be just a little bit cynical.

Of course, we're going to talk in depth on Bill 115, An Act to implement restraint measures in the education sector, renamed, Madam Speaker. Of course, that's going to be coming later today. This morning we're talking about Bill 2.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Please. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Patience, patience. We'll get there.

But the cynicism is no less. When you look at Bill 2—and we've heard the Liberal spin, which is the order of the day. We get the Liberal spin on any kind of bill. I've been here since 2003, and I don't think there's been a Parliament yet—it's been an increasing trend of the Liberals since 2003 to bring out bills that are designed solely for the politics of the issue, not about helping people in general, but the politics of the issue. Bill 2 is so much about the politics of the issue. It's about separating people and, in the world of the Liberals, knocking the dominoes off one at a time. This bill is designed for no other reason but to buy the votes of a group of people.

One at a time, they're going to put money out, which is everybody's money, to try to secure the votes of one group of the population. This particular group is seniors, seniors to whom they say that with this rebate program, tax credit, you'll be able to stay in your home longer.

But it's not aimed at seniors in general. It's not aimed at the senior whose furnace isn't working and could use \$4,000 or \$5,000 or whatever for a new furnace. There's no program for them. It's specifically to deal with issues of accessibility, so it's one group.

We talk about seniors and the low-income side of the ledger. That's the kind of senior that my mother-in-law is, for example. She'll be 80 on her next birthday, and she just this year quit going out and cleaning people's houses to earn a little extra money, because the only income she has—she emigrated from Germany in the 1950s. She never worked outside the home. Her husband worked in a sawmill making menial wages and also was a subsistence farmer. She has no other income except what she gets from her old age pension. She never had a job outside the home for which she was paid. She worked like a dog on the farm—worked like a bull, worked like a horse, worked like an ox, whatever—but she never earned any money. She doesn't fit into the category of a rich senior; she fits into the category of a poor senior.

But there is a category of rich seniors. We all know them. We all know the ones who go to Florida for the winter. They drive down with their Mercedes or their Cadillac or their Lincoln or something else. They are there.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Or they have a golf course behind their house.

0940

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's right. And when they're here, they golf every day. They're members of the country club. They exist.

We're realists here, Speaker. Those folks don't need the \$10,000 eligibility tax credit, but they can get it. They can get it because that's the way this Liberal government wants to play the game. Every piece of legislation is designed not to deliver the most good, not to deliver the greatest amount of help to the greatest amount of people, to the largest amount of people, but it's designed to, one at a time, "Let's see if we can't attract this group of people to the Liberal Party so we can hang on to power, so we can wreck this province more than we have in the last eight years and continue to do so going forward." As the Premier says, going forward together—going forward to hell in a handbasket.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw, Speaker.

That's what they want. This is all designed to, slowly but surely, get their tentacles into every little group of people and say, "We care about you. We're the Liberal Party and we're going to take care of you. We know best. We know best what is good for you."

You know, when I talk to people about this bill, they're actually shocked. "I don't fit into the senior cat-

egory," they say. "But you know what? We're struggling. We could use a little help, and all we get from Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals is more pain, more burden, increased taxes, increased energy bills and increased regulations." People who work in the forestry business are losing their jobs because the Liberal government is basically doing everything they can to shut that industry down by regulating them out of business. They ask me, "Is there anything out there to help us?" Regrettably, I have to say to them, "No, there isn't, because you haven't come into the plan yet. But maybe—just maybe—they'll take some of the general pot of money and try to secure your votes with it as well." That's the way they work.

When you look at this bill, you ask yourself—the government talks about it being a priority. All they really want to do is keep talking about it, because this bill was introduced on November 23, 2011. We are now essentially in the fall session of the following year. I know this is called an extension of the spring session, just for the purposes of putting it in the right category parliamentary-wise, I suppose, but we're almost into September; we're almost into the fall session. A year will have gone by without actually implementing this bill.

It really sounds like a priority for this government to me when you take a year to even implement it. I mean, are they that lost over at that cabinet table or in the Premier's office, the corner office on the second floor? I urge the folks out in television land to come and visit the Legislature sometime and go look at that—oh, no, you won't be able to get into the corner office; sorry. I'm not sure what goes on in there; I've never been there. But you have to ask yourself, what kind of planning is going on there? Who are the deep thinkers there who say, "This is a priority," and then cannot produce almost a year later?

Is it really a priority, or did they just want to talk about it? Do they just want to talk about how much they love our seniors and want them to stay in their homes? That's the side of politics that I find really, really difficult to deal with. Whatever happened to straight talk? Whatever happened to just dealing with the issues that we get to deal with, dealing with the problems of society and forging ahead with workable, realistic solutions to those problems? Whatever happened to that, Madam Speaker? Is this what people have to look forward to in the 21st century, the games people play?

Who was it? Was it Joe South or somebody who wrote that song, Games People Play? It says: "The games people play now / Every night and every day now." Well, maybe it will be night and day, because I think the House leader wants us to sit nights, to play more games in passing legislation in this House. Maybe they should have worked harder in the spring session to get this bill passed, but they didn't do anything. They just sat there playing games—just by day.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You know, the bells—I hear there's some ringing going on there. I think it's in people's heads, Madam Speaker. The bells do not slow

down the passage of legislation at all. The clock keeps ticking. The clock keeps ticking throughout all of that process. It adds to the debate time, and this government, which has had no problem—no problem—coming up with closure motions on debates for whatever bill they want, could have done that on any bill. They always look to try to put the blame somewhere else.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm not a lawyer, Madam Speaker, but I'll tell you, I did watch Law and Order once in a while. I stayed in a Holiday Inn Select one night, or whatever that was. You know, when they'd be fighting those cases on Law and Order, Jack McCoy would say, "You cannot close a door that you chose to open," if he was dealing with the defence. The defence opened the door here. They wanted to talk about the bells. So I think I have every right then, Madam Speaker, to talk about the reason for the bells and the disgusting scandal at Ornge that has been perpetrated on the people of this province by this government and that health minister. Where is the resignation of that health minister over the Ornge scandal? Why do they keep pretending that the things that went on at Ornge are somebody else's fault? Now they want to talk about bells in this chamber? My goodness gracious, Madam Speaker.

You know, my riding is the subject now of an investigation in Ornge, a death, an investigation by the coroner of a lady who regrettably passed away in my riding as a client of Ornge—a client of Ornge. You know what happened, Madam Speaker? The night that it was raised in the House here, the CEO of Ornge called the deceased's husband and apologized and said there would be an investigation. Do you know what they did at Ornge? A couple of months later, they sent out a customer satisfaction survey to the deceased lady asking her how she liked the service at Ornge.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I ask the member to come back to the bill that we are debating.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I am back to the bells, Speaker. They talked about the bells.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, the bill? I was talking bells.

So yeah, Bill 2. You know what? These folks are seniors. But a few months later she gets a customer satisfaction survey asking her how Ornge did. Quite an improvement at Ornge under this government, isn't it? That was shameful.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I remind the member to come back to Bill 2.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I am running short of time.

I want to speak on a number of things. I've got a couple of things written down here, but they don't actually speak to Bill 2, so I'm going to leave those for another time and speak about Bill 2, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement a healthy homes renovation tax credit—the healthy homes renovation tax credit, as we commonly know it by. We have to ask

ourselves what they're really trying to accomplish here. No matter how I slice and dice this, it comes back to the same thing: This is a cynical play at votes.

0950

You know, I'll get back to my mother-in-law for a minute, that group of seniors who fits into that category where they don't have much. They do not have much. She doesn't have \$10,000 to do the renovations on her place. In fact, she has a hard time paying her hydro bill. So does everybody. A lot of people have a hard time paying their hydro bill in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, because he decided that politics would trump policy. He decided he was going to try to convince the world in Ontario that if we just go down with this subsidization scheme, we're going to have a better power system. He didn't tell you that it was going to cost you; you're going to pay through the teeth. No, he didn't tell you that. So now we've got a situation where people are looking at their hydro bills and they're asking, "What's going on here? Why am I paying 150% increases in hydro since Dalton McGuinty took office?" And you know what, folks? It's going to get worse.

Let's talk about the politics behind the decision to cancel a power plant in Mississauga that we've opposed from the start. They paid \$190 million to cancel that. Who's going to pay for that, I ask the member from Pickering-Scarborough East? Who's going to pay for that? Why don't you tell your constituents who's going to pay that \$190 million? Shame on the lot of you. That's \$190 million, which they have admitted was for no other reason but to save seats in Mississauga. The Minister of Energy at the estimates had to admit it was a political decision—a political decision to shut it down. So if you're willing to put \$190 million on the table for politics, how much are you putting on the table for this? How much are you going to put on the table for every other bill, every other decision that is made in this House?

Every time the Liberals do something, it is for politics, political reasons, and they do it with your money. The people out there who are hurting the most, the people who are struggling to get by in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, they're the ones who get stuck with the bills for his ill-considered decisions. They're the ones. So when we debate this bill, and any other bill in this House—and I say to the members across the way, when you go home to your ridings and you face those constituents in the eye and they ask you how we got here, how we got to the point where we can spend \$190 million for no other reason but to buy the seats in Mississauga—that is an admission; they've admitted that. The Premier himself has not commented. He sent out the Minister of Energy. He sent out the messenger boys. But he has not commented on why a political party, in this day and age, could think it is right to take the people's money and spend it in that way. Is that what we have to look forward to in this province? Not under a Tim Hudak government. Those things won't happen.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, thank you very much. It's always a pleasure to listen to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. You keep us very interested in what you have to say. There are a few things that the member did talk about which I agree with.

But first I want to highlight a couple of things I've been doing in my riding. I'm the seniors critic, and I hear from seniors a lot. The three things are on seniors' worry lists when you talk to seniors.

First of all is health care. They're worried about the health care we have in this province, and they're worried about the health care they are receiving in their homes. It's not enough for them. They need it to improve. They need more access to health care in their homes, especially rural seniors. That's one big issue.

The other issue they have is a pocketbook issue. As the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke pointed out, hydro is expensive. If you look at your hydro bill lately, especially with the summer we've had, the heat—it has been astronomically hot, and there has been a drought. People have had their air conditioning on. You're getting bills coming in at \$200 a month. Seniors can't afford to stay in their homes if they have those types of bills.

They're also worried, believe it or not, about jobs. A lot of my seniors are worried about the economy and how their children are going to keep their jobs and how their grandchildren are getting jobs, because a lot of their grandchildren can't find summer jobs, or they've graduated from university or college and can't find work.

So having this bill, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act, is a concern because they're worried about so many other things as opposed to spending \$10,000 that they don't have in order to stay in their homes. We have to do better with the pocketbook issues and affordable housing for seniors.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments?

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: I think it's very unfortunate, when we're discussing a bill and are hopefully trying to work together to improve the quality of life, in this case, of seniors who can and want to stay in their home, that it becomes so cynical, so partisan, so off-topic. Quite frankly, this discussion about bells and all that just shows that this bill, along with others, has taken so long to get to this point because of the delays.

The fact is, the Liberal Party is the government. We govern; that's what we do. So we have a comprehensive strategy to help seniors. Other parties have been in government before, and they know what it's like to govern. That's our job, but to work in co-operation with the other parties. That's why this bill went to committee; that's why it was reviewed in detail there, clause-by-clause consideration. Here we are now, ready to pass the bill, I hope.

I think it's all-important that we stay focused on what we're talking about here today. We're not talking about hydro bills explicitly. We're talking about seniors staying at home, a tax credit, a part of a bigger strategy. No, not

every senior will take advantage of this tax credit, and no, not every senior will spend \$10,000 on home renovations.

Mr. Mario Sergio: They don't have to.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Exactly. They don't have to.

The important thing to remember is that it helps seniors stay at home longer. It helps family members sharing a home with a senior get some tax relief. It benefits taxpayers by relieving pressure on long-term-care facilities. It supports 10,500 jobs per year and about \$800 million in home renovation tax credits. That's fantastic. If passed, effective October 1, 2011, senior homeowners and tenants will be able to make a claim for a refundable tax credit up to \$1,500 for expenses related to permanent modifications of their home. That's good news. I encourage everybody to get on board and—

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has performed an important public service this morning: He has woken up the government benches. I think it's commendable, and I certainly want to compliment him on the speech that he gave this morning. It was one of the best speeches I think I've heard in this current provincial Parliament. He is a powerful voice for his constituents in Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, and that forceful and passionate manner he brings into this House is very effective in terms of representing his constituents. I think he is, indeed, one of the greatest orators in the House at present. He talked about a number of things, of course Bill 2, the subject before the House today, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement a healthy homes renovation tax credit.

Of course, as we know, this bill was introduced almost a full year ago, and the government has only now gotten around to getting it to this point in the debate: third reading. We certainly question the management of the House from the perspective of the government House leader's ability to get bills through the House but certainly also whether or not this is a high priority for the government.

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As you know, Madam Speaker, when we discuss and debate finance bills—and this bill is brought forward in the name of the Minister of Finance—there's usually a greater degree of latitude in terms of the debate.

I'm glad that the member did make reference to the \$190-million penalty that the provincial government is going to be paying for its decision—its crass political decision, I would add, just before the provincial election was called—to cancel the Mississauga gas-fired electricity plant that was proposed for that community in order to placate the voters in a number of seats around the Mississauga area.

That was one of the most cynical political decisions that I've ever seen in the 22 years that I've served in this Legislature, by any government. I think that the people of Ontario are outraged when they hear about it, and I think it's important that members of the Legislature respond to

it. Certainly, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke did a great job outlining—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I just want to commend the member from Nipissing–Pembroke for his passionate speech, but then again, I love the diversity in this House. We go from that to a calm, cool, collected approach by our member from London–Fanshawe, which was a nice mix.

I'll say one thing: The member from Pembroke did hit on one thing about bills that give a little bit. I'll give you a perfect example of what can compare to Bill 2, which is the \$50 sports grant that the government came out with last year—\$50 per family for sports equipment or sports registration.

Frankly, Speaker, that's a joke. I mean, I might be able to sharpen my skates six times for 50 bucks if I'm lucky. It's not doing anything for the kid that can't afford registration in the first place. A lot of our local clubs help out kids that can't afford to register, and they help out the families with that. So that was actually, to me, an insult—\$50. What am I going to do with \$50? That was one example of a fluff bill that's done for political gain, and now we've got another one here for the \$10,000.

They mentioned the 380,000 people that it's going to help in Ontario. Is that the total number of seniors in Ontario? I don't think so. And what demographic group does that represent? Does that represent people that can afford \$10,000, or people that can't? I'm thinking it's the people that can. I'm sure there are more than 380,000 seniors in Ontario, with 14 million people or close to it.

Once again, as the member said, they're appealing to a certain group to get votes. Usually, the ones in that group have a tendency to vote, more so than other people. So they're targeting a special group that votes, and that really is sad. So I can safely say, once again, it's about votes, it's about saving seats. It's not really for the people out there.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has two minutes to respond.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the members for London–Fanshawe, Pickering–Scarborough East, Wellington–Halton Hills, and of course, my friend from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

I just want to talk for a second about what the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek said about this rebate for hockey—50 bucks. The price of ice time's going up all over the place. What is the number one reason why the price of ice time is going up?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Energy.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I say to my friend from Nipissing that, as he knows, it's the cost of energy—power. And who has driven up the price of power more than anyone in the history of Ontario?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Dalton McGuinty.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Dalton McGuinty. And now he wants you to come up with another \$190 million for the Mississauga fiasco, the Sousa centre, now defunct. The

building of the Sousa centre has been cancelled. And what's it going to cost for the Oakville power plant?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'm asking the member to come back to Bill 2.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I was just speaking on the comments of other members, but I guess I won't address them, then. I'll just go to the bill.

Mr. Paul Miller: There's so little—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, yes, there wasn't a whole lot of substance there for some of them, but I did like what the member for Wellington–Halton Hills had to say, I must say, Madam Speaker. It was wonderful—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: So accurate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, and so accurate.

Anyway, again, it speaks to the cynicism that people have for this House and the people who occupy it. That's one of the dangerous things in politics today: how people view the members of this Legislature. Behaviour like what's going on on the other side, these kinds of cynical bills that are being put forward, only adds to the problem.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and welcome back. It's a pleasure and it's an honour, always, to stand in this House, and in particular to stand and to speak on behalf of seniors, because somebody has to. It's a little sunnier on the other side of this House. I listened intently to the words from the member from Pickering–Scarborough East, but I'd like to challenge her on some of the facts.

First of all, the figures: It's going to create 10,000 jobs? I'd love to see the proof. It's going to cost the government \$800 million? I'd love to see the take-up. Because quite frankly, there are two reasons why seniors do not stay in their homes, and these are well-documented, factual reasons. One is the expense of keeping it up, and that can be heating, as we've heard; it can be hydro, as we've heard; it can be property taxes. It's keeping up the home—and most of my seniors leave their homes because of that. Number two is because they need assistance to stay in their homes. It's not about widening hallways; it's not about ramps. It's about somebody to help you do the shopping, somebody to clean the leaves out of the gutters, somebody to mow the lawn. That's what seniors need and that's what drives them from their homes. Considering that almost half of seniors have a disability, that assistance becomes even more pre-eminent. This bill does absolutely nothing for those two reasons. It's not going to keep seniors in their homes. It's not going to work. If that's the reason, the reason is faulty.

We've also heard that you don't have to spend \$10,000 to collect the \$1,500 back, but the reality is, what can you get done for a couple of hundred? Even if you only spend that, you have to put the money up front and you have to wait for the money to come back at tax time. Seniors do not have even a few hundred dollars up front. Why, Madam Speaker? This is why: Almost one in 10 seniors in our province who are female live in poverty. They have a hard time feeding themselves,

paying the rent and paying the property taxes, never mind making modifications and upgrades to their homes. One in 20 seniors who are male live in poverty. The same goes for them. They can't afford anything extra.

I'd just like to correct my friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, however, about the hydro costs. In fact, the reason that hydro is so high in this province is that both the Conservative and the Liberal parties have wantonly gone down the road of nuclear energy and have put our money into nuclear. The cost overruns in nuclear are now hitting our seniors in their pocketbooks. But also, of course, it's the HST, which is what this Liberal government brought in. That's hurting seniors. We voted in this House to take it off home heating, but that hasn't happened.

Now, if you want to see a program that does actually help seniors, you don't have to look far. You look next door to Quebec. There they have a refundable \$3,500 for low-income seniors. They're the ones who need it, Madam Speaker. The people, as we've heard, who are going to Florida every winter, who can afford \$10,000 up front, don't need our help. The seniors who need our help are the people who are living in poverty, and the people who are living in poverty don't have the money to put up front. In Quebec, they get that \$3,500 if they're low-income. That works. That's smart. That's what we need here, and that's the kind of program that would actually help seniors.

Let me tell you the story of a senior in my riding, a classic story. This is a woman who owned her own home. She had to leave it. Why? Not for financial reasons, but because she didn't have assistance. She was suffering from early-onset dementia and she couldn't stay in her home, so she went into a long-term-care facility. It was a good one. But good long-term-care facilities cost a lot of money. They cost so much money that there's a new breed of seniors now who go on cruises permanently. They get carried off them, quite literally, because it's cheaper to go on a cruise than it is to go into long-term care. That's how bad it is in Ontario. It's cheaper to put yourself on a boat and start circling the world than it is to actually go into long-term care, where people will provide you with care day in and day out if you have something like Alzheimer's or early-onset or dementia, where you need that kind of care. This is the Ontario we live in.

1010

So what happened to my friend? She goes into long-term care and guess what? Because she's paying thousands of dollars every month, she not only pays the interest on the house that she sold, and she owned it outright, but she's paying the principal. Guess what? She lives too long. What a fate should befall us that we outlive our money. That's what happens to seniors too, because the longer we live, we live outside the bounds of what we can save for in any program that we have, including selling our homes. So what happened? She moved from the good long-term-care home into the not-so-good long-term-care home, where she didn't have a private room, where she had to share a room with another woman with dementia, where the care wasn't as good.

And guess what? She died shortly thereafter. That's the life of a senior in this province. And lest we forget, these are the people who built this province. These are our grandparents; these are our parents; these are the people who sacrificed day in and day out, who paid for the roads, who paid for the infrastructure, who paid for the health care system. These are the people who we are now ignoring.

This government is ignoring our senior population, and this bill, Bill 2, is window dressing. It's not going to help anybody. I'd love to see how many seniors take this bill up and what their incomes are, because it's not going to be a low-income senior. It's not going to be seniors in my riding who I'm hearing from. They're not going to take advantage of this bill. They're not going to because they can't afford it. They simply can't afford to take advantage.

And where are these jobs? I'd love to see the proof, Madam Speaker. The government's great about throwing these figures out. "Some \$800 million we're going to spend; 10,000 jobs we're going to create." Where? Show me the proof. I'd love to see the proof.

There are other jurisdictions who do it better, way better than even Quebec. Let me tell you about one. I travelled there. Because remember, coming back to my first point, there are two reasons that seniors move out of their homes. Number one is money; they can't afford to keep paying the property taxes, the heating, the hydro. Number two is they need assistance. They don't need wider hallways; they need someone to help them, just doing the menial stuff sometimes, somebody to come in. We could talk about how we've completely gutted that system too, Madam Speaker, but let's leave it for a minute.

What have they done in some Scandinavian countries? Sweden, for example: Let's look at what they do for their seniors. In Sweden, if you have a relative with dementia or Alzheimer's or a disability that means they need your help, and you're a relative—because guess what? 68% of the people who help seniors are relatives. What have they done? They've said, "We'll train your relative. If you want to look after them, we'll send you on a training course. We'll get you into a union, a good union job. We'll get you into a union. We'll train you, we'll supervise you and we'll pay you." And guess what? It's cheaper than institutionalizing, it's cheaper than long-term care and it's better, because it's a person who loves you, who wants to work with you, who's doing it anyway. They're doing it anyway in Ontario. They're doing it for free.

When we're talking about the needs of seniors, we're also talking about the needs of their caregivers, because that's a crisis too—the crisis in caring for people who want to stay in their homes. It's a crisis for those who work in those homes, who are paid many times less than minimum wage by the time they travel back and forth. It's a crisis for relatives, who set aside their own dreams, their own desires, their own work, their own families—the sandwich generation; we've heard about them so

often—to care for their seniors, because nobody else will and the seniors can't afford to pay somebody to do that day in and night out.

Could we do it better? One thousand percent better. Will this bill help? Not one iota. You spend a few hundred dollars and you get \$30 back or something at tax time. Oh, that's going to change the poverty rates. That's going to change the Alzheimer's situation. That's going to change the fact that our long-term-care beds don't keep up with the need and the fact that people who work there get ripped off day by day. That's going to change that not one iota.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): We've reached 10:15.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's been a pleasure and I look forward to speaking more about it.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

This House stands recessed until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would like to take this opportunity to introduce a former member of this Legislature, Mr. Jim Brownell, the former member for Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh. Welcome.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Kate Julien, formerly of my office, who is actually leaving my staff to go to law school. We welcome her back. Even though she's left the place, she's come back for a visit today.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'd like to welcome students from Scarborough–Agincourt: Akehil, Sarah, Raha, Nancy and Mary. Welcome to the House.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, it gives me pleasure to welcome Romeo Tello from my riding, attending today. Thank you, Romeo.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for introducing former MPP Jim Brownell. He also has a guest with him: Mr. Gerry Benson from Cornwall, who I'd like to welcome as well to Queen's Park.

Mr. Kim Craiton: I'm pleased to introduce—and I think he enjoyed us so much yesterday, he's back again today—my good friend Craig Brockwell from the teachers' federation. Welcome, Craig.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, the Ontario PC caucus has been able to drag you, sometimes kicking and screaming but drag you nonethe-

less, to a partial wage freeze for teachers. The question is, now, what do we do next?

Yesterday I asked you why you have a pay freeze for teachers but not for CUPE power workers getting almost a 9% wage increase. Your answer seemed to be, "Well, it's constitutional for teachers but it's unconstitutional for everyone else." I don't think people actually believe that argument.

Let me try something else, though, Premier. You have given 98% of bureaucrats bonus pay increases who are supposed to have their wages frozen. Will you agree to the PC caucus call to end the McGuinty loophole, close it up and take away those bonuses that are becoming nothing more than another Dalton McGuinty giveaway?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to start by reassuring my honourable colleague that in the matter of his support for our bill, which is designed to ensure that we protect progress in our schools and achieve our fiscal targets, I will defend this gentleman in that particular context and provide him with that reassurance.

I also want to say, Mr. Speaker, that on the matter of pay for performance, my honourable colleague will want to recall that he was at the cabinet table when they put in place that particular measure. We think it is less than satisfactory. That's why we've undertaken to re-examine that. If my honourable colleague has any specific recommendations, we would be most welcome to receive those.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Premier, you know that performance pay began as something to reward those hardest-working bureaucrats who save taxpayers money. It was a small, select group, the best of the best, but under his leadership, it's mutated into—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Peterborough, would you come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —free giveaway of taxpayer dollars: 98% got performance pay increases. And Premier, I remind you, this comes directly from a loophole you created in your public restraint act, subsection 8(3). Sir, you crafted this loophole and gave 98% of bureaucrats bonus pay increases.

Please help us understand how you can deal seriously and try to get wage freezes on one hand, because I don't think you're being serious enough, and give away 98% bonuses to civil servants who are supposed to have their wages frozen. Isn't the right thing to do to follow the PC plan, close this loophole completely, and an across-the-board pay freeze for all of us?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think we've made it perfectly clear that the system that was developed by the PC government is unacceptable, and we're going to have to make some changes to that. If my honourable colleague has any specific recommendations in that regard, we would be most interested in receiving those—something that goes beyond the rhetoric, ideally.

But I want to reassure Ontarians that I've asked my Minister of Finance to take a very close look at this.

We'll be eager to hear from all parties and all members with respect to what we need to do to ensure we have a fair system of remuneration in place.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, you've dug us into a \$30-billion hole. The last 10 months have been wasted with more spending, no serious efforts to try to reduce the size and cost of government, and you turned what was supposed to be an incentive program for the best of the best into a general entitlement for everyone. Ninety-eight per cent of bureaucrats got bonus pay. That defies the definition—that defies rationality.

You, sir, just asked for my recommendation: End it. Close the loophole. Make it no more. Put a stop to it. Will you do the right thing and end the McGuinty loophole that gave 98% pay increases?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I choose—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I choose to interpret the enthusiasm that characterizes my honourable colleague's intervention in this matter as a strong denunciation—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Nepean—Carleton, your leader asked a question and I think your party would like to have the answer. I'd like to have a little bit of quiet. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague and I are on common ground when we both choose to denounce the policies originally put in place by the PC government at a cabinet table at which my honourable colleague in fact sat. I don't think we want to defend that particular policy. We need to acknowledge its inadequacy, and I think we need to work together to put in place something that is more fair for all concerned.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: I had hoped the Premier agreeing to what the PC Party had called for—a wage freeze, even a partial wage freeze on teachers—may have been a sign that he was actually starting to take things seriously, that maybe he had listened to the personal conversation he and I had back in November and since. But sadly, this looks more like a conversion of convenience.

Premier, this should be a no-brainer. This is basic. This is absolutely elementary. You created a loophole in your act, the public restraint act, subsection 8(3), that allows for 98% of bureaucrats to get bonuses that were supposed to be frozen. How can you negotiate seriously at the table in achieving any further wage freezes?

The question is, where do we go next? The Ontario PC caucus says an across-the-board wage freeze, a spending freeze, no more spending programs and close this loophole. Premier, no more waffling. Do the right thing.

Close the McGuinty loophole and cut out these 98% bonus pay increases.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order, please. Sit down.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I appreciate the enthusiasm, again, with which my honourable colleague puts his questions, but I want to remind him yet again that we're talking about a policy that was put in place by the PC government. We've all acknowledged its inadequacy, Speaker. It is no longer suitable. I think we need to find a way to work together to improve it and put in place a remuneration system that is fair to both taxpayers and people working within the public sector.

I think we're on common ground there, Speaker, and I'd ask my honourable colleague to find a way to introduce some specific measures that we might acknowledge and to work with the government.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, Speaker, the Premier's quoted in today's National Post saying the following: "We can't do what we did for the past nine years." Dalton McGuinty—

Interjections.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would the member of Peterborough come to order, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —of course referring to the pay increases he's given to teachers. A very fair point; I agree with the Premier on this. You gave away too much. You gave away the store, a 30% pay increase, threw money at every problem under the sun, and didn't get results in return. We've dragged you kicking and screaming to agreeing to at least a partial wage freeze. The question, Premier: Is this a conversion of convenience or are you going to get serious about the problems?

Since then we've seen \$190 million blown on moving a gas plant, continuing scandals at Ornge, 98% of bureaucrats getting pay increases when they're supposed to be frozen. The path ahead: Freeze spending, freeze wages, no more increases, no more sliding backwards. Get serious about the situation, Premier. Is this convenience? Is it a newfound religion? Do the right thing: Close the loophole and freeze spending across the board.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the heat but I think Ontarians would more appreciate a little bit of light on this subject and I'll try to shed a little bit more on it now.

This program was created in 1996. It was expanded in 2001 and 2002. What we have done in fact is frozen the pool that's available for pay-for-performance, and we've reduced it in size now so that it's the same size today as it was back in 2003, just so we're clear as to the reality of this matter.

Again, I say to my honourable colleague that we no longer are prepared to accept this deficient PC policy and

we need to work together to ensure that it's fair for all concerned.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, over nine years, you've turned what was supposed to be an incentive for the best of the best into a freebie, another Liberal giveaway where 98% got a backdoor wage increase.

I ask a straightforward question, "Will you close the McGuinty loophole?" and I get this waffling, Speaker. He's going to look at it. He's going to study it; he's going to examine it. He's going to pursue his options. Sir, there are no options. Close the loophole and freeze spending—an across-the-board wage freeze. We had hoped that you had finally gotten that the province is in a substantial hole. It's time to take a different course, one that will grow the economy and reduce spending.

Premier, I'll ask you again: Will you close the loophole as part of an across-the-board wage freeze and freeze spending where it is? No more increases. No more runways. Put down the shovel. The hole is deep enough. Will you do the right thing, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I hear what my honourable colleague is saying, but what I understand is a reckless head-on rush to close hospitals, close schools, fire teachers, lay off nurses. That's not an approach that we're prepared to adopt on this side of the House. I think we have a responsibility to be thoughtful. I appreciate the volume that characterizes my honourable colleague's interventions on this matter, but we will remain, nonetheless, thoughtful. We would denounce that particular policy put in place by the PC government. We will improve it and put something in place that is fair to all concerned.

TEACHERS' CONTRACTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question to the Premier: Just a few weeks ago, the Premier denounced a plan by the Conservatives to impose contracts on public servants as "simplistic and unconstitutional and certain to be overturned by the courts." Now he's working with the Conservatives to do exactly that. Has the Constitution changed?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question from my honourable colleague. It's a little bit complicated, but it's worth making the effort to try to understand. I'd ask my honourable colleague to acknowledge the facts connected with what we are doing which led up to the evolution and introduction of the bill which is the subject of his question.

It started some six months ago. We sat down with our teachers' federations. We engaged in a sincere, genuine and determined effort to achieve a negotiated resolution. We did that with 55,000 teachers. So we have made a strong, concerted, determined and deliberate effort to achieve a negotiated settlement. But we are in fact running out of runway. So we've laid down a good founda-

tion of negotiations. Now it comes time for us to introduce a bill, and that's what we're doing.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The Premier needs to know that constitutional experts are saying that the government has it wrong. As one law professor noted, "The fact that you've simply bargained for six months—or any period of time—isn't the case law." She went on to guess that the government likely doesn't care. In two to four years, when the consequences are felt and have to be dealt with, perhaps by another government, it doesn't matter to them.

Why should parents believe that this isn't yet another case of the government playing short-term politics that leaves us with an extended long-term and expensive mess?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I think it's perfectly clear that the NDP believe, at this point in time, at this point in our economic history, notwithstanding our challenging fiscal circumstances, that Ontario teachers should be given a pay hike at this point in time. We can't afford that right now. We're not prepared to do that, and I think teachers understand that. That's why 55,000 Ontario teachers have signed on to the road map that we've worked long and hard to negotiate. So we see the world differently.

I'm proud of the fact that we've hired 13,000 new teachers. I'm proud of the fact that we have lowered class sizes, proud of the fact that we've hired 10,000 more support staff, proud of the fact that we have more teachers for art, phys ed and those kinds of programs. The purpose of the bill is to protect those programs, protect our progress and protect all those jobs for Ontario teachers.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I think most people understand the purpose of the bill is to win by-election seats. That's what we're talking about.

This isn't the first time we've seen this government do whatever it takes to win power for themselves. Families across Ontario are now paying the \$190 million that the government risked when it moved to save seats in Mississauga and Etobicoke. Now, the government is willing to waste millions more and create conflict for kids in our classrooms.

Is the government ready to stop playing politics and work to get a solution that actually works for students, their parents and a public that's fed up with paying the price for this government's quest for a majority?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my honourable colleague of a quote that he offered on September 26, 2011, in connection with the Mississauga gas plant. He said, quite simply, "We wouldn't build it." I want to acknowledge his support for this.

Again, I want to speak to our record of support for publicly funded education in Ontario. In addition to those 13,630 new teachers, in addition to lowering class sizes and hiring 10,000 more support staff, we've offered

teachers more prep time. We've put in place already more professional development days. We introduced the Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence, Speaker, to recognize excellence that takes place in our classrooms every single day. Tens of thousands of teachers have benefitted from the many professional learning opportunities offered by the literacy and numeracy secretariat.

That is a small sampling of the facts when it comes to our commitment to teaching and excellence in all of our schools in Ontario.

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, again to the Premier: In 2003, this Premier, then in opposition, stood in the House and spoke to government plans to impose contracts, saying, "This has nothing to do with returning ... kids to their classroom. It has everything to do with political opportunism and preparing themselves to go into the next election." He went on to say, "[Y]ou can't legislate goodwill and legislate respect." What changed?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I find it interesting that the NDP had no education platform in the last election. I would gladly put our record of achievement, our record of co-operative good will, our record of progress inside publicly funded schools up against theirs any day.

1050

I would encourage my honourable colleague to simply reconcile himself to the fact that that party believes that it's right and appropriate and fair to all concerned that we give teachers a pay hike today. I'm saying we can't afford to do that, not right now. We've increased their pay during the course of the past nine years. Right now, we need to hit the pause button. We need to ensure that any money available for education goes into full-day kindergarten, goes into smaller classes, goes into progress with test scores and grad rates. That's the choice we're making on behalf of Ontario families, and I believe that's a decision supported by Ontario teachers.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Always amusing.

The reality is that this government has completely reversed itself so many times that nobody can tell what they believe anymore. The government that denounced Conservative wage plans as unconstitutional, certain to cost millions in the long run, is now working with the Conservatives to risk just that. The government that promised to put kids in the classroom first has thrown that away in the hopes of picking up seats in the Legislature.

Why should parents believe that the Premier has a plan for our schools when he's engaging in the sort of politics he used to denounce?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I always appreciate the opportunity to converse with my honourable colleague.

I think it's important to make it as clear as I can with respect to the distinction in terms of the position that we've adopted in this matter. We can't afford to give

teachers a pay hike at this point in time. My honourable colleagues in the NDP want to give teachers a pay hike in 2012. We can't afford to do so. We've got to make some choices. The choice we make is that any money we have that's available for education will go into continuing to roll out full-day kindergarten so it's available for 250,000 of our youngest learners—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would repeat the same thing to the members of the NDP caucus. You asked the question. You may not like the answer, but I'd ask you to listen to the answer.

Continue, Premier.

Interjection.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think it was for me.

Speaker, the NDP believe that we should be giving teachers a pay hike; we don't. We think the money that's available—

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: If they don't think teachers should be getting an increase in pay, then they should go out there and say that. Go out on the front lawn today and say that: They're not going to get an increase in pay.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sit down, please. Order, please.

Supplementary?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek come to order, please. This is the last warning.

Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, the Premier made it clear yesterday what his priorities were when his first act of a recalled Legislature was to hit the campaign trail in Kitchener–Waterloo. He thinks he can fool voters with a divisive and risky plan, a plan he knows won't work. I don't think people are going to be fooled.

When will the Premier stop playing politics and work to get a solution that actually works for kids in the classroom?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: So we're clear, they don't want us to do anything with respect to the ONTC. They don't want us to touch the subsidy for horse racing in Ontario. They want to give teachers a pay hike in Ontario. They want to give doctors a pay hike in Ontario.

This represents the height of irresponsibility. We have to act responsibly in government. The times have changed, and so must we. We must make decisions that support health care, that support education. We've got to do so in a way that also meets the needs of Ontario families. That's what we're going to keep doing.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Minister of Energy.

This summer, our party used every means available to get to the truth about cancelling the Mississauga power

plant. Finally, after hiding behind the pages of a lawsuit, the minister announced the shocking news: The Liberals spent \$180 million. Only a few days later, his colleague corrected the number, announcing it's really \$190 million. "Honest; we mean it this time."

There are 600,000 unemployed men and women in Ontario. Minister, can you please tell those 600,000 people how spending \$190 million and getting nothing in return, not even one megawatt of power, is helping them get back to work this morning?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Those who are looking for work in the province of Ontario are always our first priority. That's why we've made sure that there's enough electricity for reliable generation in the province of Ontario. There wasn't when they left office in 2003. That's why we reformed the tax system, to make sure we supported job creation in this province. They voted against it. That's why we decreased the amount of tax on investment for manufacturing equipment. They voted against it. That's why we've supported the southwest economic development fund. They voted against it.

The only thing they supported was the cancellation of the gas plant, which now they're trying to reconcile from—

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the minister: We know now the damage in Mississauga. Yesterday my colleague from Cambridge had to call for the minister to be found in contempt of the Legislature because he still hasn't turned over the Oakville power plant documents. Imagine that, Speaker. What is this government hiding? Just how bad is the bill going to be for Oakville? The opening ante is \$300 million, but will it exceed \$1 billion, as many insiders are suggesting?

Minister, the 600,000 unemployed in Ontario deserve better. They deserve an answer from you. In fact, your fellow parliamentarians deserve an answer from you. Will you today provide this House with the cost of cancelling the Oakville power plant?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'm reminded that we have a vote on the southwest economic development fund right after question period.

What we said from the beginning—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Once again, if you ask a question, I ask you to listen to the answer. If the noise continues at the level it is, I can't hear the answer, so, please, order.

Minister?

Interjection.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: What we said from the beginning, when we became the government, and—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, I just stood up and asked for order, and I didn't have a chance to even hit my seat and you were at it again.

Minister?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: What we said from the beginning, as we proceeded to implement the commitment we made with respect to the gas plant, is that as soon as we had more to say about the issue, we would immediately tell the people what that was.

We did not conclude those confidential discussions until the Monday—I believe July 10—and the day after, we were out there with documents and with numbers, talking about the relocation of the plant to Sarnia–Lambton. That's the position we've taken consistently.

Now, I know there's a motion before the House, and I know the Speaker has it, and we'll await the Speaker's ruling as we reconcile the competing interests here, and the public interest, which we've always stood to defend.

COMMITTEE WITNESSES

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. Tomorrow, the Ornge hearings at the public accounts committee will resume. MPPs on the committee must be allowed to get to the bottom of what really happened at Ornge. But after a witness who appeared before this committee was swiftly suspended from his job at Ornge, many are wondering if this can actually happen.

Why is this government allowing witnesses to be intimidated and preventing the committee from getting to the bottom of this scandal?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.
1100

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question, and of course we support the work of the committee. I've had the pleasure of appearing not once, not twice, but three times before the committee. I know you've heard from many, many witnesses, and I know that the people who are sitting on that committee have a lot of good advice to give us. It's very important that we continue to do the rebuilding at Ornge. We need to pass Bill 50. If the member opposite really is interested in moving Ornge forward, let's pass Bill 50. Let's get the recommendations from the committee. We've got work to do. The people of this province deserve no less.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I have to reiterate. The concern is that the committee has to do its work. Why is this government allowing witnesses to be intimidated? Witnesses who appear at committee should not be threatened with reprisals. The Premier and the minister have all talked about all the change at Ornge. They've talked about the change and what's going on at Ornge.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would the Minister of Energy come to order, please?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: When we hear about suspensions dealt out to the very people who are appearing at the committee to assist us with getting to the bottom, with getting to the truth, it doesn't seem like this is the case. It does not seem like there is actual change here at Ornge.

Can the Premier or the minister provide assurances to the committee, assurances to this Legislative Assembly, assurances to Ontarians that those who testify at committees will not face repercussions for simply telling the truth?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I know that the public accounts committee has worked hard over the summer. I'm told that there have been 54 witnesses who have appeared before the committees; over 75 hours of hearings. We do need the recommendations from that committee.

We've done a lot of work. We've got new leadership, and we're moving forward. But we need the opposition to complete the job. We need the support for Bill 50, which includes whistle-blower protection. We need the support of the opposition to pass Bill 50. We need those recommendations from the committee. I think the people of this province want to see progress at Ornge. They're seeing that; let's finish the job with those two pieces.

TEACHERS' CONTRACTS

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, this House has been recalled to address the proposed Putting Students First Act. The government has asked teachers to take a pause in their pay. Some unions walked away from discussions with the government. ETFO, the public elementary teachers, left the provincial discussion table after only one hour. Now unions have threatened to take the government to court over the proposed act. Minister, I've heard concerns from my constituents and in this House about the constitutionality of this bill. Can you please tell the House if the legislation is constitutional?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Thank you to the member for Windsor West. Mr. Speaker, we didn't take the decision to introduce the legislation lightly. But after six months of working with our partners in education, we feel that we need to act in the best interests of students, and we made the decision to introduce legislation.

If this bill is passed and then challenged in court, the government's position will be that it is constitutional, that we have respected the constitutionally protected right to a process of collective bargaining, and that in any event, under the Charter of Rights, the bill is both reasonable and justified in all the circumstances.

The proposed bill ensures that compensation within our education system, a \$17-billion public sector wage bill every year, which represents 85% of education spending, responsibly and fairly accords with the fiscal parameters as laid out in the 2012 budget. More importantly, it ensures that the gains that we've made over the past nine years in the classroom experience for students are protected.

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

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you, Minister. Speaker, my supplementary is also for the Minister of Education. As a member of this House, I recognize that this govern-

ment has weathered the worst recession in a generation better than most jurisdictions. I also recognize that this government is making tough choices to protect education in Ontario because our students are our future. But, Minister, I've heard the third party say that there's a court case out of British Columbia that would indicate that the proposed Putting Students First Act is unconstitutional. Could you please tell the House: Is this true?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased to have a chance to speak to this issue, Speaker, because there are some significant differences between the situation in the BC case and what's happening here in Ontario. In British Columbia, the government gave 20 minutes' notice to the unions that they were changing the collective agreement, and as a consequence they were subject to a Supreme Court ruling which found that they did not respect the constitutionally protected right to the process of consultation and consideration in good faith.

In Ontario, we've been at the table in discussions since February, and we've been clear about the challenges we need to meet together. We've reached agreements with teachers in over half of the boards in the province—OECTA and AEFO, who together represent 55,000 teachers. We're not closing the door on negotiated settlements. There's still time to negotiate deals, even under the legislation, if passed. The parties do have scope to negotiate collective agreements.

But I would encourage the members opposite to pick up the BC case and have a read through the BC case, because when they do, they will find the following words: "There was no meaningful consultation with unions before it became law." They gave them 20 minutes' notice. This is a very different situation than the road that we have taken here in Ontario.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Nine years of Liberal scandal, waste and fiscal incompetence has left Ontario finances in shambles as we speed towards a \$30-billion deficit and a \$411-billion debt. We're here this week, Speaker, because the education minister bungled negotiations with educators, and now the Ontario PCs have to bail her out. Now you're caught in the shameful decision by the Liberal campaign team to put political interests ahead of the public good by cancelling the Mississauga and Oakville power plants. In desperation, the campaign ordered hundreds of millions of hard-earned taxpayers' dollars to be thrown down the drain to save Liberal seats.

Minister, how can you defend the indefensible by not coming clean with this House and the people of Ontario on who made those decisions, when they made them and how much they're going to cost the taxpayers of Ontario?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I might have missed something, but the cancellation of Mississauga was a decision they supported, in fact the very same day. What we said from the beginning was, as we conducted very delicate negotiations, before they reached a conclusion, it

was not in the public interest to speak in detail about those negotiations or where they were at, until they reached the conclusion. I spoke to them right after we reached a conclusion.

I remember the eight-year journey. I remember the lights went out in 2003; I remember we didn't have enough power; I remember we inherited a deficit when they said there was a balanced budget. We remember where we were, and in energy we remember where we are: the hottest three months in history, and we had enough power and the lights didn't go out.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the minister. Minister, you know how this is going to play out. We've seen it over and over, most recently with the Minister of Health, who stood up day after day, ultimately losing all credibility, as the facts on the Ornge scandal came out. Is this really where you want to go? Do you really want your legacy to be that you're going to withhold facts because of client-solicitor privilege? We all know that that doesn't belong and that doesn't apply to this House.

Minister, you won't release the information, so I'm going to ask you: What's worse? Deciding to sacrifice hundreds of millions of dollars on political expediency or feeding the growing cynicism Ontarians feel about politics by blindly defending a government that will do or say anything to get elected?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We've always been acting in the public interest. We listened to the public in cancelling and committing to relocate, negotiating on behalf of the public, in private, to get the best result. We were able to relocate. It was a decision supported by the PCs during and after the campaign. What I've said with respect to all issues is that it is in the public interest that negotiations, delicate as they are, be conducted in private. That issue is before the Speaker, and the Speaker will make the decision and we'll abide by the decision. It's always in the public interest. There was a lot of discussion about that yesterday, and it's the Speaker's position to resolve that.

1110

But it's also in the public interest that we support the southwest economic development fund, and I happen to have a letter here from the mayor of Kitchener, asking that Bill 11 be supported. It's obviously in the interests of that city and that region to support, and we hope you'll do that in the public interest.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, you know that the largest project to be undertaken in northern Ontario, when it comes to mining, is potentially the Ring of Fire projects. Can you confirm if you're in any way in discussions with Cliffs resources to sign a ministerial permit allowing ore to be shipped out of Canada?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: We are very, very excited about the Ring of Fire. There are several aspects that the government is speaking to Cliffs about, which will be no surprise to the member from Timmins–James Bay, because we were very, very excited. I think members on both sides of the House were very, very excited when Cliffs decided that they were going to build their processing plant in Ontario.

So we look forward to the potential that the Ring of Fire will bring to I think everyone in Ontario, in particular northern Ontarians.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Wow! We are so excited with that answer, we're beside ourselves. My Lord.

I asked you a very simple question, Minister, a very simple question: Are you, yes or no, in discussions with Cliffs resources to sign a ministerial permit allowing the shipping of raw chromite out of Canada? Yes or no? That's all I want to know.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Well, you know what? Maybe the member from Timmins–James Bay isn't excited about the Ring of Fire, but I can tell you that everybody else in northern Ontario is very, very excited. In fact, the mayor of Timmins is very, very excited. He's looking for the opportunity that this very exciting project will bring to the people of northern Ontario.

We look at the job creation opportunity. We look at the spinoff benefits of the supply and services sector with regard to the Ring of Fire. We look at the investment, the infrastructure investment, that's naturally going to take place from the Ring of Fire. We look at the additional mines that will come on board. We look at the opportunity for our First Nations.

To say that he isn't excited about the Ring of Fire certainly isn't reflective of what the people of northern Ontario—

Interjections.

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

JOB CREATION

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation. This summer I spent a great deal of time speaking to my constituents in Guelph about our economy. It's clear from them that the economic recovery remains their top priority. Thankfully, the McGuinty government has a strong plan to balance the budget and continue to take the necessary steps to keep our economy on track. I'm proud that our government is taking the needed steps to lead us through these tough economic times, allowing us to balance the budget while protecting health care and education.

Guelph has bounced back with jobs in the auto sector and the green energy sector, but my constituents are still nervous, given the world economy. They still want to know how we will support job creation and economic growth. Speaker, through you to the minister, how has Ontario fared in job creation thus far?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Our economy is steadily recovering from the global recession. We're creating jobs. In June and July combined, Ontario created 30,000 new jobs. In total, we've now created 350,000 net new jobs since the recessionary low in 2009. We've steadily been outpacing the UK, the US and all Great Lake states when it comes to job creation since 2009.

Our government has created the right climate for business investments by reducing corporate taxes, by investing in building the best-educated and best-trained workforce in the world and by fostering a climate for research and innovation. That's why companies continue to invest in Ontario.

While we're heading in the right direction, we recognize there's still more work to do. We'll continue to fight on behalf of Ontarians to create jobs and keep this economy on the right track.

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: As more and more jobs are created and retained here, there is a real sense that Ontario is catching steam, yet there are still many people unemployed in southwestern Ontario. My constituency office still receives phone calls from people, young and old, who are looking for work. The people of Guelph want to know what further steps can be taken. They want to know what we are doing specifically in southwestern Ontario.

Speaker, I'm glad that the minister has acknowledged that there is more work to be done, but, through you to the minister, I would like to ask: What is the most important thing this government can do in the short term to continue this positive trend and get the people of southwestern Ontario back to work?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Later on today, this Legislature will have before it Bill 11. That bill will make permanent the eastern Ontario development fund and create the southwestern Ontario development fund to create jobs throughout southwestern Ontario and eastern Ontario.

Many of us just came from AMO last week, and I've got to tell you what municipal leaders have been saying right across this province, from the city of Kitchener, through to the town of Norfolk, through the towns of London and Windsor. They've been saying that the PCs should be supporting this legislation.

But it's one thing for them to oppose the bill. It's quite another for them to have deliberately delayed the bill. Those dollars could have been flowing into southwestern Ontario today, in August, but they're not, because those guys on the other side deliberately delayed this legislation.

They can make amends today, this afternoon, by supporting us, by supporting Bill 11, by supporting jobs in southwestern Ontario and eastern Ontario.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question today is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, your colleague the Minister of Finance corrected you on July 16 and said that the true cost to cancel the Mississauga gas plant will come in at

approximately \$190 million. To break that down for you, that's about \$47.5 million per Liberal member whose seat was saved by the relocation of the Mississauga gas plant, all on the backs of Ontario taxpayers.

Minister, now that we know the true cost of the four Liberal seats in Mississauga, will you do the honourable thing and reveal the true cost of the Oakville seat?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: As we'd said for some months as we implemented the campaign commitment that we made—the same commitment the PCs made—we said that it was in the public interest to conduct the negotiations and discussions—very delicate—in private, and that's what we did. As soon as we reached a conclusion, where the costs were finalized, we went out there with the numbers for everybody to see—lots of commentary about the numbers.

Now, I haven't heard from the PCs what their calculations on the costs were when they made the same commitment on exactly the same day, but it would probably be interesting to compare and contrast. As we continue the discussions about Oakville, as soon as they reach a conclusion, I've said all along that we will go out with the numbers. But that issue is before the Speaker. We should let the Speaker make a ruling so that we can properly assess the public interest.

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Minister, the taxpayers aren't fooled by your seat-saver programs any longer. Another example of mismanagement is Trillium Power Wind. That company is suing your government for \$2.25 billion over your announcement to cancel the offshore wind turbine development slated to be in the ridings of two of your ministers.

Minister, I must say, the Liberals are fetching quite a price these days in terms of saving their seats. But in court, Trillium says the decision was made in bad faith, as your government sought to save the seats of cabinet ministers in both Scarborough and Windsor. They were being threatened by the wind projects in their backyards during the run-up to last fall's election.

Minister, this makes zero economic sense. At what point did it become Liberal policy to forgo fact-based science—underscore that “fact”—in favour of political science?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: So just to be clear, the Tories are now in favour of wind power. Is that the situation?

The Tories supported cancelling the plant in Mississauga. They said so exactly the same day. They haven't come clean with their estimate of the cost. We look forward to it.

1120

In fact, the Tories also supported—the member from Halton, I understand, in Hansard said, “The people of Oakville have told you they don't want the proposed gas-fired power plant ... and I agree with them.” Again, September 14, 2010: “Minister, will you move the Oakville power plant? I'm asking the minister to consider moving this plant.”

It seems to me that the Tories support moving and cancelling when it's convenient, but when action is taken, they forget. There is a cost to all of those things. We're looking forward to the Tory estimates that they put to paper when they asked the questions and when they made the same campaign commitments.

HYDRO CORRIDOR

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Minister of Energy: Waterloo residents have taken up the fight against Hydro One's plans to spray herbicides on hydro corridors near their homes and schools. They're concerned about the impact on their children's health.

Why won't the minister take action to stop this spraying and protect the health of families in Waterloo?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I had a chance to address this yesterday. I had already taken action, actually. About a week and a half ago I walked along the hydro corridor with a number of residents and other interested persons to take an actual look at what was there, what was proposed.

I understand that there have already been some discussions and meetings and there are going to be further ones between the residents, the community and Hydro One about it, remembering, as I think the member knows, Hydro One has 150,000 kilometres of wire. They have corridors all over the province, and their responsibility is to make sure that we have reliable power and that when a line is cut or needs repair, they can access it quickly to get the power back up for the people all over the province. So we're already on that, Hydro One is already on that, having discussions—very helpful.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'm glad the minister is getting a chance to take a walk.

In 2008, the McGuinty government passed the cosmetic pesticide act despite objections from the Canadian Cancer Society and others that the bill included a mile-wide loophole allowing hydro companies to spray dangerous pesticides on hydro corridors. The NDP proposed amendments to close this loophole, but the Liberals and the Conservatives defeated it.

Why won't the government, Minister, stand up for families in Waterloo and around the province and put an end to spraying cancer-causing chemicals in hydro corridors?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I think I spoke to this. Hydro One has already taken action down there. They're meeting with the residents to understand the issues. Our position: Our party has always stood for environmentally conscious initiatives. Our record shows that.

Unfortunately, the NDP consistently votes against environmental initiatives and protections. They want it both ways. It's sort of like on the teacher legislation, where they come in here and they complain about contracts, but they won't go out there at noon and tell the teachers that they're not going to agree to a salary increase, they're not going to provide a grid increase. In fact, they want to be

everything in here and everything out there. It's the party that wants to be it all, all the time. Well, if you don't stand for something, you stand for nothing, so make a decision.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Minister of Health—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would like to hear the member's question so I know where to direct it.

Member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker.

My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I think it is very important that people can receive access to health care whenever they need it, as soon as possible. That is why we must continue to focus on reducing wait times in our hospital emergency departments. When someone feels that they need to seek medical attention in an emergency department, they should be able to. After years of hospitals being closed under the previous government, many in my riding in my city of Ottawa, and nurses being fired, we saw reports of record-high wait times. It is something that Ontarians have been concerned about.

Through you, Speaker, to the minister: How long does it take to receive care in an Ottawa emergency department?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the fantastic member for this very important question.

Speaker, I couldn't agree more. Patients deserve to receive care when they need it, and that's why reducing emergency department wait times has been a priority for our hospitals and our government. We began measuring and publicly reporting wait times in 2008, because we know that if you track it, you can improve it.

The good news is that thanks to the hard work of people at the hospital and outside of hospitals, wait times at Ottawa emergency departments are down, and I'm talking about patients with complex conditions. Since 2008, they have seen a reduction in wait times at CHEO of 20%; 95% of patients are being seen within the targets. At Hôpital Montfort the length of stay is down 63%, with 77% of patients being seen within target. At the Ottawa Hospital, the length of stay for those complex spaces in the emergency department is down 30%, with 76% of patients being seen within targets.

There's more to do, but we've made tremendous progress.

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I really do want to underscore how important it is to keep records on wait times, because if we don't have the information, if we are not transparent, we cannot do anything about it. We need to continuously make improvements.

Earlier in the summer, Speaker, I had the opportunity to visit the emergency department at the Ottawa Hospital

Civic Campus, which is in my riding of Ottawa Centre, with nurses, and I was extremely impressed by their hard work and dedication in making sure that we continue to bring wait times down. I want to salute all the nurses, the doctors and the health care providers for their excellent work.

Emergency departments are not the only option available to receive important health care services. I continue to advocate on behalf of my community to bring more services into the community, where residents can access them closer to home.

Through you, Speaker, to the minister: What other options are available to those in Ottawa to receive health care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Again a very important question. Speaker, over a quarter of a million people every year go to our emergency departments who could have received the care they need somewhere else in an alternative setting. These trips to the ER are avoidable, and the patients would have received excellent care at lower cost outside the hospital.

That's why we've launched an online tool called Your Health Care Options. This website helps Ontarians find the health care options that they need right in their community, as close to home as possible.

Ottawa residents could visit the Your Health Care Options website. They'll find that they could benefit from an urgent care centre, over 20 walk-in clinics, 13 family health teams and seven community health centres.

Speaker, this is all part of our action plan for health care, which is about getting people in Ontario the right care at the right time at the right place.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question today is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, last election, the Premier authorized your campaign team to cancel the Mississauga gas plant in a desperate attempt to save Liberal seats. This careless decision cost Ontarians \$190 million, and it's estimated to cost another \$1 billion for the cancellation of the Oakville power plant. These reckless and politically motivated actions robbed Ontarians of money that could have financed essential front-line services such as quality education, health care and deficit reduction. That money could have paid for 600 new doctors or 3,100 nurses. Instead, you used taxpayer dollars to fund your election campaign.

Minister, at a time when Ontario is facing a \$411-billion debt, why do you think it's acceptable to use millions of hard-earned taxpayer dollars to ensure that you save a few Liberal seats?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I've answered that. They actually agreed with the decision. Now they seem to be trying to get away from it.

I want to read you part of a letter from the mayor of Kitchener about the southwest economic development fund. He says in part, "Given these realities, we are writing today to ask you to support Bill 11"—

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Prince Edward–Hastings, you're very close to me, and when you shout that loud, I cannot hear the answer.

Minister.

1130

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The mayor of Kitchener says, "Given these realities, we are writing to ask you to support Bill 11, Attracting Investment and Creating Jobs Act, 2011. Modeled on the successful eastern Ontario development fund, which has demonstrated a significant return on the government's investment, we believe that a new southwestern Ontario development fund will advance the city of Kitchener, the region of Waterloo and the province of Ontario's economic development agenda."

The question is, why won't you stand up for the people without work in southwestern Ontario? Give them a hand; support the economic development fund.

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: The problem is, it's because of this government that we have 600,000 people unemployed in the province of Ontario.

The other thing is, this government is always worried about the next election, but they don't give a damn about the next generation.

Minister, your government has made the people of Ontario wait nearly two years for the release of information regarding the cost of the Oakville plant cancellation. It's unacceptable that you are withholding this information from this Legislature and from the people of Ontario. It's clear that the Premier and his Liberal caucus have something to hide. Are you scared to reveal the cost for the cancellation of the Oakville power plant to the people of Ontario, and if not, will you commit to releasing this report today?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Here are some more quotes on the economic development fund: "Sometimes, you've got to decide not what should be the party line but what would be good for the towns and cities" in your riding. That's the mayor of London.

"Why can we not treat this almost like a wartime situation—this is the right thing to do and let's do it?... They're not getting that the public wants leadership [and] that's not part of partisanship." Sarnia Mayor Mike Bradley.

"It is the wrong time to be playing politics, the wrong time to hold this up. The last thing we need here is another stall tactic." Goderich Deputy Mayor John Grace.

Isn't it time for the PCs to stand up for the people of Ontario—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): It doesn't seem as though I'm getting through to everyone that we're a little too loud. I need to hear the answer.

Minister.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Thank you, Speaker. I know that in a few minutes, we're going to get an opportunity. Maybe the five-minute or 10-minute bell will give them a chance to reflect. Vote in favour of the people looking for work in southwestern Ontario and eastern Ontario. Support Bill 11. I think they absolutely have to support Bill 11. It's the right thing to do. It's the right time to do it. We absolutely need this bill.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The Middlesex-London EMS is coping with record amounts of calls, but as paramedics struggle to respond, this minister is cutting more than \$240,000 from the same service.

How can the minister justify a compensation package to former London hospital CEO Clifford Nordal of more than \$1 million while cutting this life-or-death service?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member opposite for raising this issue. It is an issue that I have been working on with the EMS, and I am confident we're going to be able to arrive at a mutually acceptable agreement.

There were some budget issues. I think the member opposite knows that I have been personally engaged in this issue, and I'm looking forward to resolution as quickly as possible.

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

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Nipissing has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Energy concerning the cost of the Oakville power plant. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Leeds-Grenville has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Energy concerning the cancellation of the Mississauga and Oakville power plants. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

DEFERRED VOTES

ATTRACTING INVESTMENT AND CREATING JOBS ACT, 2012

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

Deferred vote 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): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1135 to 1140.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Duguid has moved third reading of Bill 11. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	DiNovo, Cheri	Miller, Paul
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John
Bartolucci, Rick	Duncan, Dwight	Moridi, Reza
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gravelle, Michael	Naqvi, Yasir
Best, Margaret	Hoskins, Eric	Oraziotti, David
Bisson, Gilles	Jaczek, Helena	Piruzza, Teresa
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Prue, Michael
Brotten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Chan, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Singh, Jagmeet
Chiarelli, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Colle, Mike	Mantha, Michael	Tabuns, Peter
Coteau, Michael	Marchese, Rosario	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crack, Grant	Matthews, Deborah	Wong, Soo
Craitor, Kim	McGuinty, Dalton	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	Zimmer, David
Dhillon, Vic	McNeely, Phil	
Dickson, Joe	Meilleur, Madeleine	

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

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

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 55; the nays are 32.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the bill carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Huron-Bruce has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Energy concerning the cost of the cancellation of the

Oakville gas plant. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.
The House recessed from 1144 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Many of us here have come back to the Legislature in the middle of this summer, and I know for many of my colleagues it's been a bit difficult arranging child care and vacations. I've had the pleasure of having my little girl here this week, because next week she will be back in the classroom. But here she is today: Victoria Varner. Many of you know her. I'd like to introduce my little girl. She's seven years old, and I'd like to thank her for coming to work with mama.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'd ask all members of the Legislature to join me in welcoming some guests in the members' gallery. They are teachers here from the rally earlier, and they're here to enjoy and see what goes on in the Legislature. We have Amisha Sirpal, Alison Horn, Myra Remedios, Carol Laderoute, Aimie Mirza, Katherine Dashawetz and Jaspreet Dhaliwal.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

KYLE CLIFFORD

Mr. Rob Leone: All across Ontario, young boys dream of having many different titles when they grow up: doctor, astronaut, superhero and maybe even MPP. There's one title at the top of every list. It holds a lot of weight in this country, and that is Stanley Cup champion. Kyle Clifford, from the town of Ayr, realized that dream on June 11, 2012, when he and the rest of the Los Angeles Kings hoisted that franchise's first-ever Stanley Cup. Keeping with tradition, each member of the cup-winning team gets 24 hours with the Holy Grail of hockey, and Clifford used that time to bring the cup home to Cambridge and North Dumfries.

On August 22, in front of over 1,000 cheering fans and perched atop an antique fire engine driving through the heart of Ayr, Kyle sat alongside his latest accomplishment in a career that began as a member of the Ayr Flames youth team and included such honours as representing Team Canada at the under-18 world championships.

I congratulate Kyle for all his hard work, both last season and throughout his career, and can only hope that his story inspires young hockey players right across Cambridge and North Dumfries to fulfill their dreams of maybe one day lifting the greatest trophy in sports.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I am so proud to be able to share with the members of this Legislature the amazing

generosity displayed by Habitat for Humanity and many other businesses in London, Ontario, to an amazing family in the London-Fanshawe riding.

On Thursday, July 26, Habitat for Humanity Oxford-Middlesex-Elgin donated its second wheelchair-accessible home to an inspirational family and made their dreams come true. After 12 years on a waiting list, London-Fanshawe resident Kerri Ronson and her son, Brendon, were given the keys to their new home at 361 Edmonton Street at a dedication ceremony held in their honour. The new compact family home is fully accessible for Brendon, who has cerebral palsy, a physical condition affecting motor skills and the coordination of muscles, leaving him in a wheelchair. The public was invited to come out and celebrate with the Ronson family and tour the home. Ms. Ronson was so excited and grateful to all the sponsors and the more than 350 volunteers for donating thousands of hours to make her dream a reality.

I want to thank all the sponsors. It is because of your involvement, hard work and commitment to families like the Ronsons that they can enjoy the independence of a new home.

In total, Habitat for Humanity has built and donated 38 homes, and they are not stopping. Currently, Habitat for Oxford-Middlesex-Elgin is finalizing plans for three more builds, one home each in London, St. Thomas and Woodstock.

QUEEN'S DIAMOND JUBILEE MEDAL RECIPIENTS

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, in this, the year of the 60th anniversary of the reign of Queen Elizabeth II, I've had the opportunity to recognize some outstanding people in our western Mississauga neighbourhoods. Sixteen-year-old Streetsville resident Erica Scarff, who lost her right leg due to a rare form of cancer four years ago, is a Diamond Jubilee Medal awardee. Erica inspired a family friend to organize Erica's Wish, an annual run that attracts hundreds of participants to raise funds for cancer research and also for the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto. Erica's cancer is in remission.

Abdul Qayyum Mufti, another awardee, is one of the founding members of the Al-Falah mosque. Two years ago, he brought together the local Muslim community to establish an annual Family Day walkathon each February. Pledging a gift of a quarter of a million dollars to Mississauga's Credit Valley Hospital, the run has exceeded its goals every year.

Bishop Lennox Walker, a resident of Lisgar, is a powerful speaker and an inspirational leader who has built and led the faith community at Praise Cathedral Worship Centre in Meadowvale. His tireless work with youth and leadership in the Caribbean Canadian community makes Bishop Walker and all of the people I've mentioned worthy Diamond Jubilee Medal recipients.

On behalf of the province, I congratulate each of them and each of the people whom we all have the pleasure and the honour of presenting with medals.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT
PROGRAM OFFICE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Last week, a delegation from Elgin county and St. Thomas met with Minister Milloy regarding the recent announcement to close the ODSP office in my riding. The ministry caught my riding off guard with this announcement, as no indication or consultation was made beforehand.

With over 3,000 people currently using the services provided by the office, I met with Mayor Heather Jackson of St. Thomas and Bill Walters, warden of Elgin county, to explore ways to ensure people were not denied access to this vital service, to mitigate the negative effects of these cuts. The mayor and warden put together a proposal that has the potential to save the ministry money while keeping the service offering in St. Thomas.

To provide for further consultations, the municipal leaders also requested in their proposal that the closure date in October be delayed. This proposal was presented to the minister at the AMO conference last week but did not receive a commitment one way or the other.

Unfortunately, after nine years of mismanaged finances, the government is beginning to unilaterally cut front-line services, hoping people will not notice. But right now, I'd like to call on the minister to immediately reply to the proposal from the city of St. Thomas and Elgin county and grant an extension on that closure date of the ODSP office in St. Thomas so that proper consultation can occur and prove to the ministry that money can be saved without sacrificing the vital service.

DIANA MATHESON

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Each Olympics, there are special moments that captivate Canadians. At the London games, one of those moments was delivered by Oakville's Diana Matheson. In the dying seconds of the overtime bronze medal game, Diana scored the winning goal that lifted our team over the French team.

The team's resilient spirit was evident as they bounced back following that tough semi-final loss to the US that involved a very questionable call by the referee. "Resilient" would be a good word to describe Diana as well. She excelled in her development at the Oakville Soccer Club, but due to her size, Diana was often passed up by teams at the provincial and the national level. But that didn't stop her. Hard work and determination to overcome this paid off. She was named the Ivy League player of the year in 2007, Princeton's athlete of the year in 2008, and at the same time earned her economics major.

She has represented Canada now 130 times. She holds the national record for the most consecutive international appearances. Paul Varian, the CAO at Oakville Soccer Club, has called Diana "the workhorse" of the national team, and she's an inspiration to young women around this country.

I'd like to congratulate Diana and the entire national team for their success and for making this country so proud of what they did.

1510

TEACHERS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to rise today and acknowledge the fact that we had such a powerful showing of teachers here today representing their interests, representing their belief in the education system and clarifying for the record that there is no crisis here. This crisis is a fabricated crisis created by the Liberal government. The teachers have never said that the classrooms would be shut down. They have never said that the classroom doors would be shut. They've never said that this year would be in any jeopardy. This is absolutely a fabricated crisis by the Liberal government, and they are now solving their own fabricated problem and trying to get accolades for that. This is clearly an example of partisan posturing to win a by-election.

It needs to be very clear that the teachers were here in great numbers and education workers were here in great numbers to show their respect for the education system, to show their concern and care for Ontarians, for students, for families. I salute them for attending today, I salute them for their convictions, and I stand with them in working to ensure that our education is strong here in Ontario, to ensure that our classrooms are providing the best opportunities for our children here in Ontario.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It gives me great pleasure to rise today in this House to speak to the most significant transformation in our education system in a generation, and that is full-day kindergarten.

I'm pleased to share with this House that there will be 93 full-day kindergarten classes in 28 schools in my riding of Scarborough Southwest. I'm so pleased about this because a recent study out of the University of Toronto confirmed what our government and education experts have been saying: that there are tremendous benefits of full-day kindergarten. Kids enrolled in full-day kindergarten programs are found to have a higher level of skill in vocabulary, reading, comprehension, mathematics and complex drawing skills.

I'm so proud to be a part of this government that has consistently supported this program since its introduction. Unfortunately, we cannot say the same for the official opposition or the third party. Mr. Hudak's PC Party was against full-day kindergarten, called it a "frill," and changed his mind when polls showed that it was popular with Ontario families. Ms. Horwath was quoted as saying, "Absolutely we support full-day learning ... and absolutely it's something that we've been calling for." That was on October 27, 2009, and yet, when it came down to putting their vote where the rhetoric is, they voted against funding for full-day kindergarten.

Mr. Speaker, this government continues to support full-day kindergarten. We are proud of the value of this program for all Ontario families.

YOGA WARRIORS

Mr. Rod Jackson: Today, I'd just like to talk about Yoga Warriors. This is a local initiative aimed at assisting first responders and brave people in the line of duty who suffer from combat stress disorder and post-traumatic stress disorders. These disorders may be incurred from traumatic situations experienced by soldiers, firefighters, police officers and paramedics. Traditional therapy and medication are not a perfect fit for everyone, and that's why this alternative program has an important place in the recovery of those with PTSD.

Yoga Warriors is inspired by an American program that started in the Worcester Vet Center in Massachusetts for soldiers returning home. It served thousands of soldiers and spread across military bases countrywide. Today, Yoga Warriors International is the first and largest program in the nation for healing combat veterans through yoga. Instructors have been trained in 29 states, the District of Columbia, Canada and Cambodia. Other countries are starting to get on board as well.

Barrie resident Nicole Taylor was inspired when she heard about the program and visited a Boston-area vet centre. This led to her bringing Yoga Warriors to Canada, starting in her hometown in Barrie. It's the first of its kind this side of the border, and this enterprising concept is making a difference for people with combat stress disorder and PTSD by reducing insomnia, hyperarousal, flashbacks and anger.

I've met a few of these individuals who have been recipients of this type of therapy, Mr. Speaker. I can say, first-hand, I've met people whose lives have been saved by this program, and I think we owe them a great debt of gratitude for those that they help.

SAUGEEN SHORES BUSINESS ENTERPRISE CENTRE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: At a time when, here in Ontario, we have lost 600,000 good-paying jobs, I am pleased to recognize the Saugeen Shores Business Enterprise Centre in my riding for their innovative ideas and forward thinking to help create business opportunities.

I want to draw particular attention to their student companies program, a program that shows students the ropes in building a small business from the ground up.

Summer Company is a program for students aged 15 to 29, and it encourages people to start up and run their own summer business. If successful, applicants can receive up to \$1,500 towards their business start-up costs and another \$1,500 for successful completion of the program. The student also receives 12 hours of business training, along with hands-on mentoring and advice. This has brought seven new businesses to our community, including a computer repair shop, a deck resurfacing company, a dance and fitness studio, two seafood markets, a T-shirt shop and a digital marketing business.

These students range in age from grade 11 to their fourth year in university. This is an excellent program to

give students the experience and help they need to navigate the entrepreneurial world. I applaud the Saugeen Shores Business Enterprise Centre for working alongside these students to ensure their successful business ventures. Programs like this will help bring more small business to Ontario and create jobs for the future.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT ACT (BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE (COMMISSION DE RÉGIE INTERNE)

Mr. Gerretsen moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 116, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act with respect to the Board of Internal Economy /
Projet de loi 116, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative relativement à la Commission de régie interne.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The minister for a short statement?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I'll wait until ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'm very pleased to rise in the House today to introduce the proposed Legislative Assembly Amendment Act, dealing with the Board of Internal Economy, 2012. This bill would amend the Legislative Assembly Act, 1990 to change the composition of the Board of Internal Economy—the management board that deals with the administrative and financial affairs of the Office of the Assembly. Just for those individuals who may be watching this, I will illuminate and use some language to show exactly what the Board of Internal Economy deals with.

As I mentioned before, it's the management body that deals with the administrative and financial affairs of the Office of the Assembly, basically the premises that we're in today and the individuals who work here.

The board's powers and duties include reviewing the estimates and forecasts, expenditures, commitments and other data pertaining to the Office of the Assembly and assessing the results of that. It also deals with approving the organization and staffing of the Office of the Assembly, such as the Clerk's office and the many other people who work in the Clerk's area.

It approves and reviews administrative policies and procedures related to the operation of the Office of the Assembly. It also advises on all matters relating to the management, administration, accounting, collection and disbursement of money associated with the Legislative Assembly fund.

It also deals with the budgets of and oversees the operation of the independent officers of the assembly, such as the Auditor General, the Environment Commissioner and the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

The proposed amendment changes the composition of the board so that there's an equal number of members appointed by the government party and by the opposition parties, aside from the Speaker. The Speaker would continue to act as Chair, as has always been the case, but would be a non-voting member of the board. In other words, decisions would be made by consensus.

1520

Currently, the Legislative Assembly Act does not provide for an equal number of members appointed by the government party and by the opposition parties. As a matter of fact, the majority of the members currently are appointed by the government party. The new act would provide for the governing party to appoint two members to the board, and each of the opposition parties, one member to the board. All parties have expressed support for the proposed Legislative Assembly Amendment Act, 2012. As I've indicated before—or if I haven't, I will do so now—we consulted with the opposition parties on the proposals of this bill.

As you know, Speaker, this bill addresses a provision in a motion that was passed with the unanimous consent of this Legislative Assembly back on May 31 of this year. That motion directed the Attorney General to introduce a bill, by the third day of the House fall session, to amend section 87 of the Legislative Assembly Act, 1990; this being the second day, it's well within the three-day limit set out in that motion.

The motion also provides that this bill is to receive second and third reading on the first Tuesday following the introduction, so that would be next Tuesday, and that second and third reading are to occur immediately, without debate or amendment.

What it basically provides for, Speaker, is that, from here on in, the Board of Internal Economy, in dealing with all the matters that come before the assembly—and it affects assembly members—will be done on the basis of consensus, rather than, as it has been in the past, the government party, basically, imposing its will on the Board of Internal Economy.

This is a good amendment. The assembly is an institution that, in effect, belongs to every member of this House, and I believe that this consensus model that has been arrived at, as a result of the motion that was passed at the end of May of this past year, is a good motion, and therefore I would suggest that all the members of this assembly support this bill once it comes for second and third reading.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm pleased to respond to the statement made by the Honourable John Gerretsen, the Attorney General for the province, in response to the bill, now tabled, that will set up the Board of Internal Economy. All I can say is, thank God. Hopefully this new consensus model will work. We've had 18 years with an absolutely incompetent, ineffective—nice people on it; good intentions, but can't get anything done.

I remember we spent probably—and the table will correct me—two and a half years arguing about fixing the washroom in the north wing. If you're diabetic, having washrooms on every floor and in every corner isn't such a bad idea around here—as I am. We can't decide on simple things like fixing the washroom at the back door right now, which is closed—the men's washroom—in case anybody hasn't noticed. That debate has been going on for six or seven years that it's been in disrepair, and more recently it's actually permanently closed. That's a major staff entrance where hundreds of people go through every day, and yet there's no washroom on that floor; you have to go all the way to the other end.

I want to say that this is a consensus model that we're trying for the first time in the history of Ontario. It's based on the Ottawa model. As the minister pointed out, there will be two government members, one from the crown, i.e., a cabinet minister, and one from the regular benches, and there will be one opposition member from each opposition party, for a total of two, and we'll have a Chair, which will be the Speaker. The Speaker will be a non-voting member.

We're hoping, through this way—in the past, people at home should know that the government always had a massive majority on the Board of Internal Economy. No government likes to spend money. The government that I was a cabinet minister in for eight years was just as guilty as any other government in the last 18 years. We had orders from the corner office—from the Premier's office—not to spend money. This way you'll have some autonomy, hopefully. Hopefully, simple matters like keeping the building up—we owe this to the people of Ontario, to keep this building in half-decent shape. When we're long gone and dead, we want to see this beautiful building here for our children and grandchildren, and long past that.

Parliamentary democracy requires that proper resources be in place so that we can do our jobs. We have the privilege of representing the people of Ontario, and certain resources and certain things in the building have to be in place to do that. The Board of Internal Economy sets the budget for the entire precinct. This precinct is like a city. We used to, until the recent restructuring, have about 400 employees under the Clerk. I'm not sure what we have now, but I'm sure it's very efficient. Those employees do everything from printing services to committees branch; our table clerks; our Clerk and deputy clerks; cleaning and maintenance staff; the library and its expert researchers that we have there—wonderful

services; legislative counsel; security and precinct police; Hansard; legislative information services; public affairs; finance; tours; protocol. All kinds of offices are run out of this building and a couple of other areas in the precinct.

Thank you to the government for agreeing. You were forced into this by the opposition, by the way, because it comes out of the programming motion that got you out of the legislative logjam that we were in in June. Nonetheless, we're here. I think all parties are going to agree to certainly support this. Let's make it work.

It's ridiculous that people come in here and the place looks—you go to other Legislatures; you go to the United States, states that are smaller than ours, and they take great pride in their precincts and they make sure the resources are there to do exactly that.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: In the words of Martin Luther King, I would say the following: Functionality at last. Functionality at last. Functionality at last. Hallow be praised. We may have a board that will actually do things.

Speaker, I have probably one of the unenviable tasks or honours of being the longest-serving member on the board. I've been on the board since the early 1990s. I've served under the Bob Rae government. I've served under the Mike Harris government and under the Ernie Eves government and now the Peterson government—or, I mean the—

Laughter.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's the same. They used to spend like drunken sailors, both of them. That's a whole other story, but anyway—under Mr. McGuinty's government and what has been really striking is that each and every one of those governments has been unwilling to make the board function because they're always worried of having to wear all of the decisions because of the way that the board was structured. I have argued for years—and I know those who've sat on the board with me have heard me harp about this at the board for years. I've always said that if we ever get a minority Parliament or I become government, one of the first things that I want to do is to change the functionality of the Board of Internal Economy; that we needed to have something that actually creates, as my friend Mr. Wilson has said and my friend Mr. Gerretsen has said, something that is more non-partisan, something that checks the baggage at the door when it comes to our partisanship and says, "We are here to do the right thing," and that is to do some of the things that are necessary to maintain the building and do the things that have to be done around here for posterity.

Mr. Wilson raises some of the issues that we've had to deal with at the board. I've got to say, as a board member, I'm not going to get into those because I don't want to start using names. But I've got to tell you, it's been a pretty frustrating and actually quite comical process to watch at the board, because really simple things that were no-brainers that you could have fixed

with simple agreement just couldn't be done. More times than not, the government wanted to fix it; they wanted to be able to do the right thing, but would worry that the "we gotcha" politics would come out of it later on and they would have to wear the decision, so no decision would be made.

I've argued for a long time that we should take a look at what Ottawa and other Parliaments do, which is a Board of Internal Economy that is made up of an equal number of members of the opposition to the government. That way, it allows everybody to sit down, leave their politics at the door and make the kinds of decisions that we need to make around this place that allow this place to function more fully.

I would say as well this year that I think it demonstrates that minority Parliaments do work. We've heard a lot over this little election season with the by-elections going on about the need to have majorities and how important it is to have a majority to make things work. Let me tell you, let's not make any illusions: This would not happen in a majority Parliament. Only in a minority Parliament would you be able to do that, unless it was an NDP government, because it's something I would have forced my leader to do. Hopefully she would have listened, and I'm sure she would have. But my point is, it proves that minority Parliaments can work. I think what we can do, by way of the Board of Internal Economy, is to show this Legislature, show all of the parties, that by sitting down and looking at a problem and working together, we can finally get to a solution that works for all. Is it exactly what we individually all want? Probably not, but it's a decision that we all can live with.

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I've just got to say, as the many members who've served on the board with me and before me, I look forward to the day of the board now sitting in its new composition of an equal member from opposition and government, and we'll be able to do the kind of things that should be done around here in order to respect this building and respect the work that the board has to do.

ANNALEISE CARR

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak in celebration of Annaleise Carr being the youngest person to swim across Lake Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has asked for unanimous consent. Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: It's my pleasure to stand in this House today and send our best, and we're so proud of Annaleise Carr, and from our leader, Andrea, and from our whole party. It's good to rise today in recognition of a determined and triumphant young woman: Annaleise.

Annaleise has accomplished something that few women would even dream of and even fewer would dare

to attempt. On Sunday, August 26, she became the youngest person ever to successfully swim across Lake Ontario. It took 27 hours, in cold water, high winds, through dark, through 52 kilometres of water.

To read the detailed accounts of all the training, logistics and dedication of both Annaleise, her family and team to get her to this day and the year that led up to this humbling event, to give you a small sense of the planning and teamwork that was needed to accomplish this amazing feat, here is a small excerpt from a Toronto Star story:

“The flotilla consisted of six boats, each with his own role and driver. Extra gas has been packed and each driver understands his place for the crossing. A Zodiac boat will ride on either side of Annaleise, close enough to talk to her but keeping a safe distance. The kayak will serve as her navigation aid and constant companion, but must stay at least three metres away to avoid any chance of accidental touching, which would bring the swim to a halt, according to rules established by Solo Swims Ontario, the governing body of the swim.”

This is only one small part of the story. Annaleise did all of this, spent a year intensely training and planning for this day, all for one reason: to raise money for a cause that she thought was worthy. This camp is Camp Trillium, a camp for children affected by cancer near Waterford, Ontario. Through all of her efforts, she has raised more than \$145,000, and this number continues to grow as Annaleise gets local, national and international media attention.

On Monday, a parade in her hometown will be celebrating her accomplishments and those of all the people who supported her along the way. Annaleise accomplished something that very few of us could or would even dream of, but she provides a lesson to all of us: that dedication, hard work and the duty to give back is something we can all do and be part of.

She also provides an amazing example of dedication and sport. She is a role model for youth in our country. A 14-year-old girl swam across Lake Ontario: simply amazing. If this doesn't get our young people involved in sports, I don't know what will. This is amazing for Canadian youth. This young lady should be immortalized for what she did.

Having just seen the Olympics and our ladies' soccer team accomplish what they did—questionable refereeing, I might add—and as well, I'll wait for the Paralympics to begin tomorrow. This is an example of great sportsmanship that is closer to home but is just as worthy of our attention and praise. It is good to have the opportunity to rise in this House today to send our congratulations to this amazing young woman.

On a personal note, my aunt would be extremely proud of Annaleise. She's no longer with us, but my aunt taught a few Olympians. She also was, in the 1930s, probably one of the best, if not the best 200 breaststroker in Canada. She taught at the Jimmy Thompson Pool in Hamilton for 40 years. I'll tell you, my aunt would be so proud of this 14-year-old.

Thank you, Annaleise. Thank you for this incentive to the youth of Canada. We are very proud of you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Pickering–Scarborough East.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: It is my distinct pleasure to rise today on behalf of our government to recognize Annaleise Carr, a remarkable young woman from Walsh, Ontario, who just at 14 years old, the same age as my twins, has captivated people from all over the world, becoming the youngest person to ever swim across Lake Ontario. The very fact she was able to accomplish a gruelling 27-hour, 52-kilometre swim is nothing short of amazing. This feat required extensive training and planning that began in February, with preparations that included a 10-kilometre swim in Lake Erie. Faced with four-foot rolling waves, 20-kilometre-an-hour headwinds, boat traffic and water temperatures of 13 degrees, her will and determination was nothing short of amazing.

Yet when you just thought that was more than enough, this inspirational story is even more touching as a result of the reasons why Annaleise decided to take on such an intense personal challenge. Annaleise was swimming to raise money for Camp Trillium, a childhood cancer support centre that brings children with cancer and their families together while helping to enhance the quality of their life. Having visited the camp as part of a fundraising effort her swimming and running team organized, she decided she wanted to do more to help send kids to Camp Trillium. At the time, she was only 13 years old and too young to volunteer. So instead, she decided to raise money by attempting to become the youngest person to swim across Lake Ontario. She visualized the gates at Camp Trillium any time she found herself tiring.

Incredibly, when she entered the waters at Queen's Royal Park in Niagara-on-the-Lake to begin her marathon journey, she had already reached her fundraising goal of \$30,000. During the swim, she would learn that her fundraising totals nearly quadrupled, and by the time she got out of the water at Marilyn Bell Park in Toronto, donations had reached over \$115,000. That's fantastic. With donations still coming in, she has surpassed \$127,000, an amount that will pay to send 135-plus kids to Camp Trillium for a week. The fundraising drive continues until Labour Day, shortly before she starts grade 9.

We understand that on September 3, as my honourable colleague mentioned, Norfolk council has decided to throw a parade in Annaleise's honour in downtown Simcoe, which is a lovely tribute to all that she has accomplished. I also want to mention that she was once a legislative page right here at Queen's Park.

In so many ways, Annaleise is a role model for all of us. She is focused on setting goals and overcoming challenges, no matter what she confronts along the way. Her achievements, like many achievements, were supported by a fantastic team around her: Coach Lisa Anderson; general manager Dave Scott; ground crew Bill Martin; family physician Dr. Ghesquiere; the kayakers; the pacers; her parents, Jeff and Debbie Carr, of course; her grandparents Ken and Sharon; and her role model, the

wonderful role model of Marilyn Bell, who in 1956 became the first person to swim across Lake Ontario.

Myself, as a survivor of childhood cancer, I want to say thank you, Annaleise, to you and your team. Camp Trillium is a wonderful place where kids with cancer can go and forget about the medical procedures and all the tests and just have fun, which is so important when kids are battling cancer.

Your province is proud of you, and it's my distinct pleasure to stand in the Legislature today, on behalf of the government of Ontario and say, thank you very much, Annaleise, for all that you have accomplished and for becoming the new Lady of the Lake. We wish you the very best as you embark on the next milestones of your life. Congratulations, Annaleise.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Haldimand-Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: It was just a few short months ago that I rose in the House to introduce to all of us the legislative page from my riding and her plan to become the youngest person to swim Lake Ontario. That day we all gave her a standing ovation. I'm obviously proud to stand here today. As we know, Annaleise did it—14-year-old Annaleise Carr, the new Lady of the Lake, as was indicated, as of 9:04 p.m. August 19.

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You know, over the years, we as MPPs meet so many wonderful people. They tirelessly contribute to their communities, and every so often we meet someone who's head and shoulders, even at 4 foot 10—I think she was 4 foot 9 when she was a page—above the rest. People across Ontario have been brimming with pride, happiness and love for Annaleise—it's making headlines across Canada and abroad—not only for her athletic abilities but her infectious smile. I consider her Ontario's Mighty Mite. She's not only the new Lady of the Lake; she's now Canada's new sweetheart.

Near the end of her stint as a page, we had the traditional lunch in the dining room. She talked a great deal about what she called "Annaleise's radical crossing." It was an exciting conversation. I don't think we really fathomed the impact it would have on people once she was successful.

She swam 51.5 kilometres and touched the wall at Marilyn Bell Park here in Toronto. She had been in the water for 27 hours. The beauty of this doesn't lie so much with the athleticism of this very tiny little girl, but the reason that she worked so hard to do this. Why? Very simply, to raise money for children with cancer to attend Camp Trillium.

The camp is blessed. It's in our riding. It's at Rainbow Lake in Waterford. She did a swim with some of her colleagues to raise money. She went to the camp, had a tour and said that she wanted to help out. They told her she wasn't old enough. So she thought, "I'm going to swim across Lake Ontario and raise some money."

It was her younger sister, Larissa—her grandmother tells me that Larissa is just as accomplished a swimmer

as Annaleise. Larissa told Annaleise she could do it; she could swim the lake.

Her goal was \$30,000—that seemed like an awful lot of money; well on the road to \$150,000. I think all of us here can spread the word of that. I think we can keep putting that up a bit.

I might mention that Larissa, her sister, will be joining us in October as a page.

Annaleise is a hero in the purest form. Just ask those little ones at camp. They can forget about being a cancer kid for a while.

There were a few times during the swim when Annaleise hit the wall a couple of times on that Saturday night. The swells of up to five feet were taller than she was. She says, "During the night, I thought about getting out because in the water it's dark, it's cold; you're all by yourself in the water. When the waves were that big, you couldn't see anyone."

At 7 a.m. Sunday, she'd been in the water for 13 hours. Her tiny body had endured a battle. She got some protein at that time. Some swimmers had come in to swim alongside. The sun came up, and her doctor said she could keep going.

There was a press conference down in Port Dover. She was quick to point out that all of this would never have been possible without her family and the team that was mentioned earlier. Even during the darkest moments of her swim, she was able to stay positive.

Also, it's no surprise, Speaker, that this young lady was valedictorian at Walsh Public School this year. In her speech, she reminded her classmates of all the things they should be thankful for and she encouraged them, "Take this opportunity to write an unforgettable chapter filled with the fulfilment of your dreams and desires. Let us build on our experiences here at Walsh to better ourselves and others around us. There is a lot of power inside all of us waiting to be unleashed." And as she foretold, in a few short weeks she would go on to be known as a role model for all ages.

It's tough to put the right words together to articulate how proud all of us are of Annaleise Carr making history, making us proud and making the world a whole lot brighter. Thank you, Annaleise. You are an inspiration for all of us.

PETITIONS

RADIATION SAFETY

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

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

"Whereas dental hygienists in independent practice need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection officers in order to provide their

clients with safe and convenient access to a medically necessary procedure, as is already the case in many comparable jurisdictions;

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

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

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

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario’s automotive heritage while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

“Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

“Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment; and

“Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis, during four to five months of the year;

“Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks.”

I’m pleased to add my name in support of the petition and will send it to the table with page Louis.

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 support this petition. I send it forward with Constantine.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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

“Whereas on April 22, 2002, Premier Dalton McGuinty signed a pledge in North Bay to never privatize the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission (ONTC); and

“Whereas high energy prices have forced northern Ontario businesses to close or move, including Xstrata, which had moved its Timmins smelter operations to Quebec and made up 10% of Ontario Northland railway’s business; and

“Whereas some 60 lumber mills have closed across northern Ontario in recent years with a loss of 10,000 resource jobs, and Ontario fell from being the number one mining jurisdiction in the world to number 23 due to high taxes and government red tape, resulting in the erosion of Ontario Northland’s commercial customer base; and

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“Whereas the Far North Act that has banned development and turned much of northern Ontario into a virtual museum is the biggest barrier to new job creation in northern Ontario and cost Ontario Northland business; and

“Whereas the ONTC was completely omitted from the province’s northern growth plan issued two years ago; and

“Whereas the former Liberal MPP for Nipissing staged an election campaign announcement on September 30, 2011, regarding what is now known to be a non-existent strategic alliance between the ONTC and Metro-linx; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario on March 23, 2012, announced it would wind down and divest itself of the ONTC and its assets with no prior consultation with community stakeholders in Nipissing and across north-eastern Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, hereby demand the Premier come to North Bay ... and explain why ... he abandoned northern Ontario.”

I agree with this and will give this to page Gopi.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further petitions? The member for Durham.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham region as follows:

“Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario’s automotive heritage while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

“Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

“Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment; and

“Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis, during four to five months of the year;

“Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks.”

I’m pleased to sign and support this and present it to one of the new pages, Constantine.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. My apologies to the member for Parkdale–High Park, but my view was blocked.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Apology accepted, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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 absolutely agree with this, sign it on behalf of the over 1,000 dogs that have been euthanized because of the way they look, and I’m going to give it to Parnika to deliver to the table. I will sign it.

RADIATION SAFETY

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

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

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

“Whereas neither the legislation nor the regulations established under the HARP Act have kept pace with the advancements in imaging examinations as well as diagnostic and therapeutic procedures; and

“Whereas dental hygienists in Ontario are deemed by subsection 6(2)8 of the HARP Act to be qualified to ‘operate an X-ray machine for the irradiation of a human being’; and

“Whereas dental hygienists in Ontario need to be designated as radiation protection officers and to undertake X-rays of the orofacial complex on their own authority in order to fully function within their scope of practice; and

“Whereas dental hygienists fully functioning within their scope of practice provide safe, effective, accessible and affordable comprehensive preventive oral health care as well as choice of provider to the public of Ontario;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care establish, as soon as possible, a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations and make recommendations on how to modernize this act to bring it up to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and the public and covers all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes.”

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

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

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

“Whereas Ontario’s tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

“Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

“Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

“Whereas the latest policies from the McGuinty government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

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

“To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers.”

I agree with this petition and will be passing it off 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 inter-provinciales 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 et je la donne à Tameem pour l’amener à la table. Merci, Tameem.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Petitions? The member for Nipissing.

BEER AND WINE SALES

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

“Whereas soft alcohol can only be sold by the provincially controlled LCBO or The Beer Store, with few exceptions; and

“Whereas consumers and taxpayers deserve a more convenient, efficient distribution system for beer and wine products;

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

“That the government of Ontario open up the distribution of beer, wine and other soft alcohol products to competitive forces and allow the sale of these products through corner stores and other beverage retailers in Ontario.”

I will present this petition through page Georgia.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PUTTING STUDENTS FIRST ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 DONNANT LA PRIORITÉ AUX ÉLÈVES

Ms. Broten moved second 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 Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Ms. Broten has moved second reading of Bill 115. The minister.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I rise today to speak on behalf of Ontario families and in support of the Putting Students First Act.

1600

Ce projet de loi est nécessaire pour garantir la viabilité financière de notre système d’éducation financé par les fonds publics ainsi que la stabilité dans nos écoles.

Il est nécessaire pour que nous protégeons les gains que nous avons réalisés en éducation, tout en continuant à mettre en oeuvre la maternelle et le jardin d’enfants à

temps plein, à maintenir la taille réduite des classes et à préserver 20 000 emplois d'enseignant et de personnel de soutien.

Il est nécessaire pour que notre gouvernement puisse réduire le déficit provincial de manière équitable, équilibrée et responsable, tout en protégeant les services de base sur lesquels comptent les Ontariens, y compris notre système d'éducation public de classe mondiale.

As September fast approaches, so does the school year. Parents and students are busy getting ready for a new year, a new grade and new opportunities. For families, this is what September is all about—the ringing in of the new school year. But this year, unlike any other year since our government was first elected, there is something more in the air than excitement and anticipation. There is uncertainty; there are questions; there is confusion. Parents read the papers, and so do students. They know that teacher and support staff unions are talking about strike votes and that at least one union has already taken a vote for a day of action and received the support of 93% of its membership.

Strike votes and labour action—once common practice for an education sector that was antagonized, belittled and berated by past governments—have been a thing of the past in Ontario. It is one of our government's proudest achievements that since we were first elected in 2003, not a single school day has been lost because of province-wide teacher strikes. Working with our partners—teachers, support staff, principals and school boards—we rescued and resuscitated an education system that was in a manufactured crisis. What emerged from that crisis is an education system that is second to none. From those depths emerged a partnership between our government and an education sector that has shared common goals and shared equally in their success. Those goals continue to guide our work, our shared benchmark and the thread that pulls us upwards to new heights of excellence.

These goals are increasing student achievement, reducing gaps in achievement for struggling students and building confidence in our publicly funded education system. Working with our partners, we have delivered on all three goals. Test scores are up. Graduation rates continue to rise. Ontario students are now ranked among the highest achievers in the country and the world.

The Organization for Economic Development's Programme for International Student Assessment in 2009 ranked Ontario students among the top 10 readers in the world.

According to the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program's 2010 report, Ontario students were the only group, Speaker—the only group—to perform above the Canadian average in all three areas of math, reading and science.

In fact, Ontario students scored significantly higher than the Canadian average in all three subjects and were first when it came to reading—the only students to perform above the national average in that area.

Our effort to close the gap—the student achievement gap and the socioeconomic gap—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask people to take conversations out of the chamber and allow us to hear the minister.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Thank you, Speaker.

Our effort to close the gap—the student achievement gap and the socioeconomic gap—is working. Ontario is now recognized as one of few jurisdictions in the world where 92% of students are meeting or exceeding international standards, regardless of socioeconomic background or first language. That is astounding progress.

Perhaps our greatest achievement with our partners has been full-day kindergarten, the most significant transformation in our education system in a generation. As of this September, next week, about 120,000 students and their families will be benefiting from full-day kindergarten. That's up from 50,000 in 2011 and 35,000 in 2010.

The achievements of our students, teachers, educators and administrators working together have contributed to our final and important goal: restoring public confidence in Ontario's publicly funded education system.

We have come such a long way in less than a decade.

In 2003-04, the graduation rate in Ontario was 68%. Now it's 82%. That's 93,000 more students with a high school diploma than would have had the rate remained at the 2003-04 level. But our work is not done. We are committed to driving the grad rate up to 85%.

When it comes to how our students are doing, test scores are up: 69% of our students are meeting the provincial standard, and that's an increase of 15 percentage points, Speaker. But our goal is to get that number up to 75%.

Grâce aux efforts soutenus que nous avons déployés ensemble, nous avons réussi à mobiliser notre système et nos élèves pour obtenir des résultats d'apprentissage solides et équitables.

Les résultats d'apprentissage d'aujourd'hui permettront à nos élèves d'être concurrentiels dans l'économie du savoir de demain. C'est pour cette raison que notre engagement envers le rendement des élèves est ferme et résolu et qu'il s'est reflété à chaque étape de notre dialogue continu avec nos partenaires en éducation.

Les résultats que je viens de souligner ne démontrent pas seulement la réussite d'un gouvernement. Ils démontrent la réussite des enseignants et enseignantes, ils démontrent la réussite des parents, et surtout, ils démontrent la réussite des élèves. Ce sont les élèves dans tout l'Ontario qui passent les tests, qui font leurs devoirs, qui respectent les règles du jeu et qui obtiennent des résultats. Chaque cent alloué à l'éducation est dépensé d'une manière ou d'une autre au nom des élèves et dans leur intérêt.

Quand notre gouvernement a été élu pour la première fois, il a vu clairement que l'investissement le plus stratégique que nous pouvions faire, celui qui allait profiter le plus aux élèves, était l'investissement dans les enseignants. Pour les gouvernements précédents, les enseignants étaient devenus des cibles. Le corps

enseignant était démoralisé en Ontario, malgré son grand talent.

Our government was committed to putting an end to that. Through two rounds of labour negotiations, our commitment to teachers was reflected in the creation of provincial discussion tables and the significant investments and improvements that came out of them. PDTs were created as a way to bring unions and school boards together, with the government acting as the facilitator, to hammer out province-wide agreements on such issues of province-wide significance as compensation and benefits. Before PDTs, strictly local bargaining pitted union against union, local board against school board, and, where there were labour disruptions, parents against the education system.

That had to change. As a result of PDTs and as a result of our commitment to rebuilding public education in Ontario, it did change. In 2004 and 2008, working with teacher and support staff unions and school boards, our government helped facilitate agreements that provided significant increases in compensation, more teachers and support staff, and greatly improved working conditions. These were necessary investments to ensure students were getting the education they deserved.

Specifically, the 2004 to 2008 PDT resulted in funded salary increases for all education workers; funding for 2,630 elementary specialist teachers; funding for 1,900 secondary student success teachers; and zero lost learning days due to full-time teacher strikes.

Building on that, the 2008 to 2012 PDT resulted in a salary increase for staff and teachers; funding for 2,300 elementary specialist teachers; funding for 220 grades 7 to 8 teachers to support literacy and numeracy initiatives; funding for 650 grades 4 to 8 class size reduction teachers; funding for 890 secondary teachers; 400 additional professional and paraprofessional staff; 215 additional office support workers; approximately 500 additional custodians; and eight school years without a full-time-teacher strike.

These were necessary investments to ensure our education system was provided with the resources it needed to get a better pathway.

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Overall, the last PDTs have seen an additional 8,500 new teaching positions, resulting in lower class sizes; over 1,100 new support staff positions; significant increases in elementary prep time; and enhancements to wages, professional development, recognition and support for new teachers. Teachers have also seen significant pay increases.

Our government felt at the time, and continues to feel today, that this money was well spent. It was a strategic investment that recognized teachers for their hard work and professionalism and the overall importance of their work for the future of our students and our province. At the same time, we were increasing our investment in teachers and support staff. We were also increasing our overall investment in publicly funded education.

Since 2003, our government has increased the education budget by \$6.5 billion, or 45%, for a total investment

in 2012-13 of \$21 billion. Per pupil funding has risen to \$11,189. This represents an increase of about \$4,000 per student since 2003, an increase of 55%. We've invested heavily in new schools and school improvements. Again, these were strategic investments that reflected the needs and interests of one of our greatest assets, our students.

But it cannot be taken for granted that these investments also reflected the strength of Ontario's economy back in 2004 and 2008. Government revenues were high, the dollar was low, and manufacturing continued to be a leading contributor to Ontario's economic growth. There was money to be invested, and we did so wisely.

But in 2012, we can all agree that today is a different story. Ontario has been significantly impacted by the global recession, and we are now facing a deficit. This deficit comes in part because of our proactive response to global economic challenges. We didn't turn our back on Ontarians; we invested in them. We invested in preserving jobs. We laid the groundwork for future growth. To do so, we unveiled a significant stimulus package that has been credited for pulling Ontario's economy back from the brink.

We've made strong progress toward balancing the budget, and signs of economic growth are starting to appear. So we need to keep making the right choices, Speaker, to ensure that we continue making gains in education while overcoming the challenges of the deficit and global economic uncertainty. If Ontario does not take strong action, the deficit will grow, which would mean unsustainable levels of debt. We cannot allow that to happen. We will not allow that to happen.

That is why, when we invited our partners to a third round of PDTs back in February, we were clear that our choice was to constrain growth in compensation and benefits, areas that make up 85% of our education spending and—after years of increases—were ready for a two-year pause in the name of fairness to Ontarians and stability for our economy.

From the moment we were elected, our government has provided the investments necessary to bring education funding, including compensation, up to a level that reflects the needs of students and fair wages for teachers and support staff. As a government, we are confident that, with nearly a decade of increased resources, the education community has what it needs to continue to deliver world-class education provided by world-class instructors.

With that confidence, we presented clear fiscal parameters to our education partners that were necessary for a PDT agreement and, more broadly, the sustainability of education funding. At the time, these parameters were: a two-year agreement; 0% salary increases for two years, from September 1, 2012, to August 31, 2014; we sought to freeze banked sick days accumulated as of August 31, 2012, and any future payout of those sick days upon retirement would be at the employee's salary rate in effect as of August 31, 2012; we sought to replace retirement gratuities with a short-term sick leave plan which each year, and not carried forward from year to year,

offers six sick days paid at 100% salary and 24 weeks at 66.66%; and, effective September 1, 2012, we would eliminate all accumulated non-vested sick days.

Additionally, our government was clear that filing a valuation of the Ontario teachers' pension plan in 2012 is in the best interests of all parties, and that we would be seeking to resume negotiations with the Ontario Teachers' Federation to secure the future viability and solvency of the OTPP for future generations.

Lastly, we stated our wish to review school board salary grids with stakeholders, including but not limited to how employees move on the experience and qualification salary grid and the variation currently in the monetary value of each grid step, with a view to future sustainability.

These parameters were delivered to each of our partners on February 22 of this year. We were clear then, just as we are now, that these parameters are designed to find savings outside of the classroom, so that we continue to ensure the integrity of the classroom experience. This means protecting the gains we have made in education, continuing to roll out full-day kindergarten, keeping class sizes small and preserving 20,000 teacher and support staff jobs.

On February 28, PDT discussions with teacher federations, support staff representatives and trustee associations formally began. That same day, Ontario's largest teacher union, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, withdrew from the PDT process after giving us only one hour of their time. They walked out and never came back. That was six months ago.

Fortunately, other partners recognized the stakes and continued to talk in what were tough but constructive discussions. To be clear about the importance of the government's fiscal parameters, we included them in the 2012 Ontario budget and made sure that the 2012-13 grants for students' needs were consistent with what we had asked of our partners.

In support of the ongoing dialogue between our partners and the government, we provided a steady stream of information about our fiscal parameters and their implications for the 2012-13 budgets. These communications were in the form of memos, B memos and teleconferences to the sector that outlined what their obligations were with respect to the parameters when planning their 2012-13 budgets. In every case, we were clear about the necessity and benefits of respecting the parameters.

While some chose to follow the ETFO example and walk away, others persevered and continued to work diligently on behalf of their members and Ontario students. As a result of their hard work and our government's commitment to being firm but fair, focused but flexible, we announced amended fiscal parameters. The amended parameters proposed increasing the number of sick days from six to 10, but not to allow those days to be banked. To ensure all PDT partners were aware of this change, even those who had abandoned the process, we provided details of the change to the entire sector. This marked a turning point in our dialogue with the sector, but not with ETFO, not with OSSTF and not with CUPE.

Those who walked away and were invited back repeatedly continued to turn their back on the government, the PDT process and on their responsibility to act in the best interests of Ontario's students.

Fortunately, others showed leadership, specifically the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association. On the night of July 4, we were talking late into the night with OECTA and the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, who were acting on behalf of Catholic boards. We were on the cusp of an agreement between OECTA and OCSTA when the trustees decided to walk away from the process regarding concerns over fair-hiring provisions embedded in the draft agreement. OCSTA made the decision to walk away.

Our government made the decision to pick up the ball that they had dropped. As a result, OECTA signed a memorandum of understanding, or MOU, with our government on July 5, 2012. The memorandum of understanding with OECTA falls within the government's fiscal parameters and benefits from the creativity and innovation that can only be derived from true listening and collaboration. Frankly, what we agreed to with OECTA is better than what we had first come to the table with, and that is because it is a fairly negotiated agreement with input from key education partners.

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While I will get into the specifics of the agreements later, as they form the basis of the proposed legislation before us, I do want to speak to the ways in which the OECTA memorandum of understanding better serves our teachers and our province than the parameters we had originally outlined.

The memorandum stands out for its special consideration for new teachers: their needs at an early stage in their careers and their importance to the growth and sustainability of excellence in the classroom. Young teachers are the fuel that keeps the engines of our education system running. Their energy, enthusiasm and fresh perspectives are exactly what our schools and students need to continue to succeed.

Our initial parameters did not distinguish between new or experienced teachers. As a result, the parameters were seen as particularly challenging for those just starting out in their careers. Our talks with OECTA and the eventual memorandum of understanding helped to reframe our parameters in a way that met our fiscal requirements while still providing supports for our newest teachers. These supports include partial movement through the pay grid and improved sick and maternity leave plans.

The memorandum also includes a fair hiring provision that requires a standardized, consistent and transparent approach to hiring occasional teachers for long-term occasional and permanent positions. Taken together, and in addition to the many other supports we've already provided for new teachers, including reducing the number of days a retired teacher can supply-teach, the memorandum is a clear win for young teachers and, in turn, for the future sustainability of excellence in the classroom.

Despite these clear benefits, among others I will refer to in a moment that are embedded in the proposed legislation, teacher and support staff unions, as well as school boards, spoke out against the agreement. Some other unions declared it was an affront to what they felt they were entitled to. Some boards felt that the status quo was acceptable for hiring practices. But, Madam Speaker, in 2012, for all the economic reasons I have laid out, there is nothing acceptable about the status quo.

Fortunately, other partners accepted that notion, and not long after the OECTA memorandum of understanding, we reached agreements with the Association of Professional Student Services Personnel on July 30 and with the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens, AEFO, on August 9. These agreements were consistent with the OECTA memorandum in terms of compensation, benefits and savings for the province. With OECTA and AEFO signed to memorandums of understanding, that means the government has reached an agreement with teachers in over half of Ontario's school boards: 41 out of 72 school boards, to be exact. What we needed, then, was for Catholic and French school boards to step up and negotiate locally with their teachers, using the OECTA and AEFO memorandums of understanding as the basis for their discussions.

On August 8, we were proud to announce that the Toronto Catholic District School Board passed a motion indicating its intention to sign on to the memorandum of understanding reached between the government and OECTA. On August 22, we made the same announcement about the York Catholic District School Board. On August 23 and 24, Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic School Board, followed by Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board, announced that they too would sign on to the OECTA memorandum of understanding.

That means that all bargaining between OECTA's member in Toronto, York region, Brantford and Sault Ste. Marie will be based on the fair, balanced and responsible parameters set out in the MOU. That is great news. But to put it into perspective, that is only four school boards out of 72, and it is now August 28. As much progress as we have made since we began PDT discussions in February, it is fair to say that we haven't made enough progress for Ontario's parents and students.

I have no doubt that our education partners are committed to the three core goals of education: increasing student achievement and well-being, reducing gaps in achievement for struggling students, and building confidence in the publicly funded education system. But here in the 11th hour, just before September and the start of a new school year, I have come to doubt their understanding of the province's fiscal reality and how, in order to continue to make gains towards the three core goals, this fiscal reality demands sacrifices from all of us. It demands sacrifices from all of us in education, in health care, and across the whole public sector. We must all sacrifice something in order to protect what we cherish the most. A world-leading classroom experience is right at the top of that list for most Ontarians and, more

specifically, for the students, whose best interests must be paramount in any decision we make about education.

Since February, we have been very clear that our government will act in the best interests of those students and that we are willing to make the tough decisions necessary to do what is right on their behalf. So we are here today to stand up for the gains we've made in education since 2003. We are here to stand up for full-day kindergarten and small class sizes. We're here today to stand up for 20,000 teacher and support staff jobs. And after many months of sincere dialogue, where the government has bargained in good faith with each and every one of its partners, after many months of attempts to bring Ontario's biggest teachers' union back to the table and several months of asking others who left to come back, we have come to a point where words must be replaced by actions, where actions need to get results, results to put our students first.

Timing is of critical importance because, as I have mentioned, we are on the cusp of a new school year. The day after Labour Day, parents and students want to know that the school bell will ring and that classes will start. They want certainty, and it is our job to give it to them—certainty for this upcoming school year and certainty that our education system is on a sustainable track for generations to come, which brings me to another powerful motivator for strong action now.

Teacher and support staff contracts expire on August 31. Today is August 28. If new contracts are not in place when the current contracts expire, existing contracts will automatically roll over, resulting in a 5.5% salary increase and two million more bankable teacher sick days that can be cashed out at retirement. This will result in a significant and unaffordable cost to Ontario taxpayers. That's almost half a billion dollars that should be used to educate Ontario students. We cannot let that happen, Madam Speaker. We will not let that happen. So today, I am asking everyone to join us in standing up for schools, students and sustainability by supporting our proposed legislation, the Putting Students First Act.

The Putting Students First Act, if passed, would ensure that school contracts respect the government's fiscal and policy priorities and contain measures to secure two years free from labour disruptions. If passed, the act would require that school boards and local bargaining units of teachers and support staff settle local agreements, consistent with the priorities reflected in the memorandum of understanding between the government and the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association and similar agreements negotiated before August 31.

Specifically, the proposed act, if passed, would require that parties negotiate or accept local agreements that are consistent with the following provisions and parameters:

- 0% salary increases in 2012-13 and 2013-14;
- allowing grid movement on the 97th day of the school year for 2012-13 and 2013-14;
- all teachers will take a 1.5% pay cut in 2013-14 in the form of three unpaid professional development days so that younger teachers will continue to move through

the grid according to their experience and additional qualifications;

—that we would reach agreement to restructure the grid with a view to long-term sustainable savings;

—the elimination of the current retirement gratuity for payment of unused sick days that was responsible for a \$1.7-billion liability for school boards; and

—a restructured short-term sick leave plan that would include up to 10 sick days. This sick leave plan would benefit younger teachers by providing income protection for serious illness and improved maternity leave provisions.

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If passed, the Putting Students First Act will save the province \$2 billion and will avert an expenditure of \$473 million, and at the same time ensure that we don't take our foot off the pedal of student achievement as we continue to see progress in our schools, and that we roll out full-day kindergarten and keep our class sizes small. These savings would be found while continuing to support student achievement, protecting full-day kindergarten, smaller class sizes and 20,000 teaching and support staff jobs.

The proposed legislation, if passed with the support of the members in this House, would take effect on September 1 but would provide until December 31, 2012, for school boards, teachers and support staff to engage in local collective bargaining. This would allow the government's education partners to reach agreements that respect local circumstances while also including the parameters set out in the proposed legislation. But it is important to note that where any agreements do not meet the standards of the proposed legislation, I, as Minister of Education, will have the power to withhold approvals, and the parties will risk having agreements imposed.

The proposed legislation also includes a provision that, if passed, would claw back any increases to wages and benefits that occurred between September 1 and the signing of new collective agreements. This means that, should the House fail to act and pass the proposed legislation before September 1, we can still avoid the loss of hundreds of millions of dollars that would occur should teacher contracts expire on August 31 without a new contract being in place.

In addition to the proposed act, the government is prepared to introduce a regulation under the Education Act that will ensure occasional teachers benefit from fair hiring practices in every school board across the province. This will better position Ontario's hard-working and dedicated occasional teachers for long-term assignments or permanent jobs in schools by requiring a standardized, consistent and transparent approach for hiring.

Since February, the government has been working diligently and in good faith to establish a new provincial framework agreement with its education partners, partners like OECTA, partners like l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens, AEFO, and the Association of Professional Student Services

Personnel, APSSP, who engaged in a constructive dialogue and signed agreements that serve the best interests of the province and their members.

But as I have said, with September just around the corner, many other unions have yet to sign an agreement. As a result, we must now take strong action to provide certainty for students and families that the school year will start as scheduled and will not be interrupted at any time by labour disruptions. We must take action to avoid automatic wage increases. We must take action if we, as politicians elected to act in the best interests of the province and its people, are to have any credibility with the majority of Ontarians, who are not teachers and who have suffered greatly in the past few years as the economy struggled.

If passed, the Putting Students First Act would ensure that the single most important step to growing Ontario's economy, eliminating the deficit and protecting the gains made in education, will not be compromised by labour agreements that do not reflect the province's fiscal reality.

Each and every one of us in this House has an obligation to be responsible stewards of the province's finances. They elected us to protect the services they cherish most, education being right at the top of the list.

They elected us as MPPs in a minority Parliament to work together, to steer our province toward fiscal sustainability. By supporting the proposed Putting Students First Act, we have an opportunity to show Ontarians that their confidence in us has not been misplaced; that we are capable of rising above partisan politics to take action that will make an immediate impact for students, for their families, for young teachers, and for the sustainability of our publicly funded education system, which—make no mistake, Madam Speaker—is the pillar of our economic prosperity.

There is no doubt that we are as committed to making minority government work as we are to keeping our word with those partners who signed agreements with us. That is why we took the rare step of sharing this legislation so far in advance: because we wanted to enlist the opposition's support to ensure timely passage of this important piece of legislation.

Despite the fact that we heard nothing of substance from the third party, we worked with officials over the weekend, reviewing the official opposition's feedback and determining the best path forward.

The Progressive Conservatives indicated that they could not support the diagnostics and fair hiring provisions outlined in the original draft of the bill. This is disappointing for parents, students and our partners. They are not just asking us to move away two provisions that would make our education system even stronger, but they are also asking us to break our road map agreement with OECTA that we arrived at after over six months and 300 hours of discussion. It's a road map that other teachers, including those represented by AEFO, have signed on to. This request puts us in an impossible spot, but I believe that we have found the right balance by introducing a

revised Putting Students First Act that addresses the concerns raised by the PCs, honours the signed memorandums of understanding and reflects the realities of our minority Parliament.

But let me be clear that changes to diagnostic assessments and fair hiring provisions remain a priority for our government, which is why we will instead move forward with non-legislative tools that will allow us to enact these policies. I announced on August 13 that I would be moving forward with a fair hiring regulation and a policy directive on diagnostic assessments, and that will still happen, but it will happen outside of this legislation.

I do want to take some time to clarify some misconceptions around these policies. The increase in use of diagnostic assessments is fairly recent and has been a part of how we've been able to see the progress we've seen in our schools. But it has been made clear to me that while these assessments need to be maintained, we don't currently have the balance right when it comes to the ability of classroom teachers to make decisions about what makes the most sense for the little person sitting in front of them. Our policy and program memorandum will still require that teachers conduct these assessments, but instead of testing for the sake of testing, we'll ensure that these assessments inform the instruction of their students. No teacher will be permitted to opt out.

As for the fair hiring provision, this is an issue that I've heard a lot about from young teachers since I became minister. These are teachers who have completed teachers' college, who have been supply-teaching and on occasional teaching lists for sometimes years and who are not sure of what the process is to be hired on a permanent basis. Currently, there is no consistency and transparency on how new teachers are hired within and between boards.

The agreement we signed with OECTA sets out fair hiring rules that will bring additional transparency and accountability for new teachers so that everyone understands the rules around hiring. This is particularly necessary in a system funded by public dollars, where accountability for decisions is critical. I want to be clear, though: Management will still make the ultimate decision about whom to hire, but that role comes with a responsibility, Madam Speaker, to create a process that can be equally accessed and understood by all. The MOU requires the process to be fair and transparent but contemplates a decision based on the best possible program, the safety and well-being of students, the qualifications of each applicant, an interview process, and seniority—certainly not seniority alone.

I am committed to seeing both of these provisions implemented across the sector and will do so by introducing a regulation in the coming weeks.

I strongly encourage you as colleagues and as Ontarians to move this proposed legislation forward and help us ensure it takes effect before September 1. Doing so will give clarity to families that, come September, school will begin on time and that there will be no labour disruptions at any time—not on the first day; not on any

day. But also, by passing the law expeditiously, we will help facilitate more effective local bargaining, a process this proposed legislation respects and provides room for, while ensuring that the most contentious issues, such as compensation, are already taken care of.

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The best pathway forward exists in the fair, balanced and responsible proposed legislation at hand. We've worked hard for seven months with our partners and never imagined we would be in such a position. But it seems that despite our sincere efforts at the provincial discussion table and the many successes we have had along the way, strong action cannot be avoided, nor should it be. Tough decisions are why we are all here, and getting them right is more important than ever.

As Minister of Education and as a mother of two boys heading into grade 2, I look forward to the support of all members of this House for the Putting Students First Act and the certainty you will all help bring to the new school year.

Madam Speaker, in an effort to see this legislation moved along expeditiously, I would seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding second and third reading of Bill 115.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I heard a no.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Well, Madam Speaker, that is truly disappointing that not all members of this Legislature are willing to stand up right now and put students first. But I do look forward to further debate on this bill.

The proposed Putting Students First Act is a reflection of our government's commitment to protecting the gains we've made in education and to preserve the classroom experience by continuing to roll out full-day kindergarten, keeping class sizes small and protecting 20,000 teacher and support staff jobs.

I am very concerned to see here today in this House that we do not have the full support of the assembly to move forward with this piece of legislation that would do what matters most: standing by our kids and putting them first.

I would ask the members in this House to rethink their decisions and support our government's initiatives to put students first. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments? The member for Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the opportunity to be part of this debate and discussion. Of course, I'll have an hour leadoff immediately following this, and I know the NDP will as well.

I have been working with the minister on a number of different items here, and we have decided that what we would do is, well, co-operate as best as we can, given the hand we've been dealt. There's not everything we agree with in this legislation, and we seriously have a lot of concerns which I'll outline at a later point in time.

However, I sent a letter to the minister yesterday with two questions I really will need the answers to. I would

like her to clarify her comments yesterday to the media that the removal of subclauses 19(1)(e)(i) and (e)(ii) will apply for any agreement that has not been signed as of August 31, regardless of which school board is affected.

Secondly, we have a concern in the official opposition, as outlined by our leader, Tim Hudak, on several occasions, with the OECTA road map and the numbers, and so we had asked that the minister commit to ensuring that the Auditor General would review their act to ensure that it achieves the financial targets that they profess it does.

I'm wondering if the minister could respond to us today with answers to those two questions. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions? The member for Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, as I have said previously, this is a politically driven bill meant to give the Liberals a boost in two by-elections. I ask the minister—she talks about school starting very shortly, about the need to assure parents that they will be able to take their children to school or make sure the children can get into school—which school boards are not going to be functioning next week? Tell us. Because when I talked to trustees earlier this summer, they were not planning for strikes or lockouts. They were looking at your bill and saying, “What on earth is going on here? What is going on here?”

The minister knows full well that, typically, the negotiations between teachers and education workers and their employers—the boards—occurs at the beginning of the school year. That is common practice. However, what's different this year is a government that is desperate to get a majority; for some reason, seems to have decided that taking this position of creating a crisis will help them win two by-elections; and has thus structured everything around that.

It was interesting to me that for so much of the minister's time, she was not speaking about the bill. She was going on about her assessment of the government's record, her assessment of the situation in the province, but, in fact, the content of the bill was a minor part of her comments.

We are caught up in a political crisis of the government's making, one in which the minister cannot tell us which school boards will not be functioning next week.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions? The member from Nipissing–Pembroke–Renfrew.

Mr. John Yakubuski: That's close enough, Speaker. Thank you very much.

Well, I listened very closely to what the minister was saying, and I myself have my reservations about her ability to stick to the bill. But my colleague and our education critic, the member for Nepean–Carleton, has raised a couple of issues, and that's the request for some clarification from the minister on two very, very important points, namely, section 19, subclauses (e)(i) etc., which have a lot to do with who's going to be determining who's going to be hiring the supply teachers and under what criteria. Is it going to be under seniority or is

it going to be under suitability? The fact that she stated that school boards that have not signed on by August 31—will these measures in the current bill be removed?

But I also have my concerns about the motivation and the timing of this legislation. Are the Liberals, on purpose, creating a crisis so that they can play politics with this issue in Kitchener–Waterloo and in Vaughan? Their original statement was that we have to have this bill passed by September 1. Well, given that they didn't get unanimous consent for the motion here earlier, it's highly unlikely that that's going to happen. So what was the critical need?

We're going to bail the government out because we believe that restraint is the order of the day, and we need to go down that road, but I'm always questioning the motives of this government.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Well, there's spin, and then there's reality. The reality is that the 5,000 teachers and education workers that were on the front lawns offered this government a freeze on their salaries and never threatened to go on strike, but that's not the word that we hear from the Liberal Party.

The Liberal Party is spinning quite a different line and absolutely have created a crisis—a crisis that's going to cost Ontario taxpayers tens of millions of dollars, and here's why: because it's going to be challenged, because it is unconstitutional. That's the reality. It's going to be challenged, and they're going to lose. They're going to lose just like the BC government lost. They lost \$85 million out there. We're looking here at maybe losing as much as \$780 million. That's what this government is doing. That's what they're going to cost the taxpayers of Ontario, and all for a manufactured crisis that doesn't exist. It doesn't exist because this government had eight months to sit down and actually negotiate, and they walked away. An announcement, Madam Speaker, on YouTube does not count as negotiation. Walking away from a table does not count as negotiation.

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So this government, just like they've done in Mississauga and Oakville, will cost the taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars to save a seat, which we think they should lose anyway. We're working to that end—trust me—on this side. So here you get Liberal spin that has no basis in reality whatsoever; 5,000 people out on the lawn said as much. So do the press. Anybody who reads beneath the lines for five seconds knows that this is spin. This has nothing to do with students; this has everything to do with the by-election. It's crass and cynical politics, and it hurts our children.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The minister has two minutes to respond.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I will say to my friends opposite: This bill has everything to do with students. It has everything to do with protecting the education system that we have built up over the past nine years, an education system that we inherited when we were first

ected that was in disarray, where we had had challenges, we had low test scores and we had low grad rates. Rather, now, test scores are up, grad rates are up, our students are achieving, and people come from around the world to study what we are doing here in Ontario.

Madam Speaker, this bill has everything to do about putting our students first. If we move in this direction and we garner the support of this House, this approach will save Ontario taxpayers more than \$2 billion when applied province-wide over the next two years. It will avert a cost of \$473 million if teachers' contracts automatically roll over and more sick days are accrued. That's \$473 million that we need to spend in our classrooms to support our students, rather than pay additional teacher pay at this time that we can simply not afford.

When we were in good economic times, as I said in my remarks, we proudly paid teachers more. We believe in Ontario teachers. They deliver that top-quality education. But now, at this time in our history, at this time when our province has the fiscal challenges that we have, we must all do our part, and that includes everyone who works across the public sector. That includes our teachers. What we are asking of our teachers is simply to take a pause, and we're asking the members in this House—

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

Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The minister concluded her leadoff speech without answering the two questions that I had posed to her. They are very important questions, and in the spirit of co-operation which we have offered in the official opposition, I would like to know if she would clarify that the removal of subclauses 19(1) (e)(i) and (e)(ii) will apply for any agreement that has not been signed as of August 31, regardless of which school board is affected.

Now, Speaker, that's the first question. I'm going to tell you why I'm asking: because Catholic and French school boards who didn't want to be part of the road map want to know, are they left out of the management rights? They deserve to have a clear answer, and we in the official opposition also deserve a clear answer.

In addition, as I progress through where the official opposition stands on this bill, we'll talk a little bit about numbers, and you will recall from the public debate in the media, Speaker, over the OECTA road map that this caucus, the Ontario PC caucus, has severe reservations with the numbers being cited by this minister. We believe there is a \$300-million hole, and I will walk you through that later, but it comes back to the point: If you cannot trust their numbers, shouldn't we have a third party, arm's-length, independent assessment of their numbers?

Mr. John Yakabuski: The auditor.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: That's why we've asked for the auditor, and that is why we had requested that the minister take the initiative and call him in. I do hope she has a response for me. I have written her a letter. This is an important issue.

Now that I've got that housekeeping out of the way, I would, first and foremost, like to say thank you to those in our education system. By that, I mean I want to say thank you to our teachers. They do a great job, regardless of whether it's junior kindergarten right through to grade 12.

I must say this: I have a daughter who will be going back to school next week in grade 2, and we've had outstanding teachers. I know everyone in this assembly appreciates the work they do. I want to say thank you to school board trustees. I know there are a few former trustees in this place. From time to time, they take the brunt of criticism, or they make decisions in my own community sometimes that I don't understand. That said, for the little recognition they get with a stipend, they do work quite hard. Finally, I'd like to say thank you to Ontario's principals, who are the heads of most of our schools and have an eye into every one of our communities that most of us would like. They get to see students from all walks of life, from any economic background—lots of diversity. They know, for example, what kids are in trouble, who might be going home to no food on the table and whose parents may have lost their jobs.

That's why this bill is actually important to me. This bill is important because it is the first recognition by the Ontario Liberal government that our province has had a very difficult nine years, that we have lost a lot of jobs in this province and that we are spending more on interest alone servicing the debt and the deficit than we are on some government departments. It is a recognition of something my colleagues—in particular our leader, Tim Hudak—have been calling for for years now, which is a legislated, province-wide, mandatory broader public sector wage freeze. We believe in our caucus that that is one of the tools that will get us out of the recession and get this province back on track.

Now, why is that a concern? Well, I just talked about the kids who may be going to school and have had some challenges. I said that my daughter is in grade 2. I recognize, when I go to her Christmas concert, Remembrance Day or even when I volunteer on Fridays, that some kids may be having some struggles at home, given this economy. I've seen kids where the teacher—and I want to say thank you to the teachers who do it—has brought the extra snacks to school for those kids. I've seen it, and it's humbling.

The reality is, we really appreciate having a publicly funded education system, and where I'm getting to the point—and this is my point—is, in order for that public education system to be sustainable, we have to be able to afford it. We have to be able to afford our government in Ontario so that it's not breaking the backs of the moms and the dads who are paying the taxes. For too long, this government has not paid attention to the dire financial situation in our province. They ignored it. They didn't keep up with the times. When other nations, when other provinces, when our own country was hit by recession, they continued to spend at enormous rates that we

couldn't afford. In fact, let me give you a statistic. In fact it's not even a statistic. It's a quote from the finance minister on budget day. He said that the third-largest spending priority outside of health care and education in our province is on the debt and the deficit. Servicing the debt and the deficit in Ontario is larger than every other single government department combined outside of education and health care.

What does that mean? Well, let's continue to walk through. It means that every single dollar spent servicing the debt and the deficit to multinational financiers, many out of this country, in New York, every single dollar being spent to service that debt and the deficit out of this country is a dollar taken away from front-line classrooms, from front-line health care. It's taken away from kids in classrooms.

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In order for this public education system to remain sustainable, in order for us to ensure that we are still building schools in high-growth neighbourhoods, that we've got the right and proper supports for those urban cores—and that we're making sure in our rural communities we're not closing down the only institution that is making that community viable itself by being able to continue to fund it.

Unfortunately, Speaker, and I say this as an unfortunate instance, it means we're going to have to bring in a legislated wage freeze. No one really wants to do that, out of the heart, because we know that people work very hard. The core difference between us and the Ontario Liberal government is that we believe it needs to be applied across the board.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Equally.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Equally to everyone. It needs to be fair, equitable, but it also needs to be comprehensive.

There are 4,000 outstanding collective agreements that still need to be negotiated elsewhere. But in this instance, this Liberal government has chosen to fight with teachers. It reminds me of a fight that they chose to pick just last spring with the doctors. I can't understand why you would pick and choose who should receive a pay cut or a wage freeze or a rollback and who shouldn't. That's why we've asked for a broader public sector wage freeze. We believe, if applied equally across the board, it would save \$2 billion a year and cut that debt and the deficit down so that our core public services that we support in health care and in education would still be there and would be viable and sustainable into the future; this government chose not to. They chose to do the piecemeal approach.

Our leader has been, as you know, for over a year looking for a solution to this crisis. In fact, he met in November with Mr. McGuinty, the Premier of Ontario, and he stated that it was important to bring in a legislated wage freeze. At the time, the Liberals said it was unconstitutional. Number two, we brought forward our own legislation that would have applied equally across all of the government. The Liberals voted that down.

But five weeks before the first day of school, we heard rumblings, chirping, that the government was going to recall the assembly because they now, at the 11th hour, were going to save everyone. They're going to put kids in classrooms and they weren't going to stand for these 5.5% increases that the province couldn't afford.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My colleague from the New Democrats says it's the by-elections.

Now, Speaker, we've had our concerns with the OECTA road map. We have been advocates for reining in government spending and balancing the budget so that in the future there is an education system that parents in Ontario can rely on, and that's why we want an across-the-board wage freeze.

In Ontario, we have over 114,000 teachers. In the 2012 Ontario budget, they stated that freezing teachers' wages, including their salary grid, is "necessary if government is to meet its commitment to balance the budget." So the government, at the time—five months ago, six months ago—stated they were going to freeze teachers' wages, including the salary grid, and this is important. Instead of supporting our legislation in May to enact an immediate across-the-board wage freeze for two years, the government chose instead to negotiate a 0% compensation increase, and, to date, it has failed. Despite claims by the government, the recent deal struck with OECTA, now part of this legislation, really doesn't constitute a true wage freeze. About 40% of teachers can still move up the salary grid, and it means that close to 18,000 unionized teachers in OECTA will receive salary increases of about \$7,000 over two years.

Now, if the government wants to challenge our numbers on this—we're actually just using their numbers—I would encourage them to do what I'd asked the minister earlier. Send in the Auditor General. If you're so confident about your numbers, send in the Auditor General. We would love to hear what Jim McCarter has to say about this.

The problem with their legislation—we will support it, but we have reservations and this is why we want the Auditor General in—is, if this deal is replicated across all unions and all boards, 45,000 teachers in total will continue to move up the grid, representing a cumulative cost of close to \$450 million in salary increases over two years. So it's not a true wage freeze. And the costs won't be fully offset by giving teachers three unpaid days; that will save \$150 million. But given the new \$450-million cost for moving up and down the grid, these folks over on the other side of the assembly will have a \$300-million fiscal gap, a fiscal gap that they said in their own budget they wouldn't have. There's not anything that they submit that is worth the paper it is written on because you always have to read the fine print, and sometimes the fine print isn't even there, because they're not always forthcoming with the truth.

So, with less than a week until collective agreements with teachers automatically renew, the government is now here recalling the assembly, which they also dragged

their feet on, because we heard the rumblings over five weeks. In fact, I called my friend Peter Tabuns. We played a little phone tag. I said, "I'm hearing this is coming." He said, "Well, I'm hearing it, too." I think I may have told the Clerk's office. I asked some Liberals. I was talking about this because the Liberals wouldn't confirm that they wanted to sit, to recall the assembly. So Tim Hudak and I actually said, "Call back the House. You want to put forward a piece of legislation? Great. We have a lot of questions about it, and we wouldn't mind bringing up a few other questions, too, about a power plant in Mississauga and maybe a little helicopter that's Ornge. We wouldn't mind bringing up a few of those issues either."

So we're here, Speaker, and so we are discussing those little Ornge helicopters; and so we are talking about that power plant in Mississauga; and we are talking about getting kids back in classrooms; and we are talking about slaying the debt and deficit; and we are talking about making sure we have a viable and sustainable public education system. However, let's talk a little bit more about motive.

They could have prevented this, had they planned properly. One of my biggest criticisms of the government on this initiative is how they've handled it. It will take a long time to convince me, if ever, that they're doing this for the sake of the children. I find it insulting actually that they would name this bill "Putting Students First," because I think the message that it sends to teachers, principals and trustees is that they don't put students first.

I can tell you something, Speaker: On many occasions, I may not agree with union leaders. In fact, I guess I'm probably known as somebody who stands on the right side of politics, and they may stand on the left side. But I will tell you one thing: I don't believe for a second that Ontario's teachers don't put students first. Any person who walks into a classroom in this province knows that those teachers are there for the children. Albeit, my child is in elementary school, and I've had a great experience with her teachers, Tammy Epp—

Interjections.

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Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This is the other thing, Speaker. I just have to point this out. This is also a government that cannot take yes for an answer. The reality is, we are going to bail them out and let this bill pass. Yet all they do is they chirp from the sidelines because they can't handle what they've done for the past nine years. They'll heckle—and this coming from the person who mis-managed, Speaker, a \$190-million file as energy minister, and he wants to heckle us about talking about putting students first. That is shameful. I can tell you something: The people watching at home have more questions about that Mississauga power plant, I can assure you, than anything else.

But let me say this, Speaker. We have said that we would see this legislation pass. We have nothing against the teachers. In fact, we have the greatest of respect for them. Our issue is making sure that we do move toward a

broader public sector wage freeze, and we have asked the government on a number of occasions.

Now, the issue in the past couple of days is that the minister has said she would listen to our concerns. We have some serious concerns. We think that—

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You guys are making it awfully hard, this conversation between the two.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I don't want to—in any event, Speaker, outside of the fiscal parameters that the government actually believes they've invoked, which I think can be debunked, because that's only a partial issue, is weakening school boards' and principals' ability to hire the best possible staff and ensure that proper assessment and reporting is continued. Don't take our word for it. Take the word of the Catholic trustees' association or the student trustees' association, or the principals' council, who are very concerned with that clause.

So here's where we are, as I walk you through where the PC caucus is—where we are. The minister called me and said to me she would be tabling legislation, a few weeks ago. I said, "Thank you. I'd like a briefing immediately." I'm still waiting for the briefing. I said, "I also have some questions for you, Minister, with respect to your fiscal parameters." You're going to love this.

Mr. Paul Miller: I want to hear it.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I sent a letter immediately after the conversation I had with the minister, before she made it to the media that she was going to put this legislation forward. You'll like this. So I sent her the letter. A couple of days later, she tells the media that the Conservatives haven't responded to her legislation. They were asking no questions. Can you believe that? I sent her a letter.

In fact, I was actually quite friendly to her. I couldn't believe for a second that she wouldn't respond. In fact, I wrote to her right on August 16 at 12:13 p.m. So, Peter, Mr. Tabuns, I think you and I had a conversation about 11 o'clock that day. I spoke with the minister maybe a little bit before that.

So I wrote her a letter. I said, "Thank you for the call. I appreciated the notice that you will be announcing your legislation later today. It would be helpful if I could have a technical briefing today when the bill arrives to my constituency office and one at a later date for our senior staff once the Ontario PC caucus retreat is over." Because why? They decided to make this announcement while our two caucuses were having our retreats. They were in Kitchener. Our caucus was in Niagara.

I said again, "I'd like to know, if you plan on introducing this legislation, if it will be a confidence measure. Also as I've indicated, I have several technical questions regarding the OECTA road map. I wish we could have gotten more through them before the call was over. But I appreciate the offer to send them to Gabrielle to be answered before I receive a copy of the legislation this afternoon." Then I asked a series of questions.

I didn't receive a response until the minister went to the media saying that I hadn't written her a letter, I hadn't given her feedback, I hadn't asked any questions. It was not until I handed over to Jonathan Jenkins from the Sun and said, "I sent this letter. I've asked for several responses and none have been forthcoming," did I actually receive a response.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Well, it is a friendly paper if you tell them the truth, and unfortunately, when you're not telling the truth over there, Mr. Bradley, the reality is that you get a little bit burned.

So we get our response back, and then the minister calls again and says, "We're going to be recalling the House and we're going to be putting forward the legislation." I said, "Fine."

Hon. Brad Duguid: So you called Peter right away.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: No, I didn't call Peter right away. I—

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Sorry, Peter. I didn't call you right away.

But the reality is that, on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I spoke to the minister and I said, "Look, we'll pass this bill, and what we'll do is take a good, hard look at it. We're going to run the numbers again. You've got my word." Therefore, we spoke with the minister, and she told us, this past Monday, that she was going to make some concessions. We asked for subclauses 19(1)(e)(i) and 19(1)(e)(ii) to be removed from the bill, to restore and empower the authority of school boards and principals.

Then, of course, no sooner did she say that she was going to do that and we'd be happy, than she comes out and speaks to the media and tells us that she doesn't have a response for us, that she is thinking about putting them out in regulations. Now there is an awful lot of mixed messaging—not a lot of clarity for the school boards or the principals or, for that matter, us.

I know that the minister's staff are here, so I would hope that they can answer by email today if the Catholic and the French boards are going to be left out of the management rights amendments, if they're going to stick to their word and ensure that 19(1)(e)(i) and 19(1)(e)(ii) will be eliminated. Speaker, we think that that is critical for a solid bill that will work in the best interests of the people of Ontario. We think that it is the best way to proceed with this legislation. We feel that this bill needs to be passed as soon as possible, but we also still feel we'd like to continue to be at work.

Next week, students across Ontario will be going back to school, but the bottom line is still this: After nine years of reckless spending, we're still going to have a deep financial hole, one that will continue to strangle our public education system. I maintain—and I know my colleagues do—that the OECTA deal alone is just one example of a larger problem in Ontario. It's a symbol of Ontario's debt, our crisis in the deficit and debt slaying,

and the challenges that they've now presented with their own stakeholders.

In fact, I've said to the Ottawa Citizen and other media that this had to have been a master stroke of alienation. I am surprised that in one fell swoop this government has been able to alienate the teachers who have given them three back-to-back-to-back elections, the school board administrators who are going to have to carry out and implement this bill—and they can't stop—they cannot help themselves—trying to alienate the opposition parties.

The reality is, Speaker—and I'm sure you're aware of this—last October 6 they weren't elected in a majority government. I'm sure you know that it was a minority government that was elected on October 6. But, for the life of them, they forget that. They forget from time to time that they have to work with others to get things done, to legislate, and when we say "We'll work with you," they can't take yes for an answer. In fact, they want to play silly little games. They want to disenfranchise even people who are willing to tolerate their silliness.

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But that said, we view this legislation for the first time as recognition by this Liberal government that they're in a deep financial hole and they won't be able to spend on full-day learning; they won't be able to spend on class sizes; and they won't be able to spend on new schools if we continue to dig ourselves deeper into a fiscal hole. The money isn't there.

For the first time, the Ontario PC caucus is actually pleasantly surprised that they're taking the notion of a legislated wage freeze seriously. Tim Hudak has been very clear that he doesn't want to derail a school year. In fact, we would appreciate no disturbances whatsoever, so that kids can be in the classroom, so that they can learn, so that they can enjoy not just the educational environment but the social environment that is so important, particularly in those early years. But this government has made a complete mess out of the negotiations. In fact, they had to take over a school board earlier today to get them to sign on to the MOU in Windsor, in Mr. Duncan's riding. It's interesting.

So, here we are today, Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus bailing out Dalton McGuinty and that Liberal sinking ship over there. They rejected our call in November for a public sector wage freeze. They failed to negotiate a deal. Only five of 72 boards have reached agreements, and as I mentioned, one of those came today because they had to take the board over.

Now the Liberals have frantically recalled the Legislative Assembly. Now they're threatened by classroom chaos. They now have finally agreed, at least partially, to a wage freeze for teachers but not everyone. They decided to single out and pick on teachers and single out and pick on doctors. But they could have done it differently. We have the road map, and we're going to continue to pursue it across the board.

In fact, our leader has been very clear in the last week that we've got a plan to fix, freeze and reduce, starting by

freezing public sector salaries to save that \$2 billion annually. Speaker, I ask you: How many schools would be built in Ontario with \$2 billion? How quickly could we get our debt and deficit under control with \$2 billion a year? How many MRIs, hospitals, how many doctors, nurses and teachers could you ensure were working and getting paid with \$2 billion?

Well, the reality is, this government has spent us into oblivion. This bill, we maintain—although it will pass with our support—I want to reiterate, is just a band-aid solution. That is all. It is only a band-aid solution. The Liberals handed our keys over to the education system for the past nine years. They gave increases that this province couldn't afford and spending went up, but enrolment went down and outcomes haven't gotten any better.

If our province wasn't facing a \$411-billion debt and a \$30-billion deficit, this Liberal government would still be throwing money at a problem because they are hardwired—and I repeat, hardwired—to spend money that is not theirs, and they've done it for the past nine years.

So, Speaker, we are going to ensure that kids will be in the classrooms in September. We're going to ensure that they have a trouble-free environment in the fall and for the next two years. We know that this bill will prevent a 5.5% immediate increase in wages, it will outlaw strikes and it will prevent lockouts.

As I mentioned, we are still concerned with the \$300-million fiscal gap in their plan. They could remedy that if they would just talk to the Auditor General and he could prove that their numbers are right. However, this is also a government that thought they were going to balance the books a few years ago and ended up with—what was it?—a \$25-billion deficit. So we don't have a lot of hope that they can get that right.

We know, for example, that there are concerns with our stakeholders over supply teacher hiring and student testing. We have indicated very sharply, very clearly, very emphatically that this is unacceptable to us, and we've asked for changes that would restore school boards' and principals' ability to hire the best possible staff and ensure that proper assessments are done. Now, the minister, as I said, indicated that she would support our changes, yet she was quoted in the media saying one thing compared to what she had said to us.

Now, Speaker, I have a nickname for the Premier. I call him the fine-print Premier. I know, after being in this place for three elections over a period of close to seven years, that you always have to read the fine print with this government, so I'm reading the fine print, and that's why I'm seeking clarification and that is why I am, frankly, disappointed. After her leadoff speech today, in questions and comments I asked her two very specific questions, questions that should have come as no surprise to her because I had submitted them to her in writing yesterday. She was unable to answer the questions. Then immediately when I began to speak, she walked out of the room so that she couldn't even engage me in questions and comments.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

That is a big issue for us.

Now, where do we go from here? Well, we're going to continue to press for amendments and we're going to continue to call for a legislated wage freeze for the entire broader public sector. We're going to ensure that at committee hearings we put forward those amendments, and we're going to continue to call on the minister to bring in the Auditor General to review their numbers, because we know McGuinty math means two plus two equals 250 million bucks in the hole. That is how they add over there. I don't know where they get those calculators, but, Speaker, that is effectively where we are today.

Just to recap today's speech and our feeling in the official opposition on this whole mess, it could have been done differently. It could have been done easily. It could have been done with a phone call from the minister to myself to open up the lines of communication. In one master stroke of alienation, this minister was able to alienate the teachers who have given her three elections, the school boards who have to implement this, and the assembly members here in the official opposition and the third party who they require to pass their legislation. The height of arrogance is now being displayed by the members opposite. They have become what most governments wish not to become, and that is entitled.

Speaker, she could have contacted us and we could have been more collaborative. In fact, the minister then told us that the real issue here was that she had spent 300 hours on an MOU, without understanding that she needs 37 members from the official opposition to pass her bill. The reality is that we're going to continue to pressure her as we proceed with this legislation.

The Ontario PCs will continue our call for a broader public sector wage freeze. This legislation proves we have been right all along. It's exactly what we've been saying. It is constitutional. Poor old Dwight Duncan has been saying one thing for a year now, and now he has to flip-flop on that, but it's true. It is constitutional, it is legal, and that's why we'll support whatever type of wage freeze they're putting in right now, because it speaks to the need to get our costs in this province under control. But as I said—and I'm glad the finance minister is here—it is only part of a bigger problem. There are still 4,000 collective agreements outstanding in Ontario, and while we might be making a bit of progress—and I emphasize, underline, underscore, italicize and bold “a little bit of progress”—there is still much more to do.

1730

So we're still concerned, but we are willing to work together to make this legislation work. We are willing to work to make sure that we get our debt and our deficit under control. We are willing to work to ensure that our education system is viable into the future, that we can afford to pay teachers, and we are willing to make sure that kids are in classrooms starting next week.

But, Speaker, I have to say this: We're not going to sit by and watch this Liberal government make parents and their kids pay the price for their continued mismanagement. We're happy we're here. There's more to go, and I must say, we are so pleased to be here because not only can we pass this legislation and make sure the kids are in school, not only can we bail out the Liberals and their rotten fiscal plan, but we can also get to the bottom of that nasty scandal at Ornge being presided over by the Minister of Health and, of course, talk about that energy scandal over in Mississauga where the previous Minister of Energy squandered \$190 million—\$190 million they shredded through the paper shredder because they were not prepared to do their due diligence. In fact, the question I asked—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Sorry to interrupt. Would the House please come to order?

I recognize the member for Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Speaker.

You know, it has not been a very good month for the Liberals. I can understand why they're very upset, because today they had 5,000 of their former friends out front protesting them—5,000 friends. I actually went out to meet with them. I talked to Sam Hammond. You know, the reality is—and my buddy over here, Mr. Tabuns, will tell you—the difference between us and the Liberals is that we know where we stand and we let people know where we stand. We don't double-cross them. We don't tell them one thing and then do another. We don't stab them in the back after they deliver three back-to-back-to-back governments for them. No, we didn't do that. So I could walk out there today to talk to the union leaders, to talk to CUPE, to talk to ETFO, to talk to OSSTF, and I'll tell you why: because I've been clear with them about where we stood all along; because we have mutual interests in protecting students and making sure we put them first. There are some labour issues that our caucus philosophically, ideologically and otherwise does not agree with, but we've been upfront with them. We've never lied to them like this government has lied to them.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the member for Nepean–Carleton to withdraw her unparliamentary remark.

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to also withdraw his unparliamentary remark.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): You still made the unparliamentary remark. First—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Speaker. And I would—

Interjection: Withdraw.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Member for Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Speaker, for that. I was getting very excited about all of the—well, let's just put it this way: If there were a wire and there were pants, they'd be hanging on a wire—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm sorry. I have to ask the member from Nepean–Carleton to withdraw her unparliamentary remark.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Speaker. I was just repeating something I learned in school when I was a little kid.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): No, you have to say, "I withdraw."

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Oh, sorry, Speaker. I withdraw. Any insult that was intended, I apologize for. But it was still intended.

The reality here is that we are going to continue on debate. We have now reduced this assembly into what's happened here at this particular moment.

I will reiterate for one last time that Tim Hudak and the Ontario PCs will bail this government out. We'll make sure that they can finish the job, because they couldn't do it alone. We've got our ideas and we're going to continue to advocate them. We'll use this time wisely, as the people of Ontario want us to. We will ask the tough questions, not only about this legislation, but on Brad Duguid's \$190-million power plant. We'll ask those tough questions on Dwight Duncan's \$30-billion deficit and we'll ask those tough questions on Deb Matthews's Ornge helicopter scandal. We're going to take our time and study this legislation and put forward meaningful amendments, but we're going to ensure that our kids are in the classroom come next week.

Speaker, thank you very much. I look forward to some enlightening questions and comments. I do hope, however, that the Minister of Education could provide me with the answers and the clarification that I've requested regarding this legislation. I would also encourage the members opposite that when another political party, without any conditions, says, "We'll pass your legislation," try your best not to alienate them. You're doing a great job of alienating everyone, and no one can quite figure out why. So if you could also answer that question, I would appreciate that. Thank you.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, it really amazes me sometimes when I sit in this House and I listen to the dialogue. You've got one side, they're at each other all the time—90% of the time—and then all of a sudden there's one issue that they, I guess, can agree on. I don't know why, but they do. All of a sudden they're going to hang each other and then, the next day, when it's all said and done, they're back at it again on opposite sides of the fence. It's amazing. But when you look at it, it certainly is a political move by both of them.

Let's face it, folks. We've got two by-elections, and we've got this party which created a crisis that didn't need to be created to get popular support from the public. And then we've got another group over here that's jumping on the same wagon driving down the same street to get more public cuts to attack the big bad unions. But then, what kills me the most is when the party across says, "We're for collective bargaining."

I do recall a few, and the last few things were called "essential services." My fear is, Speaker, that everything's going to become essential services that they can get their hands on and everyone will be forced back to work and collective bargaining will go out the window.

So when this party over there, the government, says, "We're for collective bargaining," that's a load of malarkey. And when this group over here says, "We're with you as long as you're screwing the unions," that's good. So here we go.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Okay. I'm going to ask the member to withdraw his unparliamentary—

Mr. Paul Miller: I'll withdraw that word and say that when they're joining in to attack the unions, they jump right in.

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: I don't know. When I was outside I didn't see any Liberal members out there to face the teachers who they say are partners and they love them. I didn't see one Liberal out there, but all of the NDP were out there. We were proud to walk out there. So it's really amazing, Speaker, really amazing.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: I just want to kind of calm things down a little bit here. I did listen intently to my colleague the member from Nepean–Carleton. I get an opportunity to serve with her on a committee and we always have great discussions about parliamentary process.

1740

But I want to take my one minute and 42 seconds this afternoon just to thank the teachers of the province of Ontario. My wife, of course, is an elementary principal at St. Patrick's in Peterborough. My son is going into high school next week, Holy Cross in Peterborough. My daughter is going into grade 8 in St. Anne's. I know a lot of teachers, and the passion and commitment that they bring to the classroom each and every day is something to admire and thank what they do, because it is a challenging job.

I want to think that over the last eight years, you know, we've made strategic investments in education. Don't take my word for it. Outside agencies have come to Ontario to say that we have one of the best public education systems in the world right here in Ontario—something we need to celebrate, right here in Ontario. We've been doing that about making those strategic investments. In fact, Arne Duncan, who is President Barack Obama's education secretary, has come to On-

tario on at least five occasions, I'm told, to see such progressive initiatives like full-day kindergarten, which is going to be the model for the world. He said, "I've got to come up to Ontario. I've got to see the great things you're doing in Ontario because I want to provide some advice to the President of the United States on investments in public education." So that's where we've been coming from the last eight years.

We have a challenge, I recognize that, over the next two fiscal years, 2012-13, 2013-14. We're really asking our partners to come together as we continue this journey, our two great families of public education in the province of Ontario—our Catholic family and our public family—two great approaches to education, something that is recognized around the world.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Glad to be still here. Listen, I was here like the rest of you listening intently to my colleague from Nepean–Carleton, our very, very capable, hard-working education critic, Lisa MacLeod. She's raised a couple of things that are very, very important. One of them was, how about enlisting the help of the auditor to determine the validity and the accuracy of the numbers that this government purports to be the facts? That's always a real concern with this government. They throw numbers out there, they talk about them being the facts, and then we find out later that they invented the numbers. They make them up.

But we do believe there's a \$300-million hole in their budget here with regard to the costs of this agreement that they've signed with OECTA. If it's taken across the broad spectrum of all boards across the province, it will add up to at least \$300 million. So we have that concern there.

Another thing that we are very, very concerned about—we think that, you know, now the cat's out of the bag here, folks, you can't stand on one issue and say we're freezing the wages of teachers across this province, and then not be willing to stand up in your place and do the right thing and freeze the wages of every public sector employer in this province, across the board. It's time to take bold action.

Our leader, Tim Hudak, has said we will freeze the wages of public sector workers. Over there, what did you do? Ninety-eight per cent of managers can factor that as a salary increase now. They get a bonus. Shame on you. It's time to man up.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further questions and comments? The member for—Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: How could you forget me so fast? I don't get it.

I enjoyed the speech made by the member from Nepean–Carleton. Tories are always very clear about these things, and I love to hear them, because when they whack people, they whack them good. There is no ambivalence about how they do it.

My worry is with the Liberals. I am worried about you. I've told you this often. I worry about you all the

time. Why it is that the Minister of Education called John Snobelen for advice beats me. I don't get that. Of all the people to call, why John Snobelen? You remember the man. He loves horses. But you remember the man when he created a crisis in education. That's not the person you want to get advice from if you're a Liberal, because you need to appear as if you're good with teachers. And by the way, this strategy—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Hold on, hold on. Listen to the two minutes.

This strategy of going after teachers is not getting you any votes. Listen to me. You're trying to get Tory votes. You're not going to get them because Tories are saying they can do it better than you. And the teachers are saying to you, "You're losing me," and you have. You've lost half of the teachers already.

I don't quite understand your political strategy. You're not going up in the polls; you're going down. It's amazing, once you've made a decision to go in a certain direction, you keep doing the wrong thing.

Furthermore, it's interesting that OSSTF has been saying all along. "Look, we're willing to bargain." In fact, they were accepting a pay freeze voluntarily, but that's not good enough for Tories. I understand that. But it's not good enough for Liberals either. That they should do this voluntarily and the government should say, "No, that's not good enough. We're going to make you take a salary freeze," is beyond me. I can't help you. I really can't.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I would like to thank, in order of when they spoke, my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, my colleague from Peterborough, my seatmate from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and my colleague from Trinity–Spadina.

In my first set of debates here in this assembly, when I was first elected, Mr. Marchese was speaking. He was the then education critic, and he was remarking about a young fellow who used to be a Liberal MPP, but he wasn't around in those days: Gerard Kennedy. He was off running for something. I wonder what Gerard Kennedy would say today.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: God bless.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Good gosh.

Speaker, it has been a pleasure to address the assembly today on the Ontario PC position on this legislation, our concerns with it and, of course, those critical two other scandals that have brought us back to this assembly: Ornge and that \$180-million power plant.

I will leave this with the government: We are still concerned about the removal of section 1, subsection (2), subsections e(i) and e(ii). We want to ensure that they are removed from this legislation and that they will apply for any agreement that is not signed as of August 31, 2012, regardless of which school board is affected. We want to know, are Catholic boards and French boards left out of

the management right amendments? The minister must be clear on this.

In addition, we have poked holes, using the government's own numbers, in their fiscal plan. We know this is going to cost them \$450 million to execute. There are only \$150 million in offsets. That leaves a gaping \$300-million hole, and that's why we believe the Auditor General needs to be brought in to review their numbers.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to start off by noting that I'll be splitting my lead on this particular bill.

It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to talk about Bill 115. I want to address different significant elements, both of the bill and of its impact in this society—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'm sorry to interrupt, but you do need to tell us with whom you are going to split your time.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'm splitting it with Andrea Horwath, the leader of our party.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Oh, you forgot her name.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): You may continue.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Mr. Bradley, you're being mischievous; you know that—as you often are, sir, as you often are.

Madam Speaker, I had an opportunity to speak briefly to this bill yesterday and I want to start out talking about what I think is the most significant risk that this government's initiative poses for the parents, the families, the people of Ontario, and that's that this bill risks being found unconstitutional and thus risks damages in the tens, if not hundreds, of millions of dollars for this province.

As others have argued and I am going to argue now, this bill comes forward because this Liberal government believes that it could be advantageous to it in two by-elections in this province. It has looked at the polling and decided that looking tough in dealing with teachers, with education workers, will play to their advantage.

1750

Now, I actually happen to think that the member from Trinity–Spadina is probably correct and that they have misread where the public is at. But, Speaker, I'm not here to actually help the Liberal Party. I'm here to point out the failings in their initiatives. There's no question that this party has a record of doing this kind of thing: setting up a problem, addressing it in some very expensive way, and leaving the bill with the people of Ontario.

If we go back—and I think the member from Nepean–Carleton mentioned this, and I think my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek mentioned this—this government decided to put a privately owned gas-fired power plant in Mississauga. Our party said that these private power deals are risky, expensive and not good ideas. Our critic and our leader at the time, Mr. Hampton, said that this was an expensive and risky option. But this government, having made the decision in the first place, in the midst of an election, because it wanted to save seats, cancelled that plant. So you made an initial error,

you compounded the cost, and you hit the people of Ontario.

You have a record of doing that, and that is what we're looking at again today. We are looking at risks in the tens of millions, if not hundreds of millions, of dollars. Speaker, that is reckless and that is cynical. This government needs to make it clear to the people of Ontario that it is rolling dice with their budgets and their future with this bill, and it continually tries to obscure that.

Today, it was very clear that the minister had a problem with credibility on the constitutionality of that bill. She had a backbencher set up to ask a question on constitutionality. Why? Because when the government is having difficulty in the media, having difficulty with the public, they try to have a conveniently placed question, a softball, lobbed to a minister so they can express the talking points of the day. So the member from Windsor, Teresa Piruzza, got up to ask the Minister of Education, "Is it true that this bill is constitutional, or are those allegations that it's unconstitutional correct?" No clearer signal can be given that the government is getting hit on this issue—no clearer indication at all.

I had asked the minister previously, "Show us the legal opinion. What's the secret?" If you've got a legal opinion showing that you're in the clear, if you've got several showing that you're in the clear, bring it up. Put it on the table. Let the people of Ontario see it. It hasn't been produced—has not been produced. So I have to say to you, Speaker, that this minister knows that, at the very least, she's got a credibility problem in talking to the people of Ontario and talking to the media of Ontario, who understand that she is rolling the dice with very big stakes for the people of this province.

If you look at the legislation itself and the potential constitutional and legal problems with it—and I have to say that the minister didn't address any of this; I think she needs to. This bill goes well beyond any general wage restraint legislation or back-to-work legislation that has previously been brought forward in Ontario. It singles out a particular group in the public sector.

It's interesting that the Liberals are, in fact, following the Conservative lead. Conservatives are being quite serious when they say, "They're following our lead, and we're bailing them out." They may have legal problems because they're singling out one group.

This bill gives cabinet, rather than the Legislature, the right to restrict strikes and lockouts. Substantial legal questions here: It intrudes into the collective bargaining process by allowing cabinet, by regulation, to impose terms into collective agreements even if there's been a memorandum with the government, thereby changing the agreement reached.

This is substantial power, reaching into agreements that have been freely negotiated. This government, when it gets serious about bringing down the hammer, doesn't seem to hesitate for a moment.

The bill goes well beyond any prior attempt by the provincial government to constrain collective bargaining.

The authority given to the minister and cabinet effectively enables them to control both the process of bargaining and the results of bargaining, including the right to strike or lock out, and imposing collective agreements or their forms without any accountability to the Legislature. So all of you in here who are going to get a chance to vote know that you are delegating huge power to the cabinet. We are being asked to sign a very big blank cheque. So ask yourselves: Do you trust this cabinet with that blank cheque? I ask the Conservatives: Do you trust this government, this cabinet, with that blank cheque? Aside from sitting ministers who would like to be seen well by their Premier, is there anyone else in this room who thinks that giving the Premier a blank cheque is a good idea? I don't.

The act interferes with the collective bargaining process set out under the Labour Relations Act on significant matters, such as wages and sick leave. It violates rights to freedom of association under section 3 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada.

The act seeks to shield the actions of cabinet from any review by the courts, the labour board or boards of arbitration, in contravention of a legal concept as basic as the rule of law.

I have to say, Speaker, when I talk to those who work in this area of law, they are consistently taken aback by the extensive and unfair nature of what is being done.

I say to parents who are concerned about their schools and students, who recognize the work that teachers and other education workers have done, who know that people give it their all: This extraordinarily unfair piece of legislation is not something that reflects their values, does not reflect how they feel about those who have done so much for their children, so much for this community.

When the Supreme Court overturned a legislated wage freeze for 9,000 health care workers in BC, it cost the people of BC \$85 million. There are 10 times as many teachers in Ontario, and costs could easily reach \$780 million.

I will quote a well-known politician in these matters, a Mr. Dalton McGuinty, in fact. In the spring, the Liberals opposed a Progressive Conservative private member's bill to legislate a wage freeze. What did Premier McGuinty say? I'm assuming he was given sage advice by some of his legal advisers.

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

"We have 1.2 million public sector employees, and I hesitate to think of the cost that would flow from this mistake were we to adopt this particular approach." Dalton McGuinty, May 31, 2012.

It seems to me, Speaker, that Premier McGuinty has turned his back on the advice that he gave us here in the Legislature and turned his back on the advice of sage legal counsel who looked at that private member's bill.

1800

Speaker, you seem eager to—

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

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being 6 of the clock, pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

POWER PLANTS

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Nipissing has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Energy earlier today concerning the costs of the Oakville power plant. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes. I'll recognize the member in a moment. We'll just allow members who wish to to leave the chamber.

The member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, the overspending of this government has left no area of the province untouched, and Ontario's energy sector is no different. In fact, some of the most careless and egregious uses of taxpayer dollars by Dalton McGuinty are tied directly to energy. Today, I called on the energy minister to come clean now on the hidden costs associated with their disastrous energy policy decisions. This isn't just the Mississauga and Oakville power plant cancellations, but the multiple lawsuits and the potential payout of microFIT contracts.

Enough is enough is enough. Ontarians are sick and tired of hearing about the newest way this government has found to squander their hard-earned tax dollars. The minister has had plenty of chances to be upfront with Ontarians about these costs, but he has ducked and dodged at every turn. He failed to table documents requested by the Standing Committee on Estimates surrounding the Mississauga and Oakville power plant cancellations this past spring. Yesterday my caucus colleague from Cambridge, who sits on the estimates committee, rose to raise a point of privilege, calling for the minister to be found in contempt of this Legislature. While we await the Speaker's ruling on this, is this what it's come to in Ontario?

Real leaders take responsibility. They're accountable. This minister has failed us on both. First the minister failed to table the documents with the committee within the acceptable time frame and did not table what was

requested. When he did table documents, they were incomplete and not what we had requested. As a further example of his contempt for his fellow parliamentarians, he has still failed to table the Oakville power plant documents. I believe most Ontarians find that unacceptable and obstructionist.

Speaker, I am absolutely convinced, I am unbelievably positive that \$190 million is not the final bill for the Mississauga power plant cancellation, which the government has admitted in estimates committee was done—and I'm quoting—"in reaction to overwhelming community opposition" prior to the last election campaign. This is \$190 million, Speaker, for not one megawatt of power—for a cancellation.

This government has now sole-sourced the new power plant in Lambton for over \$300 million. Without competing bids, how do we know this is a fair price for the taxpayers? Meanwhile, a settlement between the province and TransCanada Corp. for cancellation of the Oakville power plant could be as high as \$1 billion, according to insider estimates. Again, we have no idea, because the minister refused to provide any documents related to this when asked by the committee and failed to meet the deadline to do so. In fact, this morning, when I asked him in this Legislature again about the Oakville power plant, no answers were given, which brings us here this evening.

I would say to the minister: What are you failing to disclose to us? Ontarians have a right to know. This government is now facing numerous legal actions over their helter-skelter decisions in the energy sector, including a couple of \$1-billion-plus lawsuits. It's just another example of their overspending and careless use of taxpayer dollars. Their poor planning and unrealistic subsidy promises are coming home to roost.

Now the newest bill to come due is the payout by the Ontario Power Authority, which is set to run up as it purchases back microFIT contracts. These are from renewable power developers that Hydro One was unable to connect to the grid due to the lack of transmission capacity.

This minister needs to tell us today: How much more money will be wasted on that mistake, what is the true cost of the Oakville power plant, and when will this sideshow end?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Richmond Hill has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Madam Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise in this House and speak in response to a question raised by the member from Nipissing on revealing the cost of the Oakville power plant.

The need for the Oakville power plant was identified in the year 2006, when the demand projection for electricity in that area was quite high, actually. Since then, the Ontario Power Authority identified that the future needs of the electricity and the power for the region had been met by the transmission solutions in the area. So on October 7, 2010, the Ontario government and

our ministry listened to the residents of Oakville and made a specific commitment to cancel the proposed natural gas power plant in Oakville. This commitment was made in response to concerns raised by a number of members of the community and also people who were advocating for the cancellation or relocation of this power plant which was proposed to be built in Oakville. Our decision to cancel this power plant in Oakville was supported by local community groups, by advocacy groups and by the opposition parties.

For example, Madam Speaker, the member from Halton, on June 1, 2010—I'm just quoting from Hansard—stated that “The people of Oakville have told you they don't want the proposed gas-fired power plant ... and I agree with them.”

The member from Halton, in a press release on September 14, 2010, stated, “Minister, will you move the Oakville power plant? ... I'm asking the minister to consider moving this plant.”

The NDP member from Hamilton Centre, and the leader of the NDP, stated—again I'm quoting from Hansard, Madam Speaker—“New Democrats actually have thought for a long time that that plant should never have been built, and we've said so.”

These are quotes from the members of the opposition. The fact is that both opposition parties have known that cancellation of this plant is going to cost; it's not going to be cost-free. This is quite obvious.

In order to continue the discussion with the proponent, which was TransCanada, the Ontario Power Authority has been continuing negotiation and discussion with TransCanada. As long as this conversation and this negotiation is continuing, we will not be able to reveal any information, because this is not in the interests of the taxpayers; it's not in the interests of Ontarians. Once the negotiations are finalized, as in the case of the Mississauga power plant, the information will be provided.

1810

POWER PLANTS

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Leeds–Grenville has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Energy concerning the cancellation of the Mississauga and Oakville power plants. The member has up to five minutes for this.

Mr. Steve Clark: This morning, I asked the Minister of Energy a very straightforward question about the political decision to cancel the Oakville and the Mississauga power plants. The Liberal campaign brain trust, knowing that those seats were in jeopardy, picked up the phone in the dying days of last fall's campaign and ordered the Premier to pull the plug on the Mississauga power plant, the same play that the government played in Oakville before that.

In doing this, Speaker, the Premier proved that this is a government that is willing to do anything or say anything to get elected. Despite knowing this crass, politically

motivated move would throw hundreds of millions of hard-working taxpayers' money down the drain, Premier McGuinty did it anyway.

I know that the Minister of Energy can't undo the damage that's been done from this shocking Liberal seat-saver program because the money's gone and he can't change history. He can't undo the costs that are only going to put Ontario on track for a \$30-billion deficit and an embarrassing \$411-billion debt.

But he does have an opportunity, and the parliamentary assistant has an opportunity to come clean with the people of Ontario, who deserve to know why they're paying hundreds of millions of dollars for two power plants that didn't and won't produce a single megawatt of energy.

When I'm out over the summer going to events in Leeds–Grenville, people ask me: “How did things get so bad in the province of Ontario?” We were once the economic engine of this country and now, under that government, we're the caboose.

Well, you know, Speaker, you don't have to look much past the decision on these two power plants to get an answer to the question. This is a government that's become so hard-wired to wasting taxpayers' money that they do so to save Liberal MPPs' jobs. It's just another day at the office for this Premier.

I noticed this morning that the minister bragged about the fact that he kept the lights on during the record heat wave this summer. Well, you know, I'm glad the lights stayed on too, but it wasn't because of any stroke of any policy genius from the Minister of Energy. The sad reality is that we've got 600,000 fewer Ontarians working these days that demand that power, and power obviously was used a lot less than when the McGuinty government first took office.

We've heard this morning that the cost of pulling the plug on the Mississauga plant alone was \$190 million—this, after the finance minister had to correct the Minister of Energy because the original math that they gave was \$10 million off. So, it just shows how bad things are in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario when you're adding up the government waste and mismanagement: \$10 million to you is just a rounding error. It's sad and disgraceful.

Our energy critic, the member for Nipissing, has said that the figure to cancel the Oakville plant could be anywhere between \$300 million and could reach \$1 billion. When we talk about government waste, I think it's important to bring it down to something every Ontarian can relate to. How many nursing home spaces could we have created with these funds? How many MRIs or any other medical procedures could we have done?

The true cost of that decision is shameful because we have to remember that every dollar frittered away by the McGuinty government, whether it's on eHealth, Ornge, this seat-saver program, is another dollar stolen from front-line services. That's really what's tragic here, and tragic in our question period debate today.

At a time when this government is cutting services Ontarians rely on because of their fiscal crisis it created,

how could they treat funds entrusted to them by taxpayers with such complete disregard?

Speaker, I understand why our leader, Tim Hudak, and our party, the Ontario PC Party, were asking these questions in the House today. Our Ontario taxpayers deserve to know who made these decisions, how much they're going to cost and when in fact they were made.

I'm proud of my colleague from Cambridge with his point of privilege. I know the Speaker is going to rule, and I'm looking forward to hearing the parliamentary assistant talk about why we've had lame excuses on what these power plants have cost Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The parliamentary assistant has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Madam Speaker, again it's my pleasure to rise in this House in response to the question raised by the honourable member from Leeds–Grenville on the Mississauga power plant cancellation—actually, relocation of the Mississauga power plant.

We made this decision, again, in consultation with the public. The people of Etobicoke and the people of Mississauga didn't want this power plant. When the power plant was planned for Mississauga—the time was basically September last year. The circumstances in the area had changed. Residential development had since come to the area, and the local officials and local residents and also both political parties all made the statement saying, "We are going to cancel this or relocate this power plant."

I'm just going to read a couple of quotes from the leader of the Conservative Party that were made just a few days before the election last year. The honourable Tim Hudak actually said on September 25, 2011, to the *Globe and Mail*, "We've opposed these projects in Oakville and Mississauga." Again, in a PC press release dated September 24, 2011, Mr. Hudak says, "A Tim Hudak government will cancel this plant." And again, a few days before the election, on October 5, 2011, in an interview with CBC News, Mr. Hudak says, "A PC government would go to willing communities like Nanticoke and Lambton, which already have transmission lines and a workforce at power production facilities."

So when the leaders of the opposition parties and the opposition parties came out and all agreed, all made the promise that if they form the government they are going to cancel or relocate this power plant, they knew this is going to cost for them. This was quite obvious.

What we did was, basically we listened to the public, we listened to the parties as well, and we relocated this 300-megawatt natural gas power plant to the township of St. Clair. The reason we moved this power plant to St. Clair, the old Lambton site, was that, first of all, the Lambton site was host to power production for the past 35 years, and there are existing gas lines and also transmission infrastructure in place in the Lambton area. There are local expert people for power production to work in power generating stations there. Also, there are supports from the grid. It will also help us to get rid of

coal power production in the province of Ontario, as we promised. By the year 2014, we are going to get rid of power production using coal.

We have heard from the local community that the site should continue to remain a centre for electricity generation in the province of Ontario. The Sarnia-Lambton area has a long history of producing energy for the people of Ontario and hosting the electrical generating industry in this province. The construction of this plant in Sarnia at the Lambton site is going to create approximately 200 jobs.

As we all know, the minister indicated that this relocation is costing us about \$190 million, and that is the cost of relocation of this plant. Now, this cost includes a settlement agreement with EIG, which is the financier for the Greenfield South project on behalf of Greenfield Power, the OPA and the province. It also includes all payments made by the OPA, including construction costs, design costs, permitting costs, etc., for the Mississauga site.

Natural gas is a clean source of energy. I'm just going to quote a couple of statistics here, Madam Speaker. When it comes to carbon dioxide emissions, gas power plants produce or emit half of the coal power plants. If it is nitrogen oxide, their emissions are one third. When it comes to sulphur dioxide or sulphur oxide, their emissions are 1%. So it is a much cleaner source of energy, and there are abundant sources of gas available for us, so—

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

1820

POWER PLANTS

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Huron–Bruce has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Energy concerning the cost of cancelling the Oakville gas plant. You have five minutes in which to make your comments.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: We're standing here tonight for one simple reason, and that is, clear and simple, the Liberal mismanagement of this entire file. We're here because the Liberal government is throwing money away left and right on band-aid solutions to their big, politically driven problems. Like I said this morning, instead of using fact-based science to determine policies, the McGuinty Liberals are looking for political science answers. In other words, they're going to take a look at and focus in on what is going to garner the most votes for them, not what makes the most economical sense. It's shameful.

Waste, mismanagement and doing whatever is necessary, no matter how costly it is, to save a seat, a Liberal seat, has been the name of this Liberal game. This government has put the needs of Ontario families behind political gains and opportunism. This is wrong, and it has to stop.

I asked today a simple question: When will this minister reveal the true cost of the cancellation of the

Oakville power plant? Minister, this isn't Dancing With the Stars, and we have seen so much dancing around this question. It just has to be stopped, and we ask you to do the honourable thing. If you had answered the first time, we wouldn't have had to be here debating what we already know: that this government and this ministry really have no business needlessly spending taxpayer dollars on a single kilowatt of energy that would never get produced. This is out of control: a lawsuit here, a payoff there, contingency money for emergencies only spent on failed policy on the fly.

What are you going to tell taxpayers of Ontario if a real emergency happens? What about the drought-plagued farmers across Ontario whose crops are wilting in the ground? What if we need those contingency funds for real emergencies as opposed to paying off the big companies just not to sue your government? Guess what? I'm afraid to say that when we really are going to need those contingency funds, they're not going to be there because you've squandered them away on failed policies. People will ask and remind us to ask, "What was that money spent on again?" The answer unfortunately is going to be, "Nothing."

Now, this morning, I also brought up the pending lawsuit from Trillium Power Wind Corp., another issue that the minister did not seem to want to address. Again, this Liberal government made up policy on the fly. It cancelled offshore wind turbine programs because they said the science just wasn't there to back them up. Conveniently, these projects were slated to go in the home ridings of the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Energy of the day. Conveniently, they ended up scrapped. Those wind turbines did not happen in Windsor or Scarborough, respectively. Now this lawsuit stands to cost the taxpayers of Ontario \$2.25 billion. That's about \$1 billion per seat of those two Liberal ministers. What job is really and truly worth that?

But while this announcement left the voters of Scarborough and Windsor happy, the sad part of it all is, while those ministers firmly sat comfortably in their seats, there's another story to tell, and that is of rural Ontario. While the Liberals were busy cancelling the offshore wind turbine program, it left people in rural Ontario saying, "What about us? What about our needs? What about our concerns? What about our communities that are literally being ripped apart?"

I'll be honest. If I was a defeated a cabinet minister from rural Ontario in the previous McGuinty government, I'd be a little insulted by the fact that the Premier did not think my seat was worth the seat-saver program like others had realized. While the offshore program bit the dust, turbines are still popping up all over rural Ontario. In fact, communities are getting landlocked as turbines surround them. So the McGuinty Liberals have leaned on science—political science, that is—to cancel the offshore program, but they won't lean on science to cancel on-shore wind programs. It just doesn't make any sense, and I don't blame rural Ontario communities for feeling anger and very slighted towards this decision.

Rural Ontario matters. In fact, all of Ontario taxpayers matter.

We need you to stand up and do the honourable thing and answer the question. Reveal the true costs of the Oakville power plant cancellation. In other words, what is the true cost of one Liberal seat in Oakville?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The parliamentary assistant has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Madam Speaker, it's again a pleasure to rise in this House and respond to the question raised by the member from Huron–Bruce on the cancellation of the Oakville plant. As I indicated in my previous response to the member from Nipissing, the OPA currently is in negotiation with TransCanada about the cancellation of this plant. The negotiation is going on, and we have to wait until these commercially sensitive negotiations are concluded.

Once these negotiations are concluded, then, of course, those figures will be indicated and will be presented to this House and to the people of Ontario, as we did in the case of Mississauga plant. Once the Mississauga plant negotiations were finalized, the day after that, the minister was out there and talking to the media and giving information about the results of the negotiation, basically, to the media and also to the public. We have to wait until these commercially sensitive negotiations between the Ontario Power Authority and TransCanada come to a conclusion.

But, Madam Speaker, I'm going to read a few quotes from people and see what people are saying about this relocation of the power plant from Oakville to Lambton. His Worship Mayor Steve Arnold, on July 11, 2012, to the Sarnia Observer stated, "I told the minister the community would view it as a very positive thing for us all."

The Coalition of Homeowners for Intelligent Power stated on their website on October 5, 2011, "The Coalition of Homeowners for Intelligent Power, which has been fighting the plant for six years, noted that Hudak did not oppose the plant in the past..."

They added, "Mississauga South Liberal MPP Charles Sousa has stood with residents in opposition to the plant from the beginning."

Of course, the honourable Tim Hudak, the leader of the PC Party, just a few days before the election, stated to the Globe and Mail that "We've opposed these projects in Oakville and Mississauga."

Again, on September 24, just a few days before the election in 2011, in a press release, the PC Party stated, "A Tim Hudak government will cancel this plant."

Just two or three days before the election—on October 5, actually—Mr. Hudak, in an interview with CBC news, stated that "A PC government would go to willing communities like Nanticoke and Lambton, which already have transmission lines and a workforce at power production facilities."

These are the statements of the leader of the Conservative Party—and also similar statements given by the leader of the NDP that if they formed the government, they were going to cancel these power plants.

They knew, I am sure they knew—they were supposed to know that cancellation of these power plants was going to cost money. It's not going to be free.

This is what all parties wanted to do. We listened to the communities, to the people of the area, and this cancellation happened.

I'm going to quote, Madam Speaker, MPP Bob Bailey, on July 12, 2012; it's quoted in the Sarnia Observer. He states "I think it's positive news, obviously, for our area, with 200 construction jobs." MPP Bailey basically acknowledged that building this power plant in the Sarnia–Lambton area is going to help his riding. It's going to create 200 jobs. "That's positive news for our area." He is absolutely right.

The member from Simcoe–Grey, who was a former energy minister during Conservative governments in the past, stated in Hansard on October 30, 2000, "Two plants that are being proposed, one in Brampton and one in

Mississauga, will be the largest of their kind in North America: one 800-megawatt plant in Brampton and one 800-megawatt natural-gas-fired plant in Mississauga."

I can read to you a similar quote from MPP Peter Tabuns from the NDP caucus on September 26, 2011—again, a few days before the election. He stated, "We wouldn't build it." He meant those power plants. Again, the local NDP candidate confirmed in a press release that the NDP would cancel the plant.

These are the quotes we have from both parties that if they formed government, they would have cancelled these power plants.

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

There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1831.

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Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
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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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Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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