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Thursday 30 August 2012

Jeudi 30 août 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 30 August 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 30 août 2012

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Resuming the debate adjourned on August 29, 2012, on the amendment to the motion by Ms. Broten relating to the government's commitment to the full-day kindergarten program.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Ottawa—Orléans—no, Nepean—Carleton; sorry.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: They've been asking in Ottawa—Orléans for me to move over there, Speaker, so they can get a more effective representative. Thank you very much. It is my pleasure.

I was thinking on my way to the House today how the Liberals must enjoy me this week, because they've given me the opportunity to stand up and speak in this House at length each and every day this week, and I can say from the bottom of my heart: I missed you too this summer, and thanks very much for bringing me back a week early.

We did some reading yesterday from our friend Don Drummond, the hand-picked economic adviser.

Mr. Jeff Leal: How was the game?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I didn't get to go. Thanks very much for keeping me here last night; I appreciated that. Being the education critic and a person with a private member's bill this week, I haven't had a lot of sleep. But I have had a lot of time to think about this motion before us, this motion that is non-binding and only designed to trick people into thinking that they actually, actually care.

We talked at length yesterday about Don Drummond, the chief economic adviser of the McGuinty Liberals, who was the architect and the brainchild behind the greedy \$3-billion HST tax grab before the last election. He, of course, reported in February this year to say—and I must remind everyone, because there are some new members in the assembly today who weren't here yesterday—and this is the critical point, on page 213:

"Given the current fiscal climate, the commission is concerned that the timing is not appropriate for a new program with a cost of this magnitude. The costs of FDK were incorporated into the March 2011 budget and the 2011 Ontario economic outlook and fiscal review in

November. But as we have discussed elsewhere, not enough offsetting restraint was secured in other spending to ensure that these fiscal plans would achieve the overall ... objective."

Speaker, that isn't the only Liberal who had concerns with the government's plan. You'll probably recall the Scarborough Observer on September 22, 2007. Now, this is an interesting quote. It's in the article. It is written by Tianpei Ma. I'm going to quote directly from the article:

"The same debate is happening over early childhood education. While most candidates support the proposed suggestion to change kindergarten classes from a half day to a full day, Balkissoon suggests any party agreeing with the initiative should make sure they have the revenue first."

So a Liberal MPP, in September 2007, two provincial elections ago, stood and told the voters of Ontario that only if the province of Ontario could afford to pay for full-day kindergarten—that is only when they could proceed.

I now have two Ontario Liberals on record: the chief economic adviser to Dalton McGuinty and Dwight Duncan—

Interjection: The Liberal economist.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: That will be the Liberal economist Don Drummond, the architect of the \$3-billion HST tax grab, and now Bas Balkissoon, who is a member of the Legislative Assembly for the Liberal caucus. He too agreed with Dalton McGuinty's hand-picked economic adviser who said we must be cautious. That, sir, is why we have put forward an amendment to this legislation.

They have to be truthful with the taxpayers of Ontario. Can we afford it or can we not? We went through this yesterday at great length. We went through at great length the challenges we are facing in Ontario given the economic mismanagement of the decade of darkness.

For the past nine years, this Liberal government has spent us into oblivion. They have taxed the families of this province so that there is not a lot of affordability in their own communities.

Now, how does that impact full-day learning in Ontario? Quite simply, it talks about the sustainability of the entire public education system if there is no money in the kitty. And I can tell you something, Speaker. Given the fact that they have taken Ontario from first to worst in economic growth, given the fact that they have tripled Ontario's debt in a very short period of time, and given the fact that their high energy prices have driven manufacturing jobs out of our province, it is becoming more difficult to pay for core education, not to mention full-day learning, as I cite Mr. Balkissoon.

I say once again, “While most candidates support the proposed suggestion to change kindergarten classes from a half day to a full day, Balkissoon suggests any party agreeing with the initiative should make sure they have the revenue first.”

Well, Speaker, we know that this government is on its way to a \$30-billion deficit. There is no money. Don’t take my word for it. Take their own hand-picked economic adviser’s word for it, Don Drummond. He says so in his commission, the commission appointed by this government. He said if they don’t get spending under control and they don’t find some offsets of a \$1.2-billion price tag, we’re going to find ourselves in a \$30-billion deficit and a \$411-billion debt.

I ask my colleagues, is that the responsible way to spend the next generation’s money? Is it? I ask the assembly, is that the right thing to do in order to suffer the next generation and burden them with a debt and deficit that they did not create? Don Drummond doesn’t think so. Don Drummond—and there’s actually a larger report here, Speaker, that I quoted from extensively, as you’ll see, the Commission on the Reform of Ontario’s Public Services. Don Drummond goes to great length. That’s why I made an amendment to the frivolous motion put forward by the government to expand on what our concerns are in the official opposition.

I’m just going to recap, because the problem with the debate that starts on one day and goes on to the next, through the speech of one member, is sometimes it gets lost in translation, particularly for the government and especially those members who may not have been here before 2007.

So we amended their motion yesterday, and what we’re debating now—I want them to be very clear on this—is to ensure that the new cost of this program does not further increase Ontario’s structural deficit and lead to the tripling of Ontario’s debt, so the House requires the government to ask the AG to report on the program’s new costs and the ministry’s corresponding savings to pay for them to ensure the Liberal government’s nine years of overspending does not jeopardize the things we care about, like front-line health care and classroom education.

0910

Let’s go back to this: “does not further increase Ontario’s structural deficit.” This is a government that inherited the good days. This economy, this province was booming. People were coming here from all around the world. They decided they wanted to set up here in Ontario, move here, raise a family here, get a job here, retire here. They were spending money here. That stopped. That stopped when they took power, and they’re on course to creating and they have created—they’re going to triple the debt, but at the same time they’re creating a structural deficit because they are spending more money every year than they take in.

Don Drummond said two things: “One, you’re either going to have to raise taxes, which I’m not allowed to recommend, or two, you’re going to have to cut all these

programs.” If you don’t have the courage, if you don’t have the ability, if you don’t have the strength of character, if you don’t have the leadership to make these decisions, then you’re going to have to find offsets elsewhere, and that’s what we’re asking for. Where are the offsets?

I think I speak in the spirit of my Liberal colleague Bas Balkissoon in suggesting that if you’re going to go through with the initiative, you should have the revenue first. Who here, Speaker, goes shopping when they have a dime in their pocket? That’s what this government does. I mean, this is the shiny bauble trinket and excitable government, over next door. The reality is that no one is arguing with the education system here; we’re arguing about ability to pay and the affordability and ensuring that the next generation doesn’t have to pay for the mistakes of this government. We’ve been asking for that forever. I would humbly submit that in this Toronto Observer article for Scarborough, my colleague Bas Balkissoon suggests the same thing.

There hasn’t been an opportunity today, or yesterday in the last hour, for me to indicate any of my own personal views or beliefs on this subject, because it has been so clear that there is such debate going on in the Liberal Party over this matter that we simply have to expose where the government is. They don’t know, so we have to continue to bring it up, that their own hand-picked economic adviser, the person that they rely on to ensure that the trains run on time with this government, so that there’s enough money for them to pay their buddies over at Courtyard, at eHealth, and ensure that all the big managers get their big bonuses in a time of restraint—and so that they can ensure that when Deb Matthews wants to go take her Ornge helicopter with Chris Mazza, there’s fuel in the tank even though there isn’t when it’s needed for patients. But, Speaker, the reality is that they’ve got Don Drummond and Bas Balkissoon telling this assembly and telling the people of Ontario, “Hold on. We have to make sure we have the revenue first.”

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Mississauga.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker. The member, in her zeal to make her point, has consistently violated a standing practice of the House, which is not to name members but to refer to members by their riding name.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Mississauga—Streetsville does have a point, and I would advise the member for Nepean—Carleton—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate that. I’m simply—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Just a second—to refer to other members of the House by their riding name, not by their proper name.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Okay, Speaker. Thank you. I have 30 seconds left. I just want to just say this: I have an article that I was quoting from that actually mentions Mr. Balkissoon, because it says, “Balkissoon suggests any

party agreeing with the initiative should make sure they have the revenue first.”

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you, but again I'll caution the member that you have to talk about the riding name, not the member's name, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The newspaper doesn't identify this individual that way.

I'd just like to say thank you. I have had a great opportunity here over the past hour to point out the flaws in the government's fiscal plan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say at the outset that I'm obviously not going to speak against the motion, and I'm obviously going to be voting, and our caucus will be voting, with this motion in the end, because we've believed for a long time that full-time JK and K are important. In fact, where I come from in Timmins, we've been doing it long before the government ever thought about it. We've been doing this for the better part of 20 years. My kids went to full-time kindergarten, and I think our youngest daughter went to full-time JK and she's 29 years old now with her own daughter now, Ellisa, my granddaughter. Do you want to see pictures?

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'll show you pictures. Don't get me going. I've got to tell a funny story about pictures if you'd allow me, Mr. Speaker.

The other day, my second granddaughter, who is 18 months old, was with her dad watching television. They were watching the news of the rally outside, of the teachers sort of gathering together and protesting this government's actions in regard to the bill they have before the House. Some woman on the television—you've got to remember that my granddaughter Victoria speaks, at this point, one-word sentences. It's all in French: en haut, en bas, papa, maman—you know, that kind of stuff. She doesn't speak in anything more than one-word sentences. This woman gets on TV and she says, “Dalton McGuinty's a bad man,” at which point my granddaughter grabs a Batman figurine and says, “Dalton McGuinty Batman.” I thought it was hilarious. Anyway, the Premier said he was thankful that somebody thought he was a superhero, but that's a whole other story. Anyway, let me get to the motion.

We, as New Democrats, have always said that we believe it's an important part of social policy and also an important thing for kids that we have full-time kindergarten and JK. So I'm not going to spend all of my time talking about the actual policy because, in fact, we voted on this some time ago. This House pronounced itself on this particular issue some time ago. The government made the announcement that is now being implemented, and it begs the question why we're having this debate. Why is it important, all of a sudden, that we have this debate? They've called the Legislature back because, supposedly, there's a crisis in education

somewhere. Nobody seems to figure out, except the Liberals, that there is a crisis.

Why are we having this particular debate? Well, I would think we're having this particular debate because the government is more preoccupied about by-elections than they are about really doing what needs to be done in this Legislature. They've manufactured this crisis in education in order to say, “Oh my God, if we don't take action, there's going to be disruption in the classroom. It's going to be terrible. Kids won't go to school. The lights will go out in the schoolrooms. Look at those teachers, what they're doing.”

They're just trying to create a crisis, and everybody in Ontario is sort of standing back and saying, “Where the heck's the crisis?”

What have we heard so far? We've heard that the teachers started—their opening position in bargaining—by saying, “We'll take a two-year wage freeze.” My God, I've been negotiating for years on the union and on the employer side, and I've got to tell you, from the employer side, that if my employees come to me and say, “I'm prepared to take a two-year wage freeze,” that's a pretty big start toward getting a settlement when it comes to negotiation.

I say to myself, “Oh, the government wasn't happy with that,” so they decided, “Well, how can we win a by-election if we don't find some way to get voters all excited and mad about something where we could be seen as doing something for them?” So they decided to contrive this crisis. Then the government says, “It's really important. We've got to get the House back, because we have to deal with this crisis. Oh, my God, if we don't deal with this crisis, the world's going to come to an end.” So they take the extraordinary step of calling the House back early by two weeks, starting last Monday.

The government also says, “Not only do we have a crisis in education, but the bad old opposition is holding up this important legislation that we have on the order paper to pass through the House.” The government says, “We're not going to have a debate on bills that are on the order paper.”

There are a number of bills that probably could be finished, done and wrapped up in this House if the government was just to call them. For example, the government's got Bill 2, which is the seniors' tax credit. Wow, if the government would have called that this morning, a bill that they say, “Oh Lord, it's so important. We've got to get bills through the House and the opposition is holding us up. Oh my God, that terrible opposition. This minority Parliament can't work,” they're saying to the voters in the by-elections.

Well, if they're thinking that minority Parliament doesn't work, why didn't they just call that bill? They probably would have got it. I know we're done speaking to it. I can't speak for the Conservative caucus, but I think they're finished speaking to it. The only ones who are filibustering Bill 2 at this point is the government themselves by introducing this motion to talk about something that was decided over two years ago.

0920

Mr. Speaker, what's going on here? This is simple politics. This is a government that is so preoccupied with two by-elections that they're prepared to call the House back, create a crisis in education, and make it look as if there's some sort of a crisis and paralysis in the Legislature. God, they're filibustering themselves. Mr. Speaker, I object. They're trying to take away the role of the opposition by the government being oppositional to themselves.

What is going on here? The world is turning upside down. You have the opposition saying there are some important issues that need to be dealt with. Andrea Horwath gets up in the House and says, "Listen, we have a job crisis in this province." There are people in communities across Ontario, from Sault Ste. Marie to, yes, Waterloo, Vaughan, Toronto and a whole bunch of other cities that are looking for work. And what are they doing? They're not dealing with, "Let's look at what we can do to help people when it comes to the economy." We're sitting here talking about a motion that will have no effect on public policy because the vote was done two years ago and the funding has been put out the door to already start up full-time JK and senior kindergarten.

Why aren't we talking about the issues that are going on in Essex and London and Hamilton and Toronto, where people across this province are saying there is a jobs crisis? You have people that are afraid that they're going to lose their jobs. You have people that are feeling as if they're falling further and further behind because of the burden that this government has imposed on them with things like the HST and other measures like high hydro rates, where people are feeling the squeeze and people are saying, "I want some solutions brought to these problems."

No, the government doesn't in a by-election say, "We're going to roll up our sleeves and, as the government, we're going to show the way and provide leadership in order to make this province prosperous again and to give people the feeling that they can actually make ends meet at the end of the day and a little bit more security when it comes to having a job." Oh, no: "We're going to negotiate something that's earth-shattering, something that we decided two years ago."

What's this place all about, Mr. Speaker? Like I said, imagine that: a government filibustering itself. I think it proves what we have been saying from this side of the House for the last couple of weeks. This government is more preoccupied in their own self-interest of being able to win by-elections—contrive to create by-elections—so that they can hopefully try to get a majority in the House. And God protect us if they get a majority in the House.

We've had two terms of majority Liberal government. We know what that gave us. Let's remind ourselves what we got. We got the HST; we got ourselves higher interest rates. We now have the highest deficit numbers that we've ever had in the history of the province of Ontario; no plan really to deal with it in a progressive way. The only response the government has to balancing the

budget is, "Let's run over the working people. Let's just hack away at things," and do essentially what right-wing governments have been doing across this province.

My learned friend wants to say something.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'd actually like to accept some advice from the member for Timmins–James Bay and ask for unanimous consent to revert to third reading of Bill 2.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I heard a no, and I return to the member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: For the record, Mr. Speaker, I said yes. I'm perfectly willing to deal with those bills that are important to the people of Ontario.

Now, here's the beauty of the Legislature. This is why Parliament can work. This is why minority Parliaments can work. So now here I am, a lowly little MPP from Timmins–James Bay, standing up in the Legislature making the point, and the government is now starting to say, "Oh, God. He's beating us up and he's right. People are seeing through our veneer of silliness of trying to make it look as if there's a crisis, and in fact there isn't one. And he's right: There are important things that we should do."

So now we have the government getting up and saying unanimous consent to revert to passing Bill 2, which is the senior home tax credit, which I'm in favour of and I would vote for and I would agree to unanimous consent. But I think it proves the point that I've been making: This government is so intent on—how would I say it nicely? They're so intent on feather-bedding their own chances in the next by-elections that they're prepared to resort to anything, except doing what's right, in order to win those particular elections.

I come back to the point. I look at people across this province; I look at people in my own constituency. What are they concerned about? They're concerned about being able to make ends meet at the end of the day. People open their hydro bills every month and they say, "Oh, my God. Look, Gilles; look how much I'm paying. I'm paying almost double what I used to before Mr. McGuinty came to power." I'm sure other members are getting that, in Essex, in Hamilton and other places on a regular basis, where they're saying, "This is crazy."

We had, in the city of Timmins, Xstrata metals, which operated a refinery smelter in Timmins for a number of years—a state-of-the-art facility, one that was making money. Why did they close down? I was at the meetings along with the Premier, along with the mayor of the city of Timmins, Mr. Lewenza from the CAW, and others. They flatly told the Premier, square, head-on, "We're leaving Ontario because we can't afford the electricity rates in this province." So they closed down a facility that had almost 900 people working there and moved production to Quebec. Why? Because the Quebec government understands that cheap electricity prices—because they have the ability of producing such electricity

because of hydroelectric—is an economic development tool, and if you want to develop your economy, you have to do things that are important, leading to a lower bottom line, for those companies to establish and stay in your own jurisdiction. This government says no; the only way they're going to do that is by following a right-wing agenda of austerity and lowering taxes.

I've got to tell you: There's another way. New Democrats, social democrats, have been saying for a long time that there's a better way. There's a balanced approach to how you balance the budget. Yes, you must keep an eye on the bottom line. Yes, you must be frugal in your expenses. Yes, you must make sure that you're extremely efficient in how you spend taxpayer money on things like education, on health care, on plowing your highways. But there are other things you can do. You can look at the revenue side—and that doesn't mean raising taxes; that means building a stronger economy that generates more revenue because there's more activity in the economy.

The reality is that if you look at it—and this is interesting. If people want to do a little bit of reading—and I'm sure all of us in this House have, but for the people listening or reading this debate, go and read what some of the economists are saying about the austerity measures that are now taking place across the world as a result of a response by right-wing governments like Mr. McGuinty's and Mr. Harper's. It leads to slower economic growth. It leads to a slowdown in the economy.

One of the really interesting articles I read recently—and I forget what magazine it was online. Some economist wrote an article; I think he was Portuguese. He made a very good point. He said that if everybody was to go into the mode of saving, you would actually kill the economy because that would mean to say that nobody is spending and people are putting their money away. You have to have people spending money in an economy. So when governments are doing things that lead to austerity, they're in fact slowing the economy down.

There is another way. You have to have a balanced approach. Yes, you have to be careful on the expense side; nobody argues. Social democrats will argue—and they've done this in Europe; they've done this in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia and other places—that you have to manage your expenses well. But you also have to look at other things. You have to take a look at, “What can I do to help my economy grow?” What can you do to help the auto sector in the Essex-Windsor area remain strong and competitive so that we can keep those jobs from going to Mexico and the United States? What can you do in London to stop companies like Caterpillar from doing what they did, where they essentially said, “My way or the highway,” and the government stood back and said, “That's fine. We're a right-to-work state. If you want to basically strip everything that workers have worked for for their entire lives, it's okay by us”? The government should have stood up and said, “That's not the Ontario we believe in. We believe that we have to help you with your costs, Mr. and Mrs. Caterpillar, but at the end of the day, you're not going to, all of a sudden,

try to take your savings on the back of the community and on the backs of the workers that rely on the jobs in that company.”

You have to have a balanced approach. You have to grow your economy. You do that how? By having good economic development policies, in that you do things such as cheaper electricity prices, so that companies like Xstrata don't move away from places like Timmins, and cheaper electricity prices, so Cliffs Natural Resources really will one day build a refinery in Nickel Belt. I fear that's not going to happen, and I hope that's not the case. I really fear that we'll be in a position where it will never happen, because Cliffs Resources, I'm told, is now in discussions with the government to get a ministerial permit to exempt them from processing ore out of the Ring of Fire in Canada. They want to ship it to China. Why? Because I think there isn't an agreement between the government and Cliffs to lower energy prices to the degree they need to make that particular facility work in Nickel Belt. I think that's unfortunate.

0930

I know that if we were government, we would be rolling up our sleeves and sitting down, not only with Cliffs Resources, but I'd be sitting down with KWG, I'd be sitting down with Noront, I'd be sitting down with First Nations and saying, all right, how do we build this resource and position it in such a way that, yes, mining takes place, that First Nations feel they're real partners and get some economic activity and some profit out of this, that the companies are able to make money, that workers are able to get great wages, that we're able to protect the environment and do what's right and, more important, add value to the chromite that's coming out of that mining area?

So far, the only thing the government is really excited about is the mining jobs. Well, that's only about 30% of what that ore can give Ontario. If you build a refinery, you have value-added jobs. The government says they're interested in doing that. I doubt it's going to happen. But you say to yourself, what do you do with chromite? You eventually make stainless steel out of it. Why not talk to the people in Sault Ste. Marie and Hamilton, where the steel mills now exist, and ask whether there is a possibility of figuring out how we can position those companies to get into the stainless steel business to increase production of stainless steel in Canada for export. Those are the kinds of things you do to grow an economy so you don't have a deficit. And then small businesses in those communities, like Essex and Timmins and London and Sudbury, can go out and can become more prosperous by offering services to those particular companies that are doing that value-added. It means the restaurants are fuller. It means the clothing stores sell more clothes. It means there's more activity. Everybody benefits, and that's how the government grows the revenue.

But this government's approach is, “Oh, my God. The only way we can deal with this is by austerity.” Now we've got the Premier saying, “Maybe we should take sick time away from police officers and firefighters.” Oh,

my God. Remember the last election? They were like the defenders of the police and the firefighters. Now they're saying they want to take away their sick days because they're unaffordable. Is that a response for how you balance the budget? "The only way I can balance the budget is to go to a worker and say I want to take more away." But it's okay to give managers raises; you can give them big bonuses. I'm proud to say that today Andrea Horwath and our caucus will be introducing legislation to deal with that issue. It's patently unfair when workers who are working hard to do the work they're asked to do and being paid whatever it is they're getting and are saying, "We're prepared to take a two-year wage freeze," look at managers getting 3%, 5%, 6% and 10% increases because of bonuses. This government's got a very funny approach, a very, very funny approach to what they think is fair.

I go back to my main point. My main point is, why are we debating a motion that deals with something that was passed in this House two years ago and is now public policy in the province, to which the Liberals and New Democrats already agreed? We're on the same page when it comes to wanting to have full-day kindergarten and JK. Why aren't we debating legislation that deals with fairer electricity prices? Why are we not dealing with ideas such as have been brought forward by my leader, Andrea Horwath, that say we should at least on the tax side give tax cuts only to those companies that are creating jobs and send a very clear message.

If you are serious about investing in Ontario and you want to be a partner in Ontario to grow our economy, we're there with you, social democrats say, Andrea Horwath and others. We're with you. We are going to work hand in hand with you to grow that economy. No. The only thing the government can say is, "We're essentially going to try to create a crisis in education and show there's some sort of paralysis in the House, when there isn't one, so we can game it and maybe be a little more successful politically in the by-elections in Vaughan and Waterloo."

I hope that doesn't work, because I think that will add to people's cynicism when it comes to politics. If you look at the participation rates of people who don't vote in elections nowadays, there's more people that don't vote than do vote. In the last provincial election—I may be wrong, and maybe I'll be corrected on this—in my riding there was a 49% participation rate. That means that more than half of the people didn't vote. I think there are a couple of reasons that is. One is that they look at actions such as what's going on in the Legislature today and say, "Rather than the government working hard to resolve the problems I'm concerned about, the government's more concerned about their own political problem and are creating a kerfuffle to try to maybe game the election to their favour." They say, "Well, the heck with it. I'm checking out. I don't want nothing to do with this." I say to those voters that you're wrong. You should punish those who do that. You should be voting in greater numbers and saying, "I'll show you for doing that. I'm

going to vote against you and I'm going to vote for somebody who has a positive message," whoever that might be. I hope it's us. I think as New Democrats we have a very positive message. But that's what voters should be doing. Voters shouldn't be checking out; they should be checking in.

Look at what's going on in Quebec with Mr. Charest and what happened with the *les manifestants* that we saw in Quebec over the last number of months in regard to what's going on with tuition in Quebec. Now, agree or disagree with the policy Mr. Charest put forward—I think lower tuition rates tend to make more sense, but that's a whole other argument—but there is a participation in the Quebec election on the part of young people that we have never seen before. They have all of a sudden equated political—civil disobedience or civil action on the streets is one thing, but you make the real change at the ballot box. So you're seeing a lot of young people getting involved in these elections and doing what they can to assist candidates who believe in the issues that they believe in. It's predicted that this particular general election in Quebec coming up—is it this week or next week?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Next week.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Next week. There's going to be a larger participation of youth in that election, and I think that's a breath of fresh air.

I say to those people who are taking the time to pay attention to this debate that you don't check out of politics when you're mad at the politicians; you check in, and you let your feelings be known by way of your choice on the ballot. That's how you do it.

What a wonderful tool we have in our democracy. Always remember what's going on in Afghanistan, what's going on in Egypt, what's going on in Iraq, what's going on in Syria and other places. People in those countries, in order to have a say, literally have guns in their hands. That's an awful thing, when society turns on itself, when citizens pick up the gun against their government and the government picks up guns against the people. It's a terrible thing. Here in Canada, we're so lucky, along with Europe and the United States and other countries. We essentially have those fights at the ballot box.

I say to those people who are disenfranchised and those people who are upset about what's going on in politics, don't check out; check in. Do what's going on in the Middle East. Have your own sort of uprising, but make it at the ballot box. That's where you've got to make the changes.

Again, I'm looking at my colleague here. Did he want to speak to this?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I wouldn't mind helping you.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, okay. All right. You were looking at me very intently.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, no. I was listening intently.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, very good. See? Notice how as social democrats we work together. It's like sharing.

It's a very wonderful concept that people across Ontario should take hold of. You get far more from people banding together and sharing ideas and sharing the load and sharing the work. You get a much better result in the end, I think.

I've got a few minutes, and I'm going to let my colleague take—I asked my colleague just before I got up. Madame Gélinas would also like to share in this, so we keep that in mind.

I want to end on this note, because my colleague would like—I want to be clear. I can share my time with my colleague over here, right?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): You can share your time.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Very good. I just want to be clear that we don't lose the floor.

I want to end on this point: There are very serious issues facing this province: the economy, jobs and affordability. That's what people are concerned about. When the government contrives to make a crisis by saying Parliament doesn't work—"It's slower than molasses," says the government House leader—and the government filibusters their own bills by bringing in a motion like they did this morning, I think it's pretty disingenuous. I think it proves what Andrea Horwath has been saying from the beginning, that this government is more worried about the results of a by-election than they are about doing what's right for the people of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I know my good friend from Trinity-Spadina would like to say a few words.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much, and I recognize the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I thank my friend from Timmins-James Bay for allowing me to complement his remarks and allowing me to speak against—not speaking against the motion, because we supported it when it came forward. But to reannounce an announcement that has already been approved is silly, and it's part of what I call puerile politics. You look bad. You do look bad when you do this, because what it means is you have nothing to say about the current bill and you need another distraction away from this, and actually why you need this motion is to try to embarrass the Tories. I understand that.

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Mr. Gilles Bisson: Are they embarrassing the Tories?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: They're trying; they're trying real hard. That's why I call it puerile politics, because we know where the Conservatives overall stand on this issue—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: With Dalton McGuinty.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: With Dalton McGuinty, indeed. But to do this is, in my mind, a very silly distraction away from other issues.

We pointed out a couple of years back that if you're going to do full-time JK and full-time SK, you're going to have to protect the child care centres with support, with money, because if you take the four- and five-year-

olds out of those child care centres, the very children who provide—not the children who pay, but the families who pay for the four- and five-year-olds. When you take that money out of child care centres, they're no longer viable. We pointed that out from the very beginning, and I recall not one Liberal agreeing with what I was saying—not one Liberal; not one. I usually lift my finger to say, "Is there not one among you; not one?" And it has clearly been shown that many of the child care centres across Ontario are in trouble. Indeed, 450 child care centres have closed as a result of this initiative, an initiative which I supported, which New Democrats supported.

You cannot introduce such initiatives without government funding. And then to do it on the backs of everyone else, and in particular, in this instance, the teachers, whom you are attacking—because what you're saying to teachers is this: "If you don't take these cutbacks in all the areas that have been mentioned that have not been negotiated with most of the federations, we won't be able to afford the full-time JK and SK." I didn't think that was part of the deal that they signed on to three years back. I thought that you, the government, had the money to do this, or that at least you would be able to find it. But you don't find it by attacking other middle-class workers; it's just not the way to do it.

I remember arguing in committee that you needed to put a cap on those JK and SK classrooms, because your average is 27 students. I said, "If that's your average, they're going to go up to 30, 31, 32 or 33, with one education worker and one teacher in that classroom. When that education worker is taken out of the classroom, because so many children have so many needs at any one time, that teacher is alone with those four- and five-year-olds." We argued that that's just not a good thing, it's not a good policy, but did I hear but one Liberal stand up and say, "Marchese is on the right track"? No; not one Liberal. Most of the time there is not one Liberal who will support you, except Kim Craiton, who walked with the teachers a couple of days back—God bless.

We did raise the concerns in committee. We said, "Full-time JK and full-time SK is a wonderful program." It's good for families. It's good for mothers in particular, the mothers who have the biggest burden of raising the children. They know it and we know it, and that's why we thought the initiative was good. But you cannot do it without adequate funding, and we knew that boards across Ontario—Catholic and public—would suffer as a result, because if you don't put in adequate funding, those boards are going to have to rob Peter to pay Paul, and that's what they did.

The sad thing is that the majority of people simply don't see these things as they are happening. We're all so happy about the new initiative. The Liberals: Good God, I don't know how many times they went out saying how great this is, without once mentioning the potential problems that needed to be addressed.

We argued for transitional funding, and the government finally, after many years, put \$65 million, but that was to continue the child care programming dollars that

the federal government stopped funding. It was not to provide for the support of this new initiative that you introduced.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Member from York, we raised this issue with you and others, and not one Liberal listened to what we had to say. And now, lo and behold, you have soldier MPP Liberal backbenchers standing up saying how much they love this program, how much they love these teachers.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: He didn't say that. He's not against full-day kindergarten.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Who?

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And now they're standing up talking about how great this program is and, "Good God, if we don't do this to the teachers, if we don't whack them good, as we're trying to whack them good, if we don't distance ourselves from these unions and if we don't take what we can from them, we won't be able to fund JK and SK." So all of a sudden, where you had this education Premier—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Hold on; whoa, Bob. Where you have this education Premier, once so loved, who could walk on water with teachers—I say that biblically. As I said last night, he can no longer walk on water. He has caused a split—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Hold on. I've got to shout over his voice.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to refrain from heckling the member for Trinity-Spadina, and I return to the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you, Speaker, for your intervention, because I have to shout over his voice. It's not helpful.

You had an education Premier so much loved by the teachers. They were one. They were tight. Liberal teachers loved him. And all of a sudden that love is just gone. It's no longer mutual. Now we whack teachers as we claim we love them. Every MPP who stands up every day talks about how much they love those teachers and how great our educational system is. But now the time has come to beat up on those people, and the language the Liberals use is, "We've got to beat up on these unions because they just don't get it. They just don't get it."

We've been arguing, on this side—from my private talks with many federation folks, they were quite happy to negotiate in a friendly-like way, literally giving all that you wanted in a collaborative way, and you said no. It's beautiful: You said no. Why is it that you said no? Quite frankly, I just never quite understood it, except for the by-election. And I said, it's got to be. What else could it be? This government is so uneasy about being a minority government, because they've got to work with Tories now; good God. You understand, they've got to work with Tories. They hate that. They do. They hate working

with us, but they hate working with the Tories even more. So they're like yo-yos. They've got to go back and forth, and they are completely confused, politically confused. They don't know quite what to do. They need to win a by-election. The one in Vaughan is relatively safe, but the one in Kitchener-Waterloo is not safe.

So what did they do? They remembered John Snobelen. Do you remember him, Speaker? You were here with me.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: David Cooke, too.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, no. John is our man. John is our man on the horse, the giddy-up guy. He's our man on the horse, who had a great idea about creating a crisis. So the Minister of Education said finally, "I need a new bright idea. What do I do? I call up John Snobelen." John said, "Yeah, it worked for me." She said, "Okay, no problemo. It's got to work for me, too."

So they're creating a crisis with teachers. Those Liberals, so much loved by teachers, are no longer loved because the love ain't mutual no more. Those good relations are gone. I'm okay with that, I've got to tell you. I'm okay with that. If you want to beat up on teachers, it's not a political problem of mine, but it has become a political burden for you—a big one. Because what you're doing is attacking those middle-class teachers. You're saying to them, "Your salaries have got to be cut back, because look at the poor private sector on the other side. They're taking a beating too. So if they're taking a beating, you've got to take a beating."

But a couple of months ago, you guys were saying to the corporations, "We're quite happy to give you the public piñata that you could just club away every day," and just pour all that money into their pockets. And they loved it, because they're socking it away—\$500 billion of dead money. Mr. Carney, our big guy, the governor of the Bank of Canada—he's saying that it's dead money.

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You guys, you Tories and you Liberals, have been giving them piles of money out of corporate tax cuts. What do they do? They sock it away. And you've been giving it away—you. Public piñatas, political public piñatas that you just give away to those rich folks, the bankers. Minister of Citizenship, the bankers: You know them well. Instead of sharing the wealth, we give it to the wealthy. How smart is that? Please, how smart is that for you Liberals as you attack the unions these days? I heard the minister of post-secondary education used his attacks on the unions, on the middle-class workers. Yours is an incredible assault on middle-class workers, and it's a terrible assault when they were willing to negotiate with you and willing to do it voluntarily. But no, you had to outdo the Tories, who say, "No, a voluntary wage freeze is not good enough. We need to make sure that we mandate it so that we can tell the public, 'We are tough on them.'" Boy, did you get close to the Tories on this one. Boy, are you outdoing the Tories. Boy, are you so happy to be Tories in a hurry. But it ain't working for you; it ain't working for you. That's the silly thing about what you guys have done.

Now, if you guys survive this one, I say, God bless. Then maybe your strategy of beating up on the middle class is working. I say, God bless. But I'm not convinced, I really am not; in which case you will have lost everything from the middle-class teachers who supported you and loved you to the potential Tory supporters you were wooing with your strategy of making it appear that those teachers, those well-fed teachers, just didn't want to come to the table and didn't want to negotiate.

For six months you sat on your hands. For six months you and your minister sat on your hands, quite happy to distance them away from you as a way of claiming, "We tried." She wasn't at the table. She had fancy, fancy corporate lawyers there—fancy corporate lawyers at the table, the type Tories would love. Those people weren't there to negotiate a fair deal; they weren't there in a nice, collaborative approach to find a solution. No siree, they were there to distance the teachers away; that's what that was all about.

It's lovely to see the Premier's quotes in 2004, right after the Harris regime, and in 2009, about how "We've got to work together with the teachers. This is a collaborative approach." He said, "Oh, yeah, collective bargaining. That's the way to go. We've got to do that." Not but two years later, he changed his mind. What happened? Dalton, the man so loved by teachers, you give it all away. How could you do that? How could a rational human being do that?

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Maybe not so rational.

The point is that in my view you have made a profound mistake in your approach to this issue, and I think you're going to be hurt by it. I believe a lot of the backbenchers believe it as well, except they have very little control of this matter because this thing is run by the Premier's office—not even the Minister of Education, because the Minister of Education is there to listen to the directions given by the Premier and his political staff. That's the way the system works around here. But I know some of you are very, very nervous, because you've received calls from individual teachers and locals, federation locals, and I know you've done your best to hold them back. I know you've done your best to tell them how much you love them.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Not from the public. Only from the teachers; not from the public. Our constituency offices are quiet. We haven't heard from the public.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And that's okay; that's fine. Clearly, Minister Chiarelli, the Minister of Transportation, is saying that he's abandoned the teachers, meaning his strategy is working. He says, "We've had calls from teachers, but not the others," which means that he expected the teachers, as he whacks them, to feel bad and feel the pain. And they are calling, but the regular public that they're wooing—I mean, Conservative voters are saying, "Right on, Bob Chiarelli, Minister of Transportation. You're doing good."

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We're not hearing from the NDP voters either.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I wouldn't expect you to. I wouldn't think that they would be calling you, saying, "Bob Chiarelli, Minister of Transportation, great job. We love it," as you're going after them.

Speaker, I'm happy to have contributed a few comments on this debate. We now have my colleague France Gélinas from Nickel Belt who wants to contribute to this debate, and I'm happy to pass it off.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you very much. I'm pleased to recognize the member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci, monsieur le Président.

Je ne peux pas vous dire comment insultée que je suis, ainsi qu'un demi-million de Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes qui vivent ici, quand je lis, dans un document intitulé le Feuilleton et avis, que—écoutez bien ça, monsieur le Président. Vous allez tomber en bas de votre chaise. Je sais qu'elle est belle, votre chaise-là, mais attachez-vous parce que vous allez tomber en bas de votre chaise. Savez-vous ce que ça dit? Ça dit ici que le gouvernement—

Interjection.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Page 13. Ça le dit en anglais; je vais vous le lire en anglais :

"That, in the opinion of this House, full-day kindergarten is the single most important investment the government can make in the social and economic future of our children and, on this basis, the House supports the government's commitment to ensure that 250,000 Ontario four- and five-year olds will be enrolled"—puis c'est là que ça devient vraiment insultant—"in North America's first full-day kindergarten program by September 2014."

Quand il y a un Franco-Ontarien ou une Franco-Ontarienne qui lit ça, monsieur le Président, c'est comme un couteau au coeur, parce que saviez-vous qu'en Ontario français, ça fait maintenant 12 ans qu'on a le programme à temps plein pour les enfants de quatre ans et cinq ans? Ça fait 12 ans que cela existe en Ontario français, puis on a un gouvernement libéral qui nous dit que c'est le premier programme en Amérique du Nord, qu'on vient d'inventer ça, qu'on va faire quelque chose de merveilleux pour les petits Ontariens de quatre ans et cinq ans, quand en réalité, depuis 12 ans, cela existe.

Cela existait en Ontario français, mais voyez-vous, monsieur le Président, l'Ontario français, pour le gouvernement libéral, n'existe pas. On n'existe pas. Ça fait 12 ans qu'on a un programme de maternelle à temps plein, de prématernelle à temps plein, de jardin, qu'on a un programme—des programmes—de garderie avant et après l'école. Puis, ça n'existe pas parce que c'est l'Ontario français qui fait ça. Puis voyez-vous que ça se passe en Ontario français? On s'en fou. On s'en fou. « C'est juste les francophones. On n'a pas besoin de s'occuper d'eux autres. Ils se démerdent par eux-mêmes. »

Le gouvernement n'est pas là pour les aider, les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes. On est là pour mettre en place un nouveau programme, le meilleur programme en Amérique du Nord, un nouveau

programme qui n'existe nulle part. On est le premier en Ontario.

Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire pour les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes, monsieur le Président, s'ils sont en train de dire que c'est un nouveau programme qui n'a jamais existé en Amérique du Nord? On ne parle plus de l'Ontario ou du Canada; on parle de l'Amérique du Nord.

Ça veut dire que tous les efforts que font les Franco-Ontariennes et Franco-Ontariens à tous les matins—savez-vous ce que ça veut dire d'être Franco-Ontarien? Ça veut dire qu'à tous les matins, quand je me lève, je décide de continuer le combat, parce qu'à tous les matins quand je me lève, la chose la plus facile à faire serait de parler l'anglais. La chose la plus facile à faire serait de me laisser assimiler, parce que partout où je vais, je suis bombardée par des messages anglais.

Mais non. Moi, puis un demi-million d'autres personnes, à tous les matins, on se lève, on prend notre garde, et on se dit, «Moi, je suis fier d'être Franco-Ontarien». Puis moi, je suis fière de ce que les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes ont développé dans notre province. Il n'y a rien qui nous a été donné. Pensez-vous que les programmes de maternelle, de jardin à temps plein, dans les écoles francophones, ça nous est venu du ciel? Pensez-vous que ça nous est venu du gouvernement?

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Regardez ce qu'ils nous disent, monsieur le Président. Il nous disent que c'est le premier programme en Amérique du Nord. Je ne peux pas vous dire comment ça blesse. Ça blesse tellement. C'est se faire dire par son gouvernement que les francophones n'existent pas en Ontario, que ce qui se passe dans notre vie, les succès qu'on a eus—parce qu'il ne faut pas se leurrer : la maternelle à temps plein, le jardin à temps plein pour les francophones de l'Ontario, ça était un succès, monsieur le Président. Ça était un tel succès que dans tous les médias francophones, on en a parlé. Cela a été étudié. Cela était présenté dans des conférences comme un programme novateur, un programme à succès.

Les Franco-Ontariens ont fait leur marque avec ces programmes-là. Il y a 12 ans de ça. Et depuis ce temps-là, tu as plein de petits Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes qui auraient peut-être été tentés d'aller dans le système anglais. C'est tellement plus facile. Il y a plus d'écoles. Tu n'es pas obligé de prendre un autobus pendant des heures pour te rendre dans une école francophone qui est à des milles et des kilomètres de chez vous. Tu peux traverser la rue et te rendre dans le système anglais. Ça rendrait la vie tellement facile.

Mais non, on avait, en Ontario français, développé un programme gagnant. On avait développé un programme de maternelle à temps plein. De là, voilà 12 ans quand cela a commencé en Ontario du côté anglais, et c'est «le premier en Amérique du Nord.» Je vous dis, on s'excuse d'être là. On s'excuse d'avoir survécu pendant toutes ces années-là. Mais ce que je vous dis, monsieur le Président, on est là, les Franco-Ontariens, puis on n'a pas l'intention de s'en aller.

M. Gilles Bisson: Je suis là avec toi.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Gilles est là avec moi.

M. Rosario Marchese: Moi aussi. Nous autres—

M^{me} France Gélinas: Puis Rosario aussi, peut-être Taras aussi. On est là, puis on a l'intention d'y rester.

Puis cela a payé des dividendes, monsieur le Président. On a du succès avec nos écoles. On a du succès avec les écoles françaises. Les gens sont fiers de ce qu'ils ont accompli. Puis ils l'ont accompli pour et par les Franco-Ontariens.

Quand je vous dis pour et par, la méthode qu'ils avaient en place, c'était vraiment de travailler avec les partenaires locaux. Il y a beaucoup d'écoles—je peux parler des écoles de mon compté où c'était le Carrefour francophone qui offrait la garderie avant et après. Il y avait des systèmes de garderie dans toutes les écoles francophones et plusieurs écoles d'immersion, monsieur le Président. Les écoles d'immersion avaient vu ça, eux—autres aussi, puis elles en étaient fières.

Donc, on avait développé une méthode, un système, pour et par les francophones où non seulement les écoles francophones offraient le service de jardin à temps plein, de maternelle à temps plein, on avait également le système de garderie, et ça se faisait en collaboration avec des organismes francophones existants. Ça a permis à des organismes francophones de vraiment solidifier leur assise parce que ça leur permettait non seulement d'offrir des programmes à un groupe captif—c'était tous des petits francophones; ils étaient à l'école puis ils voulaient apprendre le français—ça nous permettait de sécuriser des organismes francophones.

Tous ceux qui suivent un peu l'actualité du côté franco-ontarien connaissent la cause Montfort. On connaît également M^c Caza. M^c Caza est celui qui a défendu Montfort quand on voulait se débarrasser du seul hôpital francophone où les étudiants pouvaient apprendre en français à travailler en santé.

M^c Caza, quand il a défendu la cause Montfort, nous a démontré à tout le monde que si on veut que les Franco-Ontariennes et Franco-Ontariens continuent à survivre dans notre province, il faut leur donner—il appelait ça des îlots. Il disait qu'être francophone, c'est comme tu es dans un grand lac, puis il faut toujours que tu nages. Sinon, bien, tu noies. Moi, à tous les matins, je me décide de nager comme Franco-Ontarienne. Sinon, je coule.

Puis là, tu vois les anglophones qui, eux, se promènent en bateau. Ils passent et puis ils font des vagues. Seul les anglophones se promènent en bateau. Mais de temps en temps, tu as un îlot. Tu as un îlot où tu peux reprendre ton souffle, où tu peux te reposer un petit peu.

Ces îlots-là, ce sont les agences francophones. Donc, un îlot à Sudbury, c'était le Carrefour francophone. Tu peux aller là, puis tu n'as pas besoin d'écouter pour savoir s'il y a quelqu'un qui va vouloir que tu parles en anglais. Tu peux parler en français, c'est sûr et certain. À Timmins, ils ont La Ronde. C'est la même chose. Ces îlots-là—

Interjection.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Il y en a un peu partout. Il y en a un à Toronto, le Centre francophone de Toronto. On en a un peu partout.

Donc, ces îlots-là nous permettent comme francophones d'arrêter de nager pour un couple de minutes puis de nous reposer. C'est un peu comme ça que M^e Caza nous a expliqué ça.

Mais qu'est-ce que ça permet, ces petits îlots-là? Ça permet à la communauté francophone de reprendre son souffle ensemble. Ça nous permet de nous reposer, de se connaître l'un l'autre, de s'entraider l'un l'autre et de continuer.

Avec le système qui avait été développé pour et par les francophones, on avait mis en place des partenariats avec d'autres groupes francophones. Donc, des groupes francophones rentraient dans les écoles françaises, rentraient dans les écoles francophones, puis nous expliquaient, « Voici la programmation qu'on peut offrir avant et après l'école. Voici ce qu'on peut offrir pour vous aider avec la maternelle et le jardin à temps plein », puis tout ça. Ça marchait bien. Ça marche bien, et ça marche bien depuis 12 ans.

Là, le gouvernement libéral de M. McGuinty nous arrive puis nous dit, « C'est un beau programme-là que vous avez développé pour et par les Franco-Ontariens. On ne le regarde pas. On s'en fou. Ça n'existe pas. Nous autres, on arrive avec nos gros sabots puis on va vous dire comment ça va se faire, la maternelle à temps plein. »

Les Franco-Ontariens ont fait quelque chose que je n'avais jamais vu. Chacune des agences franco-ontariennes de la province, de la plus petite à la plus grosse—on parle de la FAFO, des conseils scolaires; on parle même des évêques et des caisses populaires. S'il y avait un francophone là-dedans, ils ont signé une lettre. La même lettre a été signée par vraiment les agences qui représentaient les 500 000 Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes qui existent ici pour dire au gouvernement McGuinty, « Écoutez. On existe déjà. Le programme de maternelle à temps plein, il existe déjà du côté francophone. Puis, on ne le fait pas comme ça, nous. On le fait autrement. »

Ils n'ont pas écouté, monsieur le Président. Ils n'ont pas écouté un seul mot de ce que les 500 000 Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes avaient à dire. Ils sont rentrés là avec leurs gros sabots, puis ils ont dit, « La maternelle à temps plein, ça va se faire comme ça », point à la ligne.

Les francophones ont continué de crier le plus fort qu'ils pouvaient pour leur dire, « On a des droits. On sait comment faire les choses. Regardez. On a de l'expérience. Ça fait 10 ans »—dans le temps, ça faisait 10 ans—« qu'on l'offre, la maternelle à temps plein. Apprenez de nos meilleures pratiques. On est prêt à les partager avec vous. » Pantoute.

Ils ne voulaient rien savoir; ils ne nous écoutaient pas. Et on continuait avec l'idée qu'ils avaient en tête : que la maternelle à temps plein, ça devait se faire comme ça. Ils avaient un cadre de référence. Ou bien tu rentrais dans la boîte ou bien tu restais chez vous.

Au bout d'un an et demi, quand tous les beaux partenariats qui avaient été établis avaient été rompus, quand tous les beaux programmes qui avaient été

développés pour et par les francophones étaient devenus histoire du passé, ils ont dit, « Ah, bien. Peut-être qu'il y avait de bonnes idées dans ces partenariats-là. En fait, les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes, on devrait peut-être les écouter. » Mais c'était trop tard, monsieur le Président. Il était trop tard. Nous à Sudbury, le Carrefour francophone avait perdu 90 % de ses contrats. Ils ont failli faire banqueroute. Ça, comme je vous ai dit plutôt, c'était un îlot pour les francophones de Sudbury. C'était un îlot que le gouvernement McGuinty a failli tuer par sa politique pour la maternelle à temps plein.

« Le premier programme en Amérique du Nord. » Quand j'entends des choses comme ça, monsieur le Président, je n'ai pas le goût de rire—pantoute. Ce n'est pas drôle de se faire dire par son gouvernement qu'on n'existe pas, de se faire dire par le gouvernement libéral que ce qui se passe dans le milieu francophone, c'est correct de l'ignorer; on ne demande même pas de regarder ce qu'on fait. C'est correct de l'ignorer, de ne pas en parler, de ne pas apprendre des autres. C'est correct de faire comme si on n'existait pas.

C'est décourageant, ça, monsieur le Président, puis ils savent tout ça maintenant, hein? Parce que des réunions avec la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones, on en a eu une, puis une autre, puis une troisième, puis une quatrième. Même chose avec la ministre de l'Éducation. Même chose avec les ministres qui s'occupent—ils savent tout ça. Ils savent l'histoire. Ils savent les meilleures pratiques. Ils savent comment blessant c'était de se faire dire qu'on n'existe pas.

Mais on est rendu le 30 août 2012, puis on a encore un document écrit par le gouvernement libéral de M. McGuinty qui dit « le premier programme en Amérique du Nord. »

Qu'est-ce ça me dit, monsieur le Président? Ça me dit qu'ils n'ont rien compris. Ça me dit que l'on ne compte pas. Puis ça me dit que ça ne dérange pas, toutes les belles choses qu'on a faites. Tout ce qui compte, c'est les gains politiques. Tout ce qui compte, à la fin de la journée, monsieur le Président, c'est de s'assurer qu'ils vont gagner dans Kitchener-Waterloo. C'est tout ce qui compte.

On n'a pas été demandé de revenir ici pour parler de la maternelle. Apparemment, il y avait une crise dans le milieu de l'éducation. Il fallait absolument revenir deux semaines à l'avance pour faire passer un projet de loi par rapport à l'éducation. Mais là, on nous présente des choses comme ça. Apparemment, c'est bien important ce matin qu'on se parle d'un programme qui existe depuis 12 ans, monsieur le Président. On est revenu deux semaines à l'avance pour se parler d'un programme qui existe depuis 12 ans, pour lequel on n'a l'intention de faire aucun changement. Pouvez-vous m'expliquer, c'est quoi la raison pour laquelle on est ici ce matin?

On est ici ce matin parce qu'il y a des gains politiques à faire. Le gain politique à faire là? Il est clair : c'est une élection partielle à Kitchener. C'est juste ça. Le programme de maternelle à temps plein est en place depuis 12 ans. Il va continuer comme il était supposé de continuer. Il n'y a absolument rien qui va changer. Si

vous m'écoutez à la télé, vous êtes en train de perdre votre temps. Vous pouvez fermer la télé. Il n'y a rien qui est en train de se passer à Queen's Park. On est en train de perdre notre temps, de parler d'un programme qui existe depuis 12 ans, auquel on n'a l'intention de faire aucun changement.

Mais il faut en parler parce que les libéraux pensent que, en parlant de la maternelle à temps plein, en faisant croire qu'il y a une crise dans le milieu de l'éducation puis qu'ils sont les sauveurs, eux, ils vont gagner une siège de plus à Kitchener, et ça va leur permettre d'avoir un gouvernement majoritaire.

C'est pour ça, monsieur le Président, qu'on est en train de perdre notre temps aujourd'hui pour pouvoir parler d'un programme qui ne changera pas.

Moi, je peux vous dire que dans mon comté il y a des gens qui attendent depuis longtemps de venir me rencontrer. Dans mon comté il y a des gens qui restent sur des chemins de bois; ça me prend deux heures sur un chemin de terre me rendre jusqu'à chez eux, puis eux autres, ils m'attendaient cette semaine. Je ne vais pas souvent à Bisco, puis je ne vais pas souvent dans des communautés ou je dois faire quatre heures de route en plein milieu de la saison de la foresterie, ou il y a toujours un gros « truck » qui va venir; tu es obligé de te mettre quasiment dans le fossé pour venir à bout de les laisser passer, ces affaires-là, en plein milieu du bois, mais j'y vais pendant l'été.

Je n'irai pas, monsieur. Je n'irai pas parce que je dois être ici pour vous parler d'un programme qui existe depuis 12 ans puis qui ne changera pas. Ça, c'est un affront à tous ceux qui avaient besoin de parler à leur députée. Nous ne sommes pas capables d'être dans nos comtés parce qu'il faut être ici. Il faut être ici pour que les libéraux aient quelque chose à dire dans les médias pour venir à bout de gagner un comté, et ce sont les gens qui restent dans nos comtés qui paient. Ce sont les gens qui restent dans le nord de Nickel Belt qui s'attendaient à voir leur députée pendant les deux dernières semaines que j'étais dans mon comté qui ne me verront pas. Ce sont des gens qui vont avoir à faire quatre heures de route, deux heures de ça sur une route de gravier, pour venir me voir un vendredi quand je suis dans mon comté. C'est pas correct, ça. C'est pas correct.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. It being 10:15, this House is in recess until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. In the budget act of 2010, you said you'd bring in a wage freeze. As part of that budget act, you had subsection 8(3), which allows for three ways you can actually

increase pay for bureaucrats outside the wage freeze: (1) his or her length of time of employment or in office, (2) an assessment of his or her performance, and (3) his or her successful completion of a program or course of professional technical education.

Premier, you created a big loophole in your wage freeze that resulted in 98% of senior bureaucrats getting bonus pay increases at the time of the wage freeze. Can you answer me, directly, why did you create the McGuinty loophole in the budget bill?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: There is no doubt that the pay-for-performance system that was established by the Mike Harris government is broken. There is absolutely no question about that, Mr. Speaker. We are undertaking a review now to address the valid challenges that rest there. I remind the Leader of the Opposition that in the last budget, we froze executive compensation. He voted against that in the budget; he voted against the budget bill.

Mr. Speaker, I'll remind him that the total amounts of money available for that type of compensation are now lower than they were when he left office in 2003. I would also remind him that a part of that money goes to front-line staff who are not part of bargained units.

We agree it is broken. We will be bringing forward appropriate changes to ensure that that Harris government policy is put out of practice and replaced with a real freeze that saves taxpayers' money and gets us back to balance.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, Speaker, there's an expression—I know they don't call this answer period. They've started calling it total evasion period on the other side of the House.

Let me see if I can get the Premier's attention for a moment here on my lead question. Premier, I know you talk about Mike Harris every day, but Mike Harris wasn't the Premier in 2010. You were. This is your bill, and you created the McGuinty loophole that gave 98% of bureaucrats pay increases.

Let me ask you this, Premier: Last year, you saw eHealth employees get 7% bonuses for merit for the mess they created at eHealth. Then you learned that 98% of bureaucrats got merit pay increases during a wage freeze. I know, Premier, that you would have banged your fist on your desk, you would have called staff on the carpet, you would have put an end to this. When you asked staff how many got bonus pay increases last year and the year before, what exactly did they tell you?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The pay-for-performance system is broken, and we're going to change it. We have said that. Mr. Speaker, we have moved to freeze executive compensation across the public and broader public sectors, which was part of this year's budget that that member and his party voted against. We concur that the appropriate course of action now is to fix that system. Therefore we will be bringing forward the appropriate

legislative and administrative changes that will give effect to that.

I look forward to the Leader of the Opposition's support of that bill. I think we will probably have it by the mid-part of September. I know he'll want to pass that as quickly as possible, so that we can in fact address that very real question that's still out there.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: If you want to pass it, then support Jeff Yurek's private member's bill from back in May that would have ended this practice—an across-the-board pay freeze.

Again, I worry that the Premier's energy may be fizzling, like his legislative agenda in this session. I want to tell you, Premier, I'm disappointed that you have no new answers. Bill 115 will pass. We'll support it; we've said that. It's a partial wage freeze, a bit of a wage freeze on training wheels. We're going to keep pushing for more, Speaker.

Premier, you seem to have run out of gas. You have no new ideas on the table. I've suggested you close the McGuinty loophole when it comes to bonus pay increases. I've suggested an across-the-board wage freeze as well. I've suggested that you end this odious practice of closed tendering that saw \$148 pencil sharpeners here in Toronto, or 40% ballooning costs on Ivor Wynne stadium in Hamilton. Premier, if you're out of ideas, which of our three ideas will you adopt to actually get serious in this session and do something about the \$30-billion hole?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have an aggressive legislative agenda that keeps teachers in schools, keeps nurses in hospitals, gets more doctors for people and will bring this government back to balance long before other jurisdictions.

We have an aggressive agenda. They have a bankrupt agenda. His member's bill was flawed; won't achieve what he wants to do. Later today, they're going to introduce legislation that tells us to keep giving millions of dollars to horse track owners. That's what they're about; they're about horse-race owners.

We're about teachers. We're about classrooms. We're about full-day learning. We will get back to balance. We're well on our way, through a responsible, balanced plan that will keep teachers in our classrooms and protect the important gains we've made in education and health care.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Nepean–Carleton, would you come to order, please.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What about him, Speaker? It's both of them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): It's nice to banter back and forth, but you're being extremely loud and I cannot hear the answer. I'm sure that soon I will not

be hearing the questions. Yesterday, a lot of people were complaining that I did not hear the language.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The clock, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock for a second.

I would ask you to keep your voices low, please. Thank you.

New question.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'll try going back to the Premier, Speaker.

Premier, I said a week ago that Bill 115 would pass—it's a no-brainer—and I asked you what comes next. You've had no answers at all. Anything you have on the legislative agenda is new spending. So let me try something else, since you've said no to every one of our ideas.

Yesterday, Premier, you mused about ending bankable sick days across the province, the practice where sick days accumulate and then you get bought out upon retirement, some to the tune of \$50,000. Quite frankly, when you're staring at a \$30-billion hole, the time for musing is over. The time for action is now. Will you support our call for an end, across the broader public service, to this bankable-sick-days practice, for the benefit of taxpayers in our great province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As my honourable colleague is wondering what role he might play to help us move forward good public policy, I want to remind him that our healthy homes renovation tax credit was introduced on November 23. That was 10 months ago.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order, please.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It would save seniors up to \$1,500 annually; it can create over 10,000 jobs annually. They've been blocking that for 10 months now.

There's the Family Caregiver Leave Act, introduced December 8. That was nine months ago. It provides up to eight weeks of job-protected leave to care for sick loved ones. They've been blocking that, I say once again, for nine months.

I have a longer list, Speaker. I'm looking forward to getting to more of it. My honourable colleague should understand that there are good things we can do together, but we're going to need his support to do that.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Clearly, evasion period continues here from the Premier. I asked a very simple question. To the Premier's point: You know what? We expected something in this session. There was all the buildup and drama. It was coming in like a legislative lion, but it has turned into a lame-duck session. Your cupboards are bare, Premier. Where are your ideas? We're putting ours on the table—bold ideas to actually get our fiscal house

in order and create jobs, and he says no to every single one.

1040

So, Premier, I'll ask you back: From the PC Party point of view, sick days are for being sick; that's basic. They're not something to be banked and stored up and then shelled out to taxpayers at the end of the day. It seems to me to be very basic that this bankable-sick-days practice is a creature of the past, and if you won't act, my colleague will. Mr. Shurman is bringing in a bill that says sick days are for sick people. Will you support it, Premier, and end this practice that is bankrupting our province?

Interjections.

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

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I think my honourable colleague will know the position that we've taken on bankable sick days in our Putting Students First legislation.

In fact, my honourable colleague should understand that there is, in fact, I think, amongst our broader public sector partners, an openness and a willingness and an acceptance that that is a practice that really should be reviewed in light of our fiscal circumstances. In fact, 55,000 teachers have agreed that it's no longer acceptable to have this practice of bankable sick days. So I think we're moving in the same direction.

But there are some other practical things that we've been talking about for a long time here, and we could use the support of the opposition to move forward with this. One of those is the air ambulance reform act. It was introduced on March 21—that was five months ago. My honourable colleague says he's very concerned about ensuring that we have in place all the progress that we can make with respect to improving the quality of service at Ornge, Speaker; they've been blocking it for five long months. If we had their support, that's yet another piece of legislation we could move ahead with.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, quite frankly, if you want to see Bill 50 debated, put it on the floor of the Legislature. You refuse to call it for a single day.

The bottom line: If you truly care about Ornge, Premier, then get out from behind your desk, go before the committee like your health minister had the guts to do, like others have had to do. What are you hiding from?

But here's the bottom line, Premier: We support Bill 115; it's going to pass. But if it's good for teachers, why isn't it good for firefighters? Let me give you some examples. Firefighters of Windsor are entitled to 18 bankable sick days a year under the current contract. If they don't use them, they cash them out. Once they retire, they can cash out up to six months, approximately a \$50,000 payoff from already hard-hit taxpayers in Windsor. This costs \$2 million to \$3 million to the city of Windsor.

My colleague Mr. Shurman is leading. He's going to bring in the Sick Days are for Sick People Act. Premier, doesn't that sound fair and reasonable? Will you work with Mr. Shurman or, at the very least, will you support this bill to help begin to balance the books in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We're delighted to see that you're following our lead. We've stated very specifically where we stand on bankable sick days with respect to the agreements that we've entered into with 55,000 Ontario teachers.

If my honourable colleague is proposing that they reach into municipal employee groups, then I think that may be a horse of a different colour. My approach with respect to that is to encourage municipalities to take a look at their fiscal circumstances, to ask themselves what's appropriate today. What's appropriate today may not have been what was appropriate before, so that may require that they make some changes. We understand that.

We've indicated where we are going with respect to our agreement with teachers. We're delighted to see that we have the support of 55,000 teachers in that regard. Speaker, we'll have more to say about this in the days to come.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Can the Premier tell us when he first learned that 98% of managers and executives in the Ontario public service were receiving bonuses in this time of restraint?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I understand that my honourable colleague is moving ahead with a bill, and I want to second the sentiments and the intent that informs that proposed legislation, and we look forward to learning a few more details connected with that.

I have said that if 98% of those who were eligible for performance pay are getting it, then it's not performance pay, it's just pay, and we need to review that practice that was put in place by the PC government. I've asked the Minister of Finance to take a long, hard look at that and to return to this House with a proposed bill. We look forward to working with the opposition to make sure we get that right.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier has asked Ontario families to tighten their belts, and our schools, our hospitals. In hundreds of aspects of everyday life, people are being told that we're in an era of restraint. Yet as people are making these sacrifices, they consistently see that those who least need a break keep getting one.

Can the Premier explain to them why this keeps happening and when, if ever, he plans to do something about it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: As the leader of the third party has indicated, they have brought forward a bill, and we're

grateful of that. Their bill does have some flaws. Their bill would cover approximately 30 of the 9,000 employees who got compensation—30 of 9,000, Mr. Speaker.

I'll go on to some more details about the shortcomings in the bill. It was obviously done on the back of a napkin and rushed out the door because of political purposes during the by-election. She also, in her bill, overrides Bill 55, the executive compensation freeze. I'm sure that was an administrative oversight on their part, because she supported that at the time. But her bill that she's tabling today will affect 30 employees. It will override the executive compensation freeze, and while it's an important step forward, we'll bring forward a comprehensive response that deals with the real problem, not just for the by-elections next week but for a better future for all Ontarians.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, those who live in glass houses should not be throwing stones, I would say. The reality is, the Premier likes to point a finger of blame, and so does the finance minister, at everybody except for themselves, but people are not going to be fooled any more. If they are genuinely interested in a balanced approach to balancing the books, we have a pretty good idea with this bill.

I just want to know, is this government prepared to take a very simple step and work with New Democrats to ban bonuses for executives in this province?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Yes. Unfortunately, you've only dealt with 30 people who have contracts; the other 8,970 don't. You've exempted bargained employees. She has exempted AMAPCEO employees, many of whom get pay-for-performance increases.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order, please.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That's not acceptable. We will bring forward a comprehensive piece of legislation that is about a better future for Ontario, that allows us to balance the books while we continue to—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, I would ask you to come to order and lower your voice. The next warning would be my final.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, we welcome this bill. It's flawed, it's incomplete, it's one-sided, and it's designed for the by-elections next week. We'll bring forward a comprehensive response to an important public policy challenge that's in the best interests of all Ontarians.

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

TEACHERS' CONTRACTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: New Democrats don't believe in just tearing up contracts. We think it costs the province

a heck of a lot more money in the long run, and that's why we've put our bill together the way we have.

My next question, Speaker, is to the Premier. Earlier this year, the Premier stated, "We feel obligated to follow the law set up by the Supreme Court of Canada when it comes to dealing with our public sector partners." Can I just ask the Premier, when did he decide that he's no longer obligated to follow the law?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm delighted to take the question, Speaker, but I see things differently from my honourable colleague in this regard. We have been very careful in taking the advice of experts in this area in ensuring that we are following the law. I know there was a specific criticism in the Supreme Court of Canada decision of the BC government because they failed to give adequate notice. I think, in the circumstances, they gave 20 minutes' notice to their collective bargaining partners. We've been working on this for some six months. There was a specific reference in the budget papers back in March of this year, setting out the program—

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Page 74.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Page 74; I'd recommend that to my honourable colleague.

Mr. Paul Miller: Page 74?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Page 74. I'd recommend that he take a look at that, Speaker. You'll see that we make specific reference to the fact that we work as hard as we can through collective bargaining. If we can't achieve it through there, Speaker, then we'll find a way to make it happen otherwise, including through legislation.

1050

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, everyone realizes that today the Canadian Civil Liberties Association added their voice to the growing number of experts who say that the government's legislation goes too far and it's likely to cost us a lot of money when it's thrown out of the courts. Earlier today, the association director said that this bill violates people's rights. She went on to say, "People's rights are not something to be trifled with." Frankly, I agree with her. Can the Premier produce any evidence that his bill won't be thrown out by the Supreme Court?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think that this does present us with an opportunity to compare the positions of the three parties that are privileged to serve in this Legislature. My honourable colleague the leader of the NDP says that we are moving far too aggressively. The leader of the Progressive Conservatives says that we are being far too timid. We're bringing a balanced, thoughtful, responsible approach. We are working as hard as we can through the collective bargaining process. We've also made it clear that if that fails to achieve our fiscal targets, then we will do what is necessary to uphold the greater public interest, which demands that we take concrete steps to eliminate the deficit and do it in a way that

protects our schools and protects our health care. We're in the middle, Speaker. We're balanced, thoughtful, responsible and lawful.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I don't think the Premier has been paying attention. We think that they're looking after their own self-interest. That's where we're coming from on this side of the House. They're taking care of their own self-interest when it comes to this bill. It's not about aggressiveness; it's about their own self-interest as opposed to the public interest.

After months and months of warning about the dangers of the Conservatives' short-sighted, simplistic wage plans, the Premier now expects people to embrace his short-sighted, simplistic wage plans. I don't think he's going to succeed.

People are very tired. They are weary of paying the price for this government's desperate drive for majority power. And parents certainly don't want to pay the price in our classrooms either.

Why is this Premier rejecting the advice of constitutional experts who say that this bill simply won't work? Is it only because he has a by-election on his radar next week?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, earlier I talked about the contrasting positions between the three parties. Now I'll just focus on the difference between our approach and that of the NDP.

The NDP are in favour of a pay hike for teachers. We can't afford that at this point in time. We think that what little money we have should be devoted to improving the quality of the classroom experience.

The other thing that our agreement does and that our legislation does is, it puts an end to bankable sick days. A moment ago, she said she was against bankable sick days. Now she's saying that in fact she's going to be supportive of them.

Speaker, I think it's important to understand that ultimately what this is all about, when you cut right through the fog, is: They want to give teachers an increase in pay. We can't afford to do that right now, not given our fiscal constraints. What we need to do is make difficult but sensible and thoughtful choices. Our choice, instead of putting money into teacher pay, is to put it into the classroom and roll out full-day kindergarten and keep class sizes small. That's in the interests of students and families.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday the Premier chose to ignore the request of the committee that he appear as a witness. He decided it was more important to host a photo op—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would the Minister of the Environment come to order.

Mr. Frank Klees: Then he told us that he'll answer any questions here in the Legislature. But Hansard does not lie, because the record will show that virtually every question he was asked about that scandal here he deflected to the minister, to his House leader or the Minister of Finance.

Choosing to deflect those questions is not good enough. We won't accept it; the people of this province won't accept it. That's why this morning the committee clerk was instructed to once again extend an invitation to the Premier to appear next Wednesday at 9 a.m. at the committee as a witness.

I'd like to know now from the Premier: Will he respect the request of that committee or will he choose once again to host a photo op rather than do the important thing, and that is to show up here and answer the important questions?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm here today to take these questions. I'll be here on Monday to take questions, Tuesday to take questions, Wednesday to take questions, and, if we're sitting on Thursday, I'll be here on Thursday to take questions as well.

I would suggest we've had a very thorough process to this point in time. The opposition has asked 467 questions in question period related to Ornge. There have been countless questions, of course, by the media. The committee has entertained 56 witnesses. They've heard from the Minister of Health on three separate occasions. They've sat for 81 hours, in 17 days. They've examined thousands of pages of documents and they've produced over 800 pages of Hansard. I would suggest that if nothing, the committee's work has been exhaustive. I think it's time for us to receive some positive recommendations so we can act on those.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, the Premier knows that his excuses are not only insulting to the committee, they're insulting to the institution of Parliament and they're insulting to the people of this province. Anyone who is familiar with the operation of question period knows that questions and answers are limited to but a few seconds. The reality is, that's why we have committees of the Legislature—so that we can call witnesses and investigate what they know.

We happen to believe that the Premier knows an awful lot more than he's willing to tell us. That's why, Speaker, he was called as a witness. I want to give the Premier one more opportunity to respect the parliamentary process and to respect the institution of Parliament. I'd like to ask him now, will you agree to appear as a witness at the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on the scandal at Ornge and tell us what you know, when you heard about it, what you did and why you chose not to put your hand into an intervening position on that scandal that has wasted millions of health care dollars in this province?

Interjections.

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

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I say to my honourable colleague, I think he just wasted two specific opportunities to put specific questions to me.

I think Ontarians have different kinds of questions that weigh on their minds, should they give this some consideration. One of those would be, why does the opposition continue to block Bill 50? They say that they're interested in ensuring that we improve the quality of oversight that we bring to bear over Ornge. Bill 50 enhances our capacity as a government to put in place that kind of oversight.

They're also asking, after this exhaustive committee experience—56 witnesses, 81 hours, reviewing thousands of pages of documentation, over 800 pages of Hansard having been produced, Speaker—how much longer Ontarians are going to have to wait before the committee provides us with some positive, substantive recommendations.

The opposition says that they're interested on making progress on this file. So are we. Give us the recommendations and allow us to move forward with Bill 50.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Yesterday in public accounts, former Ornge employee Jay Lebo told the committee about the lies and illegal actions that were rampant at Ornge. This dates back to as early as 2008—around the same time the whistle-blowers started coming to your ministry. Speaker, I want to know, why did it take three long years? Why did we have to wait until the scandal hit the press before the minister acted?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, there is no question that there were activities at Ornge that are completely unacceptable. In fact, that is why the senior leadership that was at Ornge is no longer there. That is why the board of directors is no longer there. We have new leadership making the right decisions, providing more care for more people.

The committee has heard, as we've heard from the Premier, an extraordinary amount of testimony. Members of this Legislature need to now take the time to actually write the report and deliver their recommendations. We're talking about air ambulance service. This is an important topic. If you have advice, we want to know it. Please, I urge the member opposite to get that report and its recommendations to the government as quickly as possible.

1100

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, the problem is that the minister has never admitted that her ministry did anything wrong. Were there things wrong at Ornge? Absolutely. But they were doing wrong in the ministry as well. They failed to provide proper oversight of Ornge. In the Auditor General's special report, he is crystal clear:

The problems that developed at Ornge are due to a lack of oversight from the Ministry of Health. When will the minister admit that she got it wrong and that Ontarians can be reassured that next time we will get it right?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have been very clear from the beginning that I take my full share of responsibility, my ministry takes its full share of responsibility and we are putting in place those elements that were recommended by the Auditor General. We have a new performance agreement that gives us much stronger oversight.

We need Bill 50 passed. We can no longer tolerate the opposition blocking the passage of Bill 50. It contains more rigorous oversight; it contains protection for whistle-blowers. It's time to put the political games aside and move forward for the benefit of the people of this province.

TEACHERS' CONTRACTS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is to the Minister of Education. This House has been recalled to address an important issue: ensuring that school starts in September, as scheduled, and continues uninterrupted. The Putting Students First Act protects the classroom experience for Ontario students, while asking teachers to take a pause in their pay, given the challenging economic circumstances that the province faces.

The Putting Students First Act is based on an agreement that the government reached with the Catholic teachers' union, OECTA. This deal was the result of more than 300 hours of discussions. One of the provisions of the OECTA memorandum of understanding is around a teacher's use of diagnostics. Speaker, through you to the minister: Would you please clarify what this means?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: First, let me say how proud I am of the deal that we reached with OECTA. Many people thought that that deal wasn't possible, but both parties persevered through some very challenging discussions, and after more than 300 hours, we reached an agreement which reflects our core commitment to student achievement. The approach that we've taken is designed to protect teaching jobs, small class sizes, maintenance of the classroom experience and full-day kindergarten.

Mr. Speaker, the increase in diagnostic assessment is fairly recent, and it's been part of how we've seen improved student achievement in our schools. These assessments are different from standardized tests or tests for report cards—they'll continue to exist. But we don't believe we have the balance right when it comes to the teacher's ability to make decisions about the student in front of them. The OECTA MOU requires that teachers continue to conduct these assessments and that absolutely no teacher can opt out. But instead of testing for the sake of testing, we'll ensure that these assessments inform the instruction of students, because that's the right thing to do.

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

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Speaker. Again to the minister: We're all aware that the PCs do not share our view that teachers should be supported in their ability to make decisions around assessments. We've also heard that they are opposed to teachers across this province being hired in a fair and transparent way.

Given the realities of this minority government, you made changes to your bill to reflect their position. Minister, do these changes to the legislation around the balanced use of diagnostics and fair hiring no longer apply to any school board?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: As members of this Legislature will know, before we introduced the Putting Students First Act in this House, we took the rare step of releasing the legislation publicly and also to the opposition. We got some advice from the official opposition, and the changes reflect their advice without amending the memorandum of understanding that was reached after six months and 300 hours of discussion. They were incorporated before introduction to help speed this bill's passage.

But let me be very clear: Every school board in the province will be required to abide by the same fair and transparent hiring practices and the same balanced approach to diagnostic assessment. What is different is that only the boards with OECTA and AEFO teachers, or any others who sign agreements before August 31, will be required to embed those provisions in local collective agreements. My strong preference was to see these provisions in every collective agreement and also in law, but minority calls for reasonable compromise, so we'll move forward with a regulation and a policy direction under the Education Act in order that we can see this bill passed.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the Premier. Premier, I don't know if you know this, but people call you the Teflon Premier. It's not a compliment. They call you the Teflon Premier because you refuse to let anything stick to you. You refuse to show any accountability and responsibility. You occasionally provide a half-hearted apology, but when it comes to important issues facing Ontarians today, you let them slide right off of you.

So far, over 50 witnesses have been called to testify at the Standing Committee on Public Accounts investigating your government's Ornge air ambulance scandal. So far only two people have not agreed to testify: Dr. Chris Mazza and the Premier. That's some pretty select company for the Teflon Premier.

My question to the Premier is simpler: If you're not hiding anything, why don't you give the people of Ontario an hour of your time and testify in front of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on Wednesday at 9 a.m.?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, that's the 469th question asked by the opposition on the matter of Ornge,

but I would also put it in the same category as the one asked a few moments ago because it was a wasted opportunity to ask me something specific.

Again, we draw a distinction between the partisan interest and the public interest. The public interest demands that we continue to find ways to make progress. Bill 50 represents progress and is in keeping with the public interest. Receiving recommendations from the good work that has been done by the committee is in keeping with the public interest and that represents real progress.

I hope, on behalf of Ontarians, that at some point in time, the folks opposite will stop blocking Bill 50 and will give specific recommendations we can move forward with to enhance the services provided by Ornge.

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

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, let's be serious. This government's handling of the Ornge air ambulance scandal has been a debacle from start to finish. Witnesses have testified that this government stood by while employees were intimidated. Witnesses have testified that this government allowed millions of taxpayer dollars to line the pockets of Liberal insiders. Most egregious of all, witnesses have testified that the government has allowed patient safety to be compromised. All this information, all the work that this committee has done has come from testimony and people who want to improve the situation at Ornge. Imagine what we could learn if the Premier decided to testify. Imagine what we could learn if the Premier wanted to improve the situation.

Premier, will you do the honourable thing? Stand up, go to public accounts next Wednesday at 9 a.m. and tell the people of Ontario how you will improve the situation at Ornge.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Another wasted opportunity, Speaker. I'm here every day at question period and no specific, substantive questions are coming to me. There's just an endless litany of rants and rhetoric, which I don't think serve the public interest.

I think the Ornge committee has done some good work. They've heard from many, many witnesses. They've had the opportunity to examine thousands of pages of documentation. That work comes in concert with the work that we have done as a government to change the leadership, put in place a new performance agreement, to adopt the recommendations put forward by the auditor, to bring in the Ontario Provincial Police. We now have a specific piece of legislation, Bill 50. We'd like to move forward with that but they're blocking that.

We're also very interested in receiving specific recommendations: positive, constructive recommendations that will improve circumstances—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: —at Ornge, but we continue to wait for those recommendations. We continue to wait for support. When it comes to blocking Bill 50, I want to assure Ontarians they're for the partisan interest; we remain solely for the public interest.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. Ontarians are absolutely outraged at the mistreatment of whales, dolphins and seals at Marineland. A new poll shows 83% of Ontarians want stronger regulation of zoos and aquariums. The US, in fact, has legislated protection of marine mammals since the 1970s. When will your government finally protect marine mammals in Ontario?

1110

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to thank the honourable member for her question. I've had the opportunity to hear from many, many Ontarians, via social media and doing some grocery shopping, in fact, Speaker, about how concerned they are about some of the unsettling, disconcerting news that has emerged in connection with this story.

I want to assure my honourable colleague and Ontarians alike that we are taking a very, very close look at the circumstances there, that we are allowing the SPCA to conduct their investigation and we're awaiting any advice that we might receive whatsoever that would lead us to come to the conclusion that we need to put in place stronger laws in Ontario. I will say to my honourable colleague that I appreciate the question she has brought to us today, and I appreciate the concerns expressed by thousands and thousands of Ontarians around the province.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: For years, Ontario's Environmental Commissioner has been urging the McGuinty government in vain to review its zoo licensing policies and to prevent substandard facilities, like the one we discussed, from obtaining exotic species. Zoos and aquariums need licences to keep chipmunks and raccoons, but they don't need licences for whales or dolphins or lions or elephants. Let me repeat that: They need licences for raccoons and chipmunks, but they don't need licences for whales or dolphins or lions or elephants. When will this government—we're asking when, Mr. Premier—finally put forward legislation to protect sea mammals and exotic animals in Ontario? The OSPCA can do nothing without legislation.

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

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I too am very concerned about what is happening, and I want to thank the journalists who put this story in the forefront. I was very perturbed when this happened, and that's why, in 2009, we—our government—amended the legislation, and we now have the best legislation in Canada. This legislation had not been amended for the past 90 years, so we did it. If this legislation does not protect the marine mammals in Marineland, we will amend the legislation to make sure that all animals in Ontario are well protected.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: My question also is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Minister, I listened to your answer right now, and I appreciate that this government is taking this issue very seriously. As we know, there have been allegations made about Marineland and the health and wellness of animals at the facility. The news reports, as you said, have been disturbing and deeply troubling. My office has received emails and phone calls from many constituents and residents across Ontario who are very concerned about the issue and want us to take action.

Minister, what is the government doing to ensure that animals in Ontario are safe from abuse and neglect?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, I was very concerned about what I read. But one thing that I want to say to Ontarians: I want to say to you that, if you see something like this, the first thing you should do is call the OSPCA. Yes, you can call the media, but first call the OSPCA, because they are the ones that can go and do the investigation. I'm told that in that situation they didn't have any complaints, so I was sorry to hear that. But again, we amended the legislation in 2009 to make sure that all animals in Ontario are well protected. I was very perturbed when the opposition put forward legislation to diminish the power of the OSPCA. If their legislation had passed, the OSPCA would not have been able to go there right away.

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

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: My follow-up question is to the minister. As we know, this legislation, the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, is an important piece of legislation. You have mentioned how important it is. There have been allegations stating that Ontario has no laws controlling aquariums and zoos or protecting the animals inside. As I said earlier, it's very concerning to me and, I'm sure, to every member here and to many residents across Ontario. We've seen the photographs; we've seen the articles. It's quite disconcerting when you see some of these marine animals being treated the way they are.

Can you say with certainty, Minister, that our legislation protects these animals in these facilities?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Yes, the legislation that we have in place does protect the animals. It's the strongest legislation that exists in Canada. Again, if I'm told that our legislation right now does not protect the marine mammals in Marineland, we will amend the legislation, because there's no place in Ontario for the mistreatment of animals.

Shame on you, the Conservative Party, who moved forward with legislation to diminish the powers of the OSPCA. You should be embarrassed, and people should take you to task for that.

Interjections.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: Jack MacLaren doesn't like it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister of the Environment.

Interjections.

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

Next question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. Premier, in order to provide this House with accurate recommendations on how to improve patient safety at Ornge, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts needs everyone with relevant information to come forward so that we can get to the bottom of this.

You claim that your government wants to get to the bottom of this scandal, and you've said here today that you don't want to waste an opportunity to answer specific questions. Well, there is such an opportunity, Premier. It's next Wednesday at 9 o'clock in front of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. Will you agree to appear?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would recommend to my honourable colleagues opposite that they understand that there is some urgency associated with improving the quality of an air ambulance service. These are people who are involved in emergencies. You would think that the opposition would be possessed by a sense of urgency. That's why I ask yet again, on behalf of Ontarians: Why do they stand in the way of passage of Bill 50? Why do they stand in the way of the committee concluding its work so it can provide us with some specific recommendations?

We've gone about as far as we can go as a government. We've replaced the leadership, put in place a new performance agreement, brought in the OPP and crafted legislation based on recommendations received from the auditor. Now we await support from the opposition with respect to Bill 50 and we await their recommendations. If they're truly, genuinely concerned about improving the quality of services offered by Ornge, then allow us to get this work done on behalf of patients.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Mr. Speaker, this government hasn't even seen Bill 50 to be important enough to even have called it, so forget about that.

Secondly, with respect to appearances before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, this government has reversed themselves completely from what they said earlier this spring about why we should be asking these questions.

I would read from Hansard from April 25 of this year. The Minister of Health said, "The member opposite is at that committee"—the Standing Committee on Public Accounts—"and she is able to ask questions at that committee. I think it's important that members of this Legislature do have the ability to ask those questions...."

Clearly, it's a priority for this government that we deal with those issues in committee. That's what we're attempting to do. Yesterday at committee, yet another one of the cabinet ministers, the Minister of Natural Re-

sources, was found to be guiding a witness to give cover to the Minister of Health and to interim Ornge CEO Ron McKerlie.

Too many key players that are connected to this Premier are connected with this, from Liberal president Alfred Apps, Liberal strategist Don Guy and the Minister of Health. Premier, will you appear before the committee?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I might categorize my honourable colleague's assertion, contained within her question, as fanciful. I think that's the kindest way I can put it, Speaker.

1120

What I can say is that I am here today, as I am pretty well every day during question period, to receive questions from my colleagues in the opposition. But I'm very concerned about the passage of Bill 50, and I want to put my honourable colleague on notice that at the end of question period today we will be seeking unanimous consent to receive second and third reading passage of Bill 50, so it can move forward right away. In a few moments we can hear that, Speaker. At the end of the day, we should be learning whether they're going to support that on behalf of Ontarians.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. By now it's no secret that thousands of good-paying jobs will be lost as a result of your government's decision to recklessly end the slots-at-racetracks program without any consultation. Even your own transitional panel has concluded that the \$50-million fund you propose will be completely inadequate to support any bridge to sustainability for the industry. Minister, when will your government produce a transition plan that will allow for real sustainability for the horse racing industry?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: That's a very good question from the member opposite. I appreciate it. As he knows, having been integrally involved in the issue for some time, which I also appreciate, I've asked the panel to spend some time working with the industry to see if we can come up with a way forward. You know that our good friends John Snobelen and Elmer Buchanan had some very interesting comments about the SAR program, which I accept. I also accept their observations, many of which were very positive, and have asked them to work toward seeing if we can point a way forward.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Your own panel estimates that the horse racing industry sustains 20,000 to 30,000 full-time jobs and thousands more part-time and seasonal jobs. It also makes it clear that most of these jobs are in danger of being lost unless there is sustainability put on the table, more so than the \$50 million currently pledged.

Minister, these are business people. They make decisions three and four years in advance. What I'm asking

you for today is a specific timeline. Are we waiting weeks, are we waiting months, are we waiting years before this government comes to the table with a comprehensive plan to ensure that the industry can transition into sustainability and maintain those good-paying rural jobs?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Thanks again for the question. The report was quite decidedly clear about both the challenges in the industry as well as some of the potential hopeful aspects to the industry. I have asked the panel to continue to work with the industry, which by the way has been absolutely wonderful in terms of offering input. Hundreds of people offered input to the panel, and their report has been very, very well received within the industry. So I've asked the panel to reflect with the industry on what that might look like, and I've asked them to report by September 30. You know that.

ONTARIO PLACE

Mr. Mario Sergio: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. There has been a lot of talk this summer regarding the future of Ontario Place. As a resident of Toronto for the past 54 years, I have always enjoyed visits to Ontario Place as a special summer treat, as have many like me in Toronto and across the province. What was once a thriving waterfront attraction for families has suffered a steady decline in attendance numbers over the past decades. Furthermore, despite numerous studies over the past 20 years to assess strategies to improve Ontario Place, it has largely remained unchanged for its 41 years. Can the minister please elaborate on what this government is doing differently to ensure Ontario Place's future success?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much to the honourable member for asking the question. Speaker, this summer our government accepted all 18 recommendations proposed by my advisory panel on Ontario Place revitalization. The panel was chaired by John Tory and had six outstanding members, and I want to thank them for, really, a job well done.

We started a decisive plan to revitalize, renew and rejuvenate Ontario Place so that residents and visitors alike can rediscover this iconic attraction.

Speaker, a complex undertaking, the first of its kind in the history of Ontario Place, will begin with phase 1 work, including undertaking technical due diligence, site investigations, initiating an environmental assessment process and engaging in preliminary conversations with the private sector and the city of Toronto. We will gather information needed to ensure responsible, informed and prudent planning in revitalizing Ontario Place.

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

Mr. Mario Sergio: I have to thank the minister for his wonderful response.

Again, through you, Speaker: I know that many in my riding of York West are very interested in what the future

vision of Ontario Place will mean for families and the people of our province.

As we consider the future of Ontario Place, it is necessary to reflect on our past. For over 40 years, Ontario Place has been synonymous with our city's landscape: the Cinesphere and pods—an iconic landmark at our waterfront.

With 18 recommendations to consider, is there a core theme to ensure that Ontario Place remains a place for the public to enjoy, and can the minister please explain what original aspects of Ontario Place will be retained, if any?

Hon. Michael Chan: We are committed to ensuring that Ontario Place will be a place for Ontarians to live, to work, to play and to discover. Key priorities include: barrier-free access to the waterfront; favouring submissions that incorporate the Cinesphere and pods; year-round activities and events to draw diverse audiences; a mixed-use facility with strong private-public partnerships to offer innovative programming; and a residential component.

Speaker, allow me to be clear: Any development must protect sightlines to the water and create open public access to the waterfront.

Our priority is to ensure that Ontario Place will be a thriving cultural attraction that is sustainable for future generations, boosting tourism and creating jobs.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is for the Premier. Premier, your health minister has overseen as much waste, corruption and scandal as the former CEO of Enron, yet you continue to keep her on board and reject our demands for her resignation. So let's do a quick performance review to get to the bottom of it right here and now.

She's withheld critical information to get to the bottom of the mess at Ornge. She's racked up more than \$2 billion on your botched eHealth project with little to no results. She's even refused to allow the region of Waterloo to implement a life-saving emergency dispatching system that would shave two precious minutes off our response times.

So, Premier, will you commit to doing two things today: First, show up at the public accounts committee on Wednesday and tell the truth; and second, fire your incompetent health minister today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I've spoken on countless occasions about how my honourable colleagues in opposition see the matter of Ornge purely as a partisan political game. If ever there was evidence of that, it is my honourable colleague's comparison of our respected Minister of Health to the former leadership at Enron. I think that is beneath the dignity of this institution, and I would ask that my honourable colleague withdraw that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary? The member for Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, my question is a very specific one to the Premier about the air ambulance scandal. He asked for a very specific question; I'm going to give it to him.

The Premier knows how the system of debate works in this House. He knows how bills are passed. He knows that it is the government that calls bills for debate. He should know that Bill 50 was last called by his government here on June 6. He also knows, or should know, that the bill has had eight hours and 56 minutes of debate. My question is very specific: Why is the government blocking Bill 50? Why has the government not called Bill 50 for debate and moved it into committee? Why not?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think my honourable colleague knows that the matter of bringing bills forward into this House is the subject of some conversation between the House leaders.

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: In fact, it is, Speaker, especially in the context of minority government. My honourable colleague knows as well that we are very interested in moving ahead with Bill 50. It's been the subject of considerable deliberation within our government. We have adopted many recommendations we've received from outside, including those put forward by the auditor. In fact, momentarily, we'll give the opposition an opportunity to demonstrate their genuine commitment to the passage of Bill 50.

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I detect a little bit of defensiveness over there, but shortly, we'll give my honourable colleague the opportunity to in fact specifically support the passage of both second and third reading so that we can move forward with this and do what we all think clearly is in the greater public interest.

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thanks very much, Speaker, for saving me a couple of seconds. That was very helpful.

The question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. There are growing concerns about the impact of quarries in the Niagara Escarpment. Last week, the Niagara Escarpment Commission sought a judicial review of a decision to allow another major quarry, in Duntroon, on Niagara Escarpment lands, arguing that the decision failed to consider the need for a quarry.

Minister, you are in a paradoxical position of protecting the Niagara Escarpment, but also of promoting aggregate extraction. Will you assure Ontarians that you will put protection of the Niagara Escarpment first and work to reduce the impact of aggregate extraction on the ecologically important escarpment?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I do want to assure the member as well as all members of the Legislature and the province that indeed we recognize the absolute value and the ecological beauty of the Niagara Escarpment. Indeed,

that's why we have a commission in place that is there to provide us with the kind of advice that they do. At the same time, we recognize the challenges associated with the economic development opportunities that are there in terms of aggregates, but that's also why, may I say, we have a standing committee looking at the issue of aggregates in terms of review of the Aggregate Resources Act.

I can reassure the member and everyone else that indeed we take all those issues very, very seriously, as always, trying to find that balance, which is something that we speak about a great deal in our ministry and something that we try to take very, very seriously.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I would like to request permission to move a motion without notice.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has requested unanimous consent to move a motion without notice. I heard a no.

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

The House recessed from 1133 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: It is my pleasure to acknowledge three fantastic people from Pickering here in our members' gallery. They are from the Pickering Dragon Boat Club. I'm going to speak more about this in a minute in a member's statement. They set a Guinness world record. But let me introduce to you head coach Scott Murray, paddler Suzanne and steerer Alexandra. Welcome to the Legislature.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS

Mr. Robert Bailey: The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services must show leadership and end the unnecessary and senseless labour dispute that her ministry has created at Hamilton's Barton Street jail.

Since August 14, corrections officers have been off the job, sent home by managers for, of all things, asking for the right to wear their protective vests without the fear of reprisals by management in the overcrowded maximum security facility.

On Monday, over 200 corrections officers brought their pleas for increased safety in the workplace right here to Queen's Park. Yet the minister continues to allow management to punish officers who have shown up each day ready to work, wearing equipment designed only to keep them safe in the event of an attack.

Health and safety in the workplace should be a right that all employees in Ontario enjoy, yet the health and safety of Ontario's correctional officers, and now the inmates, continue to be recklessly gambled away by this

government's mismanagement of Ontario's correctional system.

Earlier today, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services jumped at the chance to boast about protecting animals at Marineland, which we also are concerned for. This is now time for this minister to show the same concern for the health and safety of Ontario's correctional officers and the inmates that are under their protection.

LOCAL BUSINESSES IN STONEY CREEK

Mr. Paul Miller: The winds of change are blowing through Stoney Creek, and they're not really welcome. For years Creekers and Hamiltonians have enjoyed the cooling refreshment of an ice cream cone, an ice cream float, a sundae or other ice cream-based taste sensations. But all that is to come to an end, and in a few short days: on September 4.

For me, it's mixed feelings, because a new seniors' residence will be built on the site, but without Stoney Creek Dairy, which has been part of my entire life, I will always feel an emptiness at its loss. As a teen, I worked at the dairy. Whenever visitors come to Stoney Creek, I always take them to the dairy for the best ice cream anywhere. At least that was the case until a couple of years ago, when the ice cream began to be made in Quebec and transported back to our dairy—the beginning of the end.

Despite the loss of our dairy, we can be grateful for the years that many in our community would meet at the dairy on a hot summer's day, the jobs that many of our youth had at the dairy and the bragging rights for having the best ice cream in Ontario.

The other big change for Stoney Creek is the loss of our downtown local TD Bank. This bank has served our community for over 40 years. Knowing those across the counter made it a safe place where we were sure that our best interests would be at the forefront. Being able to drop into the bank while out for on a walk in downtown Stoney Creek made banking comfortable for many of our seniors, who will now have a take a bus or car or taxi just to do their banking in another TD Bank.

We are saddened by the loss of those local businesses and the piece of Stoney Creek history that goes away with it.

SCHOOL FOOD AND BEVERAGE POLICY

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: I rise today to highlight something that's very important to the families in my riding and to me personally as a parent. As a mom, I know how healthy eating gives kids the fuels they need to propel them through the day. The research has consistently shown that it's imperative that kids get good nutrition and lead a healthy, active lifestyle. That's why I'm proud of our new school food and beverage policy. This policy has implemented nutrition standards for food and beverages sold in schools, including cafeterias, vending

machines and tuck shops. This will work to cultivate the healthiest environment for students and will advance their rates of success as well.

That's why I'm pleased that as part of the safe schools strategy, schools in my riding of Windsor West will receive a portion of the \$10-million investment in urban boards with at-risk students for student nutrition. I know this will mean a great deal to students and families in my riding. I am proud to be part of this government, which is committed to finding ways to make healthy food more attractive to kids, and I am proud to be part of a government that is so committed to making Ontario a healthier place for all kids to grow up.

BURLINGTON RIBFEST

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Burlington summers draw to a close with a tasty tradition, Canada's Largest Ribfest, an event that the National Post has dubbed "the Superbowl of ribfests."

This year's event, which runs from lunchtime on August 31 to dinnertime on September 3, beside Lake Ontario in the beautiful Spencer Smith Park, is the 17th annual ribfest—I can't believe that.

As in every year, the event will welcome visitors from all around the globe to taste some of the finest ribs lovingly cooked up by some of North America's top ribbers. It's also a showcase for Burlington's own Fearmans Pork, a key sponsor. Thanks to Fearmans CEO Patrick Sugrue for his involvement.

You don't even need a map. You can smell the ribs for miles, and you drive right down Lakeshore to get there, and the event always draws a crowd. Last year we had 152,000 people walk through the gates at Canada's Largest Ribfest, organized by the Rotary Club of Burlington Lakeshore.

This community event has raised more than \$2.3 million for local, national and international charities since it began. I'd like to invite my fellow members and all of Ontario to stop by and get a taste of a great Burlington tradition.

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Mrs. Laura Albanese: As the member of provincial Parliament for York South–Weston, I have been working for some time now, together with my community, in support of the redevelopment of St. John the Evangelist school. This Catholic elementary school in our riding has been overcrowded for years and now holds 480 students, although it had been designed to hold only 260.

As of next week, the students of St. John the Evangelist will be relocated 40 minutes away for the duration of the construction of the Weston tunnel by Metrolinx. The community and I are very concerned that if the school replacement does not occur at the same time that Metrolinx is building the tunnel beside the school, the kids and

families will be inconvenienced twice, through no fault of their own.

Building a new school is a priority for our community and myself. We have been advocating at the board level and with the Ministry of Education, and have been successful in securing a \$6-million commitment from the ministry last year toward a new school or an addition. Last May, the Toronto Catholic District School Board placed St. John the Evangelist first on its capital priority list. I hope to have the minister's support for additional funding to help make a new school for these students a reality.

Beginning the construction of a new school during the period of the Metrolinx construction will prevent the students from being inconvenienced twice, as I said before, through no fault of their own. This decision will have a profound effect on the kids and families of St. John.

GEORGE TACKABERRY

Mr. Steve Clark: In July, I was honoured to attend a special ceremony in the village of Athens for George Tackaberry, one of its most beloved citizens. It's a testament to this man and his remarkable contributions to the Athens-area community that most of the village showed up to celebrate with George and his family, including his 90-year-old mother, Phyllis.

By whatever measure you use, George Tackaberry is one of Athens's greatest citizens. The business he started in 1957, George Tackaberry Construction, celebrates its 55th anniversary this year. It's an incredible success story, Speaker, and over the course of those 55 years, George has lived by the philosophy that any personal success he enjoyed would be shared with the community. That commitment has motivated him to support countless projects and initiatives that have improved the quality of life for residents of all ages.

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It's impossible to compile a list, in part because so many of George's contributions were done without any fanfare whatsoever. But know this: Whether it's helping a family that lost a home to a fire, building a community soccer field or health centre, when there was a need, George was always there to help. No request was too great and none too small, including fulfilling a young boy's request to power up the local hockey rink to bring much-needed relief to a community recovering from the ice storm.

It's a privilege to know George Tackaberry. It's an honour to be able to call him a friend. I know I speak for everyone in Leeds–Grenville when I say to George, thank you.

POVERTY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yesterday, a group called Common Front released a report called Falling Behind: Ontario's Backslide into Widening Inequality, Growing Poverty and Cuts to Social Programs.

Speaker, did you know that Ontario has the largest increase in income inequality? The gap between the rich and the poor is the widest in Ontario. It has the worst record on affordable housing and the poorest funding of public services among all the other provinces in Canada. The report puts our province at the bottom of the pack when it comes to funding and access to public services like health care, education, justice or disability benefits.

It is time for every Ontarian, including our policy-makers, to face the disturbing facts about the growing gaps between the rich and the poor. Did you know that the average CEO salary has grown from 25 times that of the average Canadian worker to 250 times the salary of the average Canadian? This is unbelievable. Why is it that the rich keep getting richer and the poor keep getting poorer?

This is not the result of economic concerns; it is the result of wrong-headed political decisions, political decisions that need to be changed so every Ontario resident has a chance at a better life.

PICKERING DRAGON BOAT CLUB

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Today, I'm very pleased to rise in the House to pay a very special tribute to a remarkable group of local athletes from my riding in Pickering–Scarborough East. Just this past Sunday, August 26, the Pickering Dragon Boat Club set a Guinness world record by paddling 214.39 kilometres. This feat marks the longest distance travelled in a dragon boat in 24 hours by a single crew. They have now successfully reclaimed the record they held from 2004 to 2008 after their initial record was eclipsed by an Australian club.

The 26-member team ranged in age from 19 to 59 years old, including 14 women and 12 men. They began their journey in Pickering's beautiful Frenchman's Bay at 12 p.m. last Saturday. The group paddled on the waters of Lake Ontario and Frenchman's Bay for the next 24 hours to establish the record, eclipsing the existing record by 39 kilometres.

Pickering Dragon Boat Club members regularly compete at local, national and international competitions and are very proud to represent the city of Pickering, the province of Ontario and our wonderful country through the spirit of sport.

I'm pleased to welcome to the Legislature today head coach Scott Murray and team members paddler Suzanne and steerer Alexandra Hennig. Garrett McKinnon was hoping to join us but unfortunately can't be here today. So a shout-out on TV to Garrett. Congratulations to all of you and your club on your achievement.

LEADING GIRLS, BUILDING COMMUNITIES AWARDS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like introduce this House to outstanding young women from my riding of Durham. They have been honoured and nominated for improving

the lives of their community. These young women, all under the age of 18, are positive role models and leaders in every sense of the word. They have been recognized with Leading Girls, Building Communities Awards.

Time does not allow me to give each detail about their accomplishments. However, the group includes several young women who have raised awareness and funds for medical research. One has received an international science award twice. Others have travelled overseas for humanitarian missions and helped their peers and their communities in all their volunteer activities.

Congratulations to the following Leading Girls: Madison Blenkinsop, Lauren Doorenspleet, Julia Gregg, Anissa Gregorio, Katharina Keays, Arielle Keene, Kathryn Lang, Jamie MacDonald, Rebecca MacDonald, Kaylin Morissette, Courtney Porter, Lauren Reid, Mikayla Robertson, Nelly Schurman, Sydney Schurman, Jessica Van Der Veer, Emma Ward, Siobhan Ward and Mikayla Witherspoon.

It was my distinct pleasure to have introduced those young women last night to over 500 people in my riding of Durham. We should all commend them and be proud of their achievements and wish them luck in their future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the time.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PERFORMANCE PAY AND BONUSES IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR ACT (MANAGEMENT AND EXCLUDED EMPLOYEES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LES PRIMES DE RENDEMENT ET AUTRES PRIMES DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC (CADRES ET EMPLOYÉS EXCLUS)

Mr. Bisson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 118, An Act respecting performance pay and bonuses for management and excluded employees in the public sector / Projet de loi 118, Loi concernant les primes de rendement et autres primes versées aux cadres et aux employés exclus du secteur public.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Introduction of bills?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sorry. My apologies.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm beginning to think you're picking on me.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): No.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Jeez, that's three times in two days.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, this bill enacts the Performance Pay and Bonuses in the Public Sector Act, 2012. The act provides that new or renewed employees contracted with certain employers within the public sector cannot be authorized for performance-for-pay bonuses.

Autrement dit, monsieur le Président, ce projet de loi donne l'habilité de s'assurer qu'il n'y a plus de—bonus?

M^{me} France Gélinas: De bonus.

M. Gilles Bisson: —de bonus, en français, excuse moi—qui soient payés après la date de ce projet de loi.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition. It's really on behalf of the constituents in northern Ontario and the hard work done by Vic Fedeli, the member from Nipissing. It reads as follows:

“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 had 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

“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;”—shameful—“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’m pleased to sign and endorse this on behalf of those constituents and the MPP for Nipissing.

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RADIATION SAFETY

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

“Whereas the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) is in serious need of modernization;

“Whereas the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) is not in harmony with all the following acts, regulations, guidelines and codes: the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario, the radiation protection regulations of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, the safety codes of Health Canada and the radiation protection guidelines of the International Commission on Radiological Protection;

“Whereas dental hygienists 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 undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To express support for the motion filed on April 17, 2012, by Reza Moridi, 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, make recommendations on how to modernize this act, and bring it to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and the public and to include all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes.”

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

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Today in the gallery, I have members from my community from the Rideau Carleton Raceway who have made the long trip from Ottawa. On behalf of them, I’d like to read these 10,000 signatures into the record on the following petition:

“Whereas the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry generates \$2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario;

“Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry;

“Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;

“Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates \$1.3 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in the province for OLG;

“Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government \$1.1 billion per year and threatens more than 60,000 jobs;

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

“Call on the government of Ontario to:

“(1) protect the \$1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program; and

“(2) direct OLG to honour the contracts with racetracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program.”

I concur and agree wholeheartedly with this petition, and I affix my signature in support of the people of Nepean–Carleton, whom I proudly represent.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Paul Miller: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s cardiologists provide accessible, efficient, and cost-effective diagnostic testing services that save, and improve, the lives of thousands of people each year; and

“Whereas the Ontario government’s unilateral, punitive changes to the OHIP fee schedule will result in the elimination of these crucial services, thereby leading to a reduction in patient access to care, the lengthening of waiting lists for services, the eradication of high-quality health professional jobs, and an increase in preventable deaths; and

“Whereas the Ontario Association of Cardiologists has presented an alternative, namely, the implementation of new, rigorous standards, which would ensure that cardiac diagnostic tests are done on the right patients, at the right time, by appropriately trained people, in accredited facilities, thereby reducing the number of inappropriate tests and leading to significant financial savings for the government; and

“Whereas the proposal has the endorsement of the highly respected Cardiac Care Network of Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“Direct the Ontario government to repeal the OHIP fee schedule regulation changes filed on May 7, 2012, and instruct the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to work with the Ontario Association of Cardiologists to implement proposed cardiac diagnostic testing standards across the province.”

I agree with this petition and will affix my name.

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 Safa.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a number of petitions that I’m also delivering on behalf of my colleague from Nepean–Carleton. I want to congratulate her on assembling thousands upon thousands upon thousands of signatures of people who are concerned about the horse racing industry.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario....

“Whereas the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry generates \$2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario;

“Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry;

“Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;

“Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates \$1.3 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in the province for OLG;

“Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government \$1.1 billion a year and threatens more than 60,000 jobs;

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

“Call on the Ontario government to:

“(1) protect the \$1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program; and

“(2) direct OLG to honour the contracts with racetracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program.”

I support this petition, affix my name and send it down with Gopi.

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HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Miller: This seems to be a recurring theme today. I guess it’s telling the government something.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry generates \$2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario;

“Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by Ontario’s horse racing and breeding industry;

“Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;

“Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates \$1.1 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in the province for OLG;

“Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government \$1.1 billion a year and threatens more than 60,000 jobs;

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

“Call on the Ontario government to protect the \$1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program; direct OLG to honour the contracts with racetracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program.”

I couldn’t agree with this more. I will affix my name.

Interruption.

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

I have to address for a moment the people who are with us as guests in the visitors’ gallery. We can’t allow any clapping from the visitors’ gallery, and I would ask

that you respect that rule of the Ontario Legislature. Thank you very much.

Petitions?

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Frank Klees: I too want to address this very important issue, having had many meetings with constituents whose investments and jobs are at stake on this issue. The petition reads:

“Whereas the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry generates \$2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario;

“Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry;

“Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;

“Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates \$1.3 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in the province for OLG;

“Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government \$1.1 billion a year and threatens more than 60,000 jobs;

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

“Call on the Ontario government to:

“(1) protect the \$1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program; and

“(2) direct OLG to honour the contracts with racetracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program.”

I’m pleased to add my signature in support of this petition, and I know that the backbenchers of the government are embarrassed by this terrible, terrible—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Petitions? Are there any more petitions?

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Todd Smith: I too would like to stand on behalf of a number of my constituents in the Prince Edward–Hastings riding whose livelihoods and futures are at stake because of this move by the McGuinty government.

“Whereas the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry generates \$2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario;

“Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry;

“Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;

“Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates \$1.3 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in the province for OLG;

“Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government \$1.1 billion a year and threatens more than 60,000 jobs;

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

“Call on the government of Ontario to:

“(1) protect the \$1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program; and

“(2) direct OLG to honour the contracts with racetracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program.”

I would also like to congratulate the member from Nepean–Carleton, Lisa MacLeod, for bringing forward her motion this afternoon, and we look forward to the support of the Legislature.

I will affix my name to this and hand it over to Jacqueline.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for petitions. Orders of the day.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

MUNICIPAL AMENDMENT ACT (ELECTION OF CHAIR OF YORK REGION), 2012 LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MUNICIPALITÉS (ÉLECTION DU PRÉSIDENT DE LA RÉGION DE YORK)

Mr. Moridi moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 60, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 to provide that the head of council of The Regional Municipality of York must be elected / Projet de loi 60, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités pour prévoir que le président du conseil de la municipalité régionale de York doit être élu.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation, and I’m pleased again to recognize the member for Richmond Hill.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this House today to present you and my honourable colleagues with Bill 60, which, if passed, will change the face of local politics in York region, and effectively my constituents in Richmond Hill.

I can say that I have had an interest in local politics all my life, and when I moved to Richmond Hill 22 years

ago, I was surprised to learn that the chair of the region is not an elected position. What is even more interesting is that the population of York region is over one million. Its growth rate of 22.4% from 2001 to 2006 was the third highest amongst all census divisions in Canada, and its population is expected to surpass 1.5 million residents by the year 2031.

My town of Richmond Hill, a lower-tier municipality, which has a population much less than a quarter of that of York region, is governed by an elected council, consisting of our mayor, two regional councillors and six ward councillors. These public officials have been elected by the constituents they serve and are accountable to the public at large.

You may ask: Who is the official that is the representative of almost one million constituents at the regional level? That will be the chair of the regional municipality of York. It may interest my honourable colleagues to note that this position, which was created in 1971, is not an elected position, and the person who holds this privilege of wearing the chain is appointed by the members of the regional council in a closed-door and non-transparent fashion.

I want to take this time to provide some background on York region and the position of the chair. The regional municipality of York is a regional municipality in southern Ontario between Lake Simcoe and the city of Toronto. There are nine municipalities that are included in York region. They are as follows: town of Aurora, town of East Gwillimbury, town of Georgina, township of King, city of Markham, town of Newmarket, town of Richmond Hill, city of Vaughan, and town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

The York regional council is the political body for the municipality of York region. It consists of 20 elected representatives, plus the politically appointed regional chair. The elected representatives are the nine mayors of each of the municipalities, plus 11 regional councillors.

The first time the York region chair was appointed by the provincial government was back in 1971, out of necessity to get the ball rolling. This happened when the population of York region was roughly 170,000 people, less than the present-day population of Richmond Hill alone. Since then, the chair has been appointed out of tradition, even though the population of the region is now over one million—more than the province of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and any of the Maritime provinces.

Interestingly enough, the York region chair is the only member of the regional council who is not elected and is, instead, appointed. He is appointed in a few short minutes behind closed doors by the 20 members of council to represent the over one million people and serve a four-year term.

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The current chair has been in office for the past 15 years. He has been unanimously appointed for five consecutive terms. The chair, who has the privilege of wearing the chain of the region, has not once had to turn to the people whom he represents and ask for their sup-

port, unlike every single member who sits on that council. Interestingly enough, the most important position in this growing region of over one million people is not an elected position.

Mr. Speaker, in this democratic country of ours, I see a big gap in democracy when it comes to the governance of the municipality of York region. This is a public office, a public position. The holder of this office acts as the political face when advocating on regional matters. It's also a position which, in case of a tie vote, has the power to break the tie, and as such change the direction of the council.

The chair, who is appointed by 20 people, has no method of accountability to any of the constituents in the municipality he or she represents. I would argue that with the election of the chair, we will bring that accountability and transparency to this office and will ensure there is fair representation.

I want to take this time to give a short synopsis of some of the duties, responsibilities and services that fall under the purview of the chair. The regional chair makes very important decisions, as he is the chief executive officer and chairman of council. As the CEO, the chair executes all activities and provides leadership in areas such as tactical and financial planning.

The chair has a budget of roughly \$2.8 billion, a budget bigger than some ministers have. This budget supports some of the following services: children's services, community planning, construction, corporate services, economic strategy and tourism, emergency medical services, environment, financial department, forestry, housing, infrastructure planning, legal services, long-term care and seniors, public health and safety, real estate, regional property taxes, transportation services, sewers, employment and financial support, transit, water, waste management, and policing. This is quite a lengthy list of some of the essential services that are under the purview of a position with no method of accountability to the public that it serves.

One can conclude from looking at the responsibilities, duties and, most significantly, scope of authority and the budget of the region that the position of chair is very much equivalent to a mayor's position. Mr. Speaker, can you imagine that the public would accept a politically appointed mayor for the city of Toronto or Richmond Hill?

As the population of cities continues to grow, more and more regions have started electing their regional chair in order for the chair to reflect the needs of the regions' constituents. Halton and Waterloo regions, unlike York region, directly elect their regional chairs and have a combined population less than that of York region. Durham region recently conducted a referendum where the residents were in support of direct election of their regional chair.

The conversation on the topic of election of the chair of Durham region has been taking place for over 10 years. It's important to note that this notion of a democratic process being introduced at the regional level

is not a new one, but one that is very much overdue, not only in York region but in all regions of this province.

The mayor of Ajax, Steve Parish, is a huge proponent of elimination of the status quo with respect to the position of regional chair. For over a decade, His Worship Steve Parish has advocated for change in Durham region, and he very pointedly addresses one of the main arguments against election of the chair, being the logistical issues of running a campaign over nine municipalities with no centralized medium for communication.

I quote Mr. Parish: "To me, this is very basic. It's just about democracy." And it also gives residents, who pay half of their taxes to the region, a say in deciding what the priorities of their community should be.

Since the introduction of this bill, this past spring, Mr. Speaker, I have received a tremendous amount of support from the residents of York region, former mayors and councillors within York region, voicing their strong support for the elimination of the status quo in our regional council.

This past July, the social planning council of York region organized a panel discussion that focused on the implementation of electing the regional chair of York region. The panellists included Professor Robert MacDermid, associate professor of political sciences at York University; Mr. Benjamin Earle, manager of the Community Development Council Durham; and myself. A constructive dialogue took place, and the constituents were able to not only show their support but also voice any concerns they may have had on the issue.

Former mayors of Richmond Hill Mr. Al Duffy and Mr. Bill Bell support the elimination of the status quo and the election of the chair.

The election of the chair must be transparent and democratic, a process that is open to the public at large, and should not be a political decision made behind closed doors. Mr. Speaker, we must bring democracy back to the regional council of York. The current process in place for the appointment of the regional chair is outdated.

My honourable colleagues, the sole purpose of this bill is to increase transparency and to bring forward the democratic process to the office of the chair of York region. I truly believe, as do some of my colleagues who will speak in support of this bill, that the holder of this position should be elected by the residents of York region rather than being appointed behind closed doors in a non-transparent method by members of regional council.

I ask my colleagues in this House to vote in favour of this bill and bring democracy back to York region. Mr. Speaker, one million residents of York region deserve a chair accountable to them.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'm delighted to add a few words to this debate.

The first thing I want to say is congratulations to my colleague from Richmond Hill. We are in agreement on

this, and I certainly will be supporting this bill during the vote. It's high time.

I have been the recipient of an honour in representing the riding of Thornhill in the region of York for the past five years, as the Speaker knows and as most people in this House know. Interestingly, in doing so, I represent significant portions of two of the major cities in York region, Vaughan and Markham—by far the dominant cities in York region, you could say.

Mr. Frank Klees: Hey!

Mr. Peter Shurman: I know my colleague from Newmarket—Aurora has some questions about that, but you'll get your turn.

A few facts about York region that bear repetition have been raised by my friend from Richmond Hill. York region is now—and we like to brag about this—home to over one million people. This is very significant, and by far the largest aspect of growth that we can see all over Ontario—in terms of businesses, in terms of individuals, individual homes and so forth. And as he pointed out, by 2031 we expect that to go up another 50%, to 1.5 million. We see high-rises, we see additional single-family units being put up as we speak, and more to come.

We also see in the past week a revelation that new ridings are being defined at the federal level, which will affect us in this Legislature—a number of them coming to York region. Why? Because of this significant growth in population. It is the sixth-largest Canadian municipality by population—the sixth-largest, Speaker. At \$43 billion, the economy of York region is larger than the economies of four Canadian provinces, with an annual budget, managed by the chair of York region, of \$2.8 billion—not an insignificant sum.

With the size and the complexity of this region, it is a tall order to govern York region effectively, and it is important that all politicians of all political stripes ensure civic democracy is upheld and is embraced. And that is embodied by the concept of this very short, very simple but very poignant bill that says in a line or two that we should have a democratically elected chair of York region. The chair in York region, the chair of any region, and certainly one of this size, has incredible and, if I may say, sweeping powers, with not very much accountability, and I think it is reasonable to characterize that position as more than a chair; it's almost like a czar.

1350

Having said that, I don't want to bring in personalities, so I will acknowledge the fact that the chair of York region, for many years now, has been Mr. Bill Fisch. He's a good politician, he's a good man, he's done a good job, and we're not debating whether he has or he hasn't. We're debating the fact that a small circle of people, as my friend from Richmond Hill pointed out, elect Mr. Fisch, and Mr. Fisch has no reason to answer directly to electors; they haven't cast a ballot for him.

So decisions regarding the services that have been elaborated on, like housing and health care, regional roads, transportation, police, have to be based on input from regular, everyday citizens in York region or any-

where else, and right now, that is a very indirect process that works through mayors and regional councillors.

The York Region Transit strike, which was the subject of a bill that I brought before this Legislature back in the fall—and a strike that endured for about four months, causing great hardship during the winter—was an illustration of why I believe we should have had an elected chair who was directly accountable to individuals. York region residents were not able to get their kids to school in that case, and families, businesses and the economy all suffered.

Durham region has seen the light and has decided that an elected chair is the way to go. I think I will finish by simply leaving that point hanging in the air and saying that the same should exist for a region that is, by far, undergoing the greatest growth curve ever, and will continue to do so for the next 15 or 20 years. We need an elected chair in York region.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: Mr. Moridi, I thank you very much for bringing this bill forward. I personally will be supporting it when it comes to a vote this afternoon.

We realize that this bill is contentious. We realized, from what we read in the newspapers, especially in York region, that there are those in York region who are not supporting your bill. We realize that some politicians have a vested interest in keeping things the way that they are, and we also understand that some municipalities feel uncomfortable that the larger-populated municipalities, with more voters, will have more sway and determination in determining who the regional chair ultimately is for York region. But I think we need to debate this here today, and we need to pass this.

For those who are the least bit squeamish about it, rest assured that the first thing that happens will be the debate in this Legislature and, should the bill get third and final reading, there are still two other citizen referenda that need to take place. First of all, the regional council is going to have to agree to this, and a majority of the local councils—the third tier—are going to have to agree as well. So it is a process that's going to take some time, but I welcome the opportunity to talk about why its time has come.

I go back to my old days as a mayor and my appointment to the regional council as it then was, which was Metro council—

Interjection: It wasn't that long ago.

Mr. Michael Prue: It was a few years ago. When Metro council was first set up in Toronto, it was very much the same as the regional councils around the other parts of the province. They were all set up using the old county warden system, but I want to say that they are very different from the warden system, and those who live in rural Ontario and who have a warden ought not to equate them the same way.

After a number of years with people being appointed by the local councils and being sent down to Metro, it was determined by the Legislature that the system really

wasn't working for Toronto, and a system was set up which allowed for direct election of regional councillors. There wasn't a direct election of the chair, although I am sure, had Metro council continued to this day, that would now be done. But what there was was an opportunity for some 26 people to be elected in their respective constituencies, and the six mayors also had a seat on the Metro council as well. From amongst that group of 32 people, a person was chosen to be the chair.

It worked. People used to come from all over the world to see the city that worked. It worked because there were six individual municipalities that ran the local day-to-day affairs and had control over planning in their respective neighbourhoods. It worked because there was an overarching body, Metro council, which did the big things that needed to be done, everything from the police force to water and sewers and those kinds of things, so that the city worked. People came from all over the world to discover that, and they need to come from all over the world to see how it will work in York region as well.

Part of the way that that happens is that the tradition has to be democratic. Durham region, in the last municipal election, overwhelmingly voted for an elected regional chair. I think it makes sense, because someone who speaks on behalf of the entire region—and, in many of the places, they wear a chain of office. I think they wear one in York region. Does Bill Fisch have a chain of office? I think he does. A big chain of office—well, that is the person who is the spokesperson for the region, and if you are going to have that kind of authority and wear that kind of chain of office, then I think the covenant has to come from the people, not from some 20 individuals who are elected in their own right.

I want to confirm and echo what my colleague from Thornhill had to say. I have known Bill Fisch for some 20 years. He is a competent and good politician. He is a bright man. He is very capable in terms of reaching out to consensus from the 20 people whom he chairs at meetings, and I have no doubt that should he want to continue in this role and run for regional chair, there are many who would vote for him. But in the end, if you do not have that covenant with the people, if you are simply the appointee of some 20 individuals who make that decision, usually behind closed doors—and I don't know how the vote is held, whether it's by a show of hands or if it's by secret ballot. But in any event, you need to have that covenant of being elected. I cannot imagine a mayor in any one of the 445 municipalities of this province saying, "I am the mayor, and I was chosen without any kind of democratic tradition. The council just simply came along and said, 'Will you be our mayor?'" and people would accept that as being right. It cannot be right. We have a system of government in this province. We have a federal government. We have a provincial government. In many places where we don't have a single tier, we have two-tier municipal governments, and all of them need to have a democratic tradition.

The issue, to my mind, has to be giving the people the ultimate authority to make the decisions. If you are afraid

of the people as a politician, you ought not to be in this game, you ought not to be here, because every election, every time you go out to a meeting or anything, you have to listen to them, you have to co-operate with them, you have to understand with them. Ultimately, if you don't agree with them, you have to have the courage of your own conviction to explain that. That's why I am asking that a regional chair must do the same thing.

We ought not, as I said earlier, to confuse this with the warden system. In much of rural Ontario we have county wardens. The warden's job, traditionally, has been for one year. So in a four-year term, as we have now municipally across the province, you may have as many as four wardens in a single term. Somebody will do it for a year—it's a ceremonial position. Someone will do it for the second year and the third year. Some wardens, I know, are there for all four years, but many are not. But this is a four-year term. A lot happens politically in four years, and if you are going to occupy that same seat for four years, you ought to do it.

I am mindful that this is a process that has taken place across all of Ontario over an extended period of time. Metro council is no longer there. Following amalgamation, we went to a single tier, but I am confident that would have changed. I also know the same thing happened in Hamilton-Wentworth. They had an elected chair, but of course following the amalgamation of Hamilton with some of the municipalities, Stoney Creek and others around them, that, too, went away.

But you have other regional municipalities. We have Halton. We have Waterloo. We have other regional municipalities that have already seized this. We have Durham, which has had a vote, and Peel, which in 2014 is going to join that rank.

1400

I believe that this Legislature has an obligation to all of the people of Ontario and especially, at this juncture and in this debate, to all the people of York region. If democracy is good enough for electing someone to this Legislature, then democracy has to be the key aspect in electing someone to the regional chair.

Canada prides itself around the world on talking about democracy and human rights. When we go to parliamentary conferences or other conferences, we often are critical of places where they take away the rights of people to vote. When we see, in dictatorships or in less-than-free elections in some countries, the kind of aspects we would not tolerate here—people stuffing ballot boxes, opposition parties not being allowed to run, candidates not allowed to put their names forward, people not having a choice between two individuals or two parties where you have one-party systems in some countries—we are critical of that.

In order for us to stand tall in this Legislature, in order for us to do the right thing, I think we need to pass, at second reading, Mr. Moridi's bill today, and in so doing, I think we need to tell people that we think the highest principle of all is that of democracy and of letting people decide what they can do with their ballot and who they

want to be their leaders. If there are those who oppose this, if it passes second reading, then I expect this bill, as all bills, will go to committee. I invite those people who think there are priorities other than democracy at play here to come forward and tell us what they are.

Is it going to be expensive to run a campaign to be regional chair across a whole region? It can be, but it need not be. People can make decisions without having thousands of TV ads and all the paraphernalia. They know who the players are, and they know who they want their leaders to be. I certainly know that an election can be held and should be held that doesn't cost the earth.

I want to leave a minute and a half or so for my colleague Mr. Miller to speak to this as well. I ask all the members: Please, in the name of democracy and in the name of the people of York region, who really, really should be able to choose their own leaders, pass this bill. Let's send it to committee and let's make sure that this is one of the last vestiges of a non-democratic system left in this province. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the member for Oak Ridges–Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise in support of Bill 60, brought forward by my colleague, my neighbour, the member for Richmond Hill. It's been stated that the population of York region is 1.1 million. Of those individuals, some 230,000 live in the riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, and in fact I represent four municipalities out of the nine. The issue for me is in fact to echo what has been said. It's all about representative democracy. I believe that in our society we value representative democracy, and in the case of the selection of the regional chair in York region, that is clearly absent.

I have, as a former employee of the region, and since my election, attended eight inaugural meetings of regional council. This is a meeting that's held following the municipal election after each term of office of municipal councillors to select the chair of York region. Of those eight occasions I attended, there was only one where there was more than one candidate proposed. In other words, in the other seven, there was only one nomination and an acclamation of the regional chair, and in all those cases, that individual had not been elected in the previous municipal process. There was only one occasion, in 1997, when in fact three members, duly elected in their municipalities, were nominated for the position of regional chair. In fact, to answer our colleague from Beaches–East York's question, they were elected by a show of hands, with all the potential that that involves; in other words, no type of secret ballot whatsoever, even among those 20 individuals on regional council.

I think the average person in York region is really unaware of the scope, the role, of the regional chairman. It was brought home to me during the York Region Transit strike. I think all of us members from York region received many different phone calls from individuals to our constituency offices, obviously hoping for an end to the strike. In explaining the role of the regional chairman

in terms of his authority when it came to regional transit, the majority of my constituents just didn't understand this. They had no concept of the importance of the role of that individual.

It's partly, in York region, a difficult role to understand because services are provided in really quite a unique way in York region. Garbage collection—curbside garbage—is actually the responsibility of the local municipality, so if your garbage isn't picked up, of course, you phone your local town or city. What is not understood is that the whole waste management process beyond that curbside pickup is in fact the responsibility of the region. It's very similar for water distribution pipes. What comes into your home, the distribution to your home, is actually the responsibility of the local municipality, whereas the provision of potable water is the responsibility of the region. So when you have something that directly affects you, you spend your time phoning your local municipality, and you're completely unaware of this massive responsibility that in fact the region has.

For me, this is all about representative democracy. I think we value citizen engagement in the process. There's an opportunity for candidates for regional chair to put forward their proposal for the next four years for the region; in other words, to espouse a particular platform. The citizens are to be engaged and, at the end of the four years, are to hold that particular individual accountable, obviously through an election process, and to give a report card on that individual's performance.

It's not about the individual who has been mentioned. I worked for Bill Fisch for many long years. He has made this a full-time job. He is passionately committed to the region. This is all about representative democracy.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to join the debate on Bill 60, the proposal from my colleague the MPP for Richmond Hill to hold a direct election for the chair of York region. Let me say at the outset that I intend to support this bill, and I look forward to it moving forward for public debate and consultation.

I think all of us agree that the key to representative democracy is just that: An election is the best way to make sure that representative democracy is being met—the demands.

According to media reports, York region's municipalities are split on the idea of direct election, and York region council itself has voted down the idea. I'd put that in the context, as well, of the many other regions that have chosen to go in this direction. Perhaps there needs to be more understanding of the way in which it's done.

I also want to make sure that people understand that my support for this has nothing to do with the current chair. The current chair, Bill Fisch, has always received strong support from the council and has been re-elected by the council unanimously the last three times. I've worked with him on a number of issues and always found him to be helpful to me and to my constituents.

My biggest concern about a directly elected chair is, quite frankly, the manner in which it's done, because I represent the municipalities at the northern end of York region, which have smaller populations than the ones at the southern end. If we were to take the raw numbers, obviously a potential candidate for chair could get virtually all the votes he needs in the southern part of York region without any kind of consideration for the northern part. Obviously, I would find that not to be appropriate. We have to look at making sure there's a mechanism that recognizes the differences.

Just to name one, the role of agriculture in the municipalities that I represent is just a simple example. We've already dealt—and I know in this chamber I have dealt—with the issue and raised a resolution a few years ago on the underfunding by the province of the high-growth areas, particularly of York region, so I don't want to see this then become an issue that gets replicated on a municipal level in any reconfiguration.

1410

I might also remind members that when Ottawa and Hamilton were amalgamated, there were concerns, but the population disparities between city and suburb were nowhere near as great as they are in York region between north and south. So I think there are a lot of questions to be dealt with on the broader basis of the governance and the manner in which this election would take place. Before we move to a direct election, we need to be absolutely sure that the system would work better than we have now, and for everyone in York region.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: The member from Beaches—East York left me at least a minute. I'd like to get in quickly.

There are only two regions left that have an unelected chair, and those are Peel and Niagara. I hope they follow suit. We certainly support this endeavour—full support from our caucus.

Let's face it: Democracy rules. People should be elected in those types of positions. I'm sure that Mr. Fisch does a great job, and he's probably very credible. But, you know, when you don't have to answer to the voting public, it certainly gives you a safe zone where you don't feel challenged or you don't feel like if you say the wrong thing you're going to pay at election time.

So I think this is a good thing. It's a good endeavour. Certainly, in our region, in Hamilton region, we had an elected chair, Terry Cooke, at the time. He was an excellent chair, but he certainly knew that he had to answer to the people of Hamilton, who are very outspoken and will certainly let you know when you're doing the wrong thing. He listened to them on more than one occasion, and maybe went against his better judgment or maybe some of the groups that he favoured privately he might have gone the other way, but through pressure from the public he did the right thing. So I really feel that this is a great thing, and I commend the member for bringing it forward.

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

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: I'm very happy to rise today and to speak in support of my colleague from Richmond Hill's private member's bill, Bill 60. I understand, and I'm hearing, that the bill has the support of members opposite. This is great to see.

The bill is quite simply about democracy, as others have said, and the ability of York region constituents to directly elect one of their most influential government leaders. Regional councils provide services to residents and businesses. Their responsibilities include making decisions on residential and commercial development, regional transit and roads, waste management, policing, emergency services and social services. York region consists of 20 elected reps, plus the regional chair, overseeing a population of well over a million people. York residents and businesses will pay \$2.8 billion for the services administered by the region, which is more than the budget of some provincial ministries, as mentioned earlier.

Clearly, much has changed in York region since the chair was first appointed out of necessity by the province in 1971. At the time, the inaugural chair was appointed by provincial cabinet. However, it was never intended to be a perpetually appointed position. As chief executive officer of council, the regional chairperson provides leadership in all areas of planning and represents the region around the table at the provincial and federal levels of government.

Let me be clear on one point, Speaker: I speak today not to challenge the record of the chairperson of York or any chair of any region in Ontario, but in support of legislation making the office of the York region chairperson an elected position. In my home region of Durham, which has a population just over half of that of York region, a referendum on direct election of Durham's regional chairperson was held last municipal election, where over 80% of voters voted in favour of direct election. After receiving the required triple majority, Durham region constituents will be electing their regional chairperson in the 2014 municipal election. Durham will join Waterloo and Halton region in directly electing their chairs. I do stand in support of this bill.

I would like to add one more point—not directly related to the bill, but which I think is very important. Others have alluded to this: that it does appear that it's a very expensive undertaking to run an election of this magnitude at a regional level. I feel strongly about accessibility to elected positions. It may be time to rethink and look at the rules and regulations around that, because I think to have good representatives, we have to make elected positions accessible to all Ontarians.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to rise in support of this bill. I want to thank my colleague the member for Richmond Hill for bringing it forward.

It's interesting; I wrote a column in May of this year, and the headline of that column was about why you couldn't vote for the most powerful politician in York region, and it was all about this issue. What was interesting is all the feedback that I had. No one in York region realized that the chair was not elected. They see Mr. Fisch everywhere. They see him wearing the chain of office. They know that he is a spokesperson for York region. They assumed that at some point he also had to be elected. Well, that isn't the case.

I consider Bill Fisch a good friend. He has done an excellent job. But this is all about democracy, it's about transparency and it's about accountability. I believe particularly, as was said already, given the growth of York region over the last number of years and what will be continued growth, there is a need for us to have the chair of that region fully accountable and supported by direct election.

I also want to just add this to the discussion. I know that Mr. Fisch today has the title of chair and CEO. I fundamentally believe that that is a conflict. I believe that there's a role for a chief executive officer, whether it be at the municipal level or whether that be at a corporate level. The functions of a chair are very different from the functions of a CEO, and I believe, particularly with the complexity of the business that is being done at the region of York, that it will be in the best interests of that individual to have those functions separated. So I will support this.

I think the arguments that are being made about the fact that you have to be able to represent rural parts of the region as well as urban parts—look, many of us have the same issue. There have been times when I've represented parts of York region where I've had to represent urban and, at the same time, rural areas. That is our responsibility. We have the ability to assess the differences of our communities, and at the end we're charged with making the right decision, making the decision that is in the best interests of all of the people we represent, and that would be the responsibility of a directly elected chair.

Speaker, thank you for the opportunity. Again I want to say thank you to my colleague. Our critic for municipal affairs will also add his comments.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate today. I want to begin by commending the member from Richmond Hill for bringing this bill forward. From what I've heard this afternoon, it's going to meet with the pleasure of the House. I think that's a good thing when we can all support an initiative like this.

It's an idea that I support, and it's based on my local experience. Prior to serving at Queen's Park, I spent 18 years in the capacity of a regional councillor in the region of Halton and for the town of Oakville. When I was first elected—it was 1984 or 1985—I was still in my twenties. One of the first things we had to do as a council was go in a little side room off the council chambers, quite similar to the lobbies we have here, and we decided who

the chair was going to be. In the region of Halton at that point in time, the chair had to be somebody who had just been elected a few weeks ago. You would pick somebody from amongst the council. There would be a vote held in the lobby, and then there would be another formal vote held in the council chamber. I was uncomfortable with that. I voiced my discomfort with it, but as a young 20-something-year-old and the new kid on the block, I wasn't really listened to.

1420

Fast-forward to the mid-1990s: I raised the issue again, and it started to gather some support. Certainly, I sensed it had support among the electorate. It was actually the former member for Burlington who became the regional chair. She wasn't first elected as regional chair; she was appointed as regional chair. She had the fortitude to stand up and support the notion that the chair for the region of Halton should be elected. It's something we've become used to in the region of Halton and the town of Oakville. It's something that works really well.

I know that some people have raised the concern that by having an elected chair you strengthen the region at the expense of the smaller communities. In my experience, exactly the opposite is true. We've got four municipalities in the region of Halton: We've got Oakville, we've got Burlington, we've got Milton and we've got Halton Hills. I don't think any one of them feels their individual voices have been stifled at the expense of the region.

The region of Halton, in my estimation, is a municipality that works extremely well. It's got people who are very dedicated, and it's got what I think is a very accountable chair at the regional level in Gary Carr, not just because of the individual he is, and having sat in the chair you're occupying right now, Speaker—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: He's a great guy.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: He is a great guy, and he's done a very good job and goes out of his way to ensure that each municipality is heard from. But every four years, like you and me, Speaker, he has to go out and face the electorate in the region of Halton.

What I think it has done is two things. It has made the level of government and the system of government far more accountable, but it also—I think another speaker this afternoon said that the people they were speaking to didn't realize that the regional chair in York was not elected. In this case, what I think it does is raise the profile of the region at election time. It makes regional issues become election issues. It gets people talking about what the region should be doing and shouldn't be doing.

I know that Durham has joined Halton and Waterloo regions recently, and they will hold a direct election for the chair's position.

I want to thank the member from Richmond Hill today for bringing forward this idea. I think it's an idea that has the support of not only the members of the House from all three parties; I think if you did some public opinion polling, you'd find that the electors in York region would

also support this. It's a basic right. Those people who have the privilege of representing you should also have the privilege of earning your vote. People in Halton have that now. People in Niagara and Waterloo regions have it. Durham will have it. There's no reason in my mind that the people of York region shouldn't have the same level of accountability that other people in the province of Ontario enjoy.

Once again, my thanks to the member from Richmond Hill for bringing this forward. I'll be supporting it.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I only have a few seconds to provide my comments, but I, as our party's critic, do support this bill presented by Mr. Moridi, the member for Richmond Hill. I think it speaks to the very core of our democracy.

We just came from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference. I did have the chance to speak with Mr. Carr and also Mr. Seiling from Waterloo region. I know the experience they've had in their regions, and I know that the politicians in Durham are very excited about this, and about their opportunity as well.

As many members have said today, the folks in York region—many of them—have looked at this as a very positive change, so I hope that members will support this legislation. And perhaps we can expand it at some point down the road for all regions in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I believe the time has lapsed for all three parties, so I now return to the member for Richmond Hill, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Reza Moridi: I want to begin by thanking my honourable colleagues from Thornhill, Beaches–East York, Oak Ridges–Markham, York Simcoe, Pickering–Scarborough East, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Newmarket–Aurora, Oakville and Leeds–Grenville for their support and eloquent speeches about this bill.

This bill, as my colleagues mentioned in their presentations to this House, is about democracy. It's about transparency. It's about accountability. That's supported by the popular vote of over one million residents of York region. The point which is sometimes raised against a popular vote—people say, "The chair is going to be elected from the people in the southern part of York region, where the majority of the population resides." The fact of the matter is that the current chair resides in the southern part of York region, in the city of Markham, for the past 15 years, so that is not really a valid point.

The other point which is sometimes raised is that the regional council should have a say on this. This is again not a valid point, because we are amending the Municipal Act. The municipalities, as we all know, are a creation of the province. Therefore, it is for us to make a decision to bring democracy back to York region.

I urge every one of my colleagues in this House to vote for this bill. I look forward to passing this bill and it becoming law so that in 2014, when we are going to have municipal elections, the residents of York region will

elect their chair and CEO of York region. This is about democracy. I want to thank every member who supported my bill, and I look forward to the passing of this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take a vote on this item at the end of regular business.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I move that, in the opinion of this House, Ontario's Auditor General must review the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.'s new gaming plans, including its revenue and expenditure projections, mental health and addictions impact and its effect on Ontario's horse racing industry, and further that a referendum take place in any affected municipality where the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. is proposing a new casino in order for the community to determine whether it is welcome or not.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This day has been a long time coming for me, particularly since the last Ontario budget had indicated that it was going to have a new approach, through the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., for gaming in our province.

I want to acknowledge the many people who have arrived here today in support of this resolution. They come from across Ontario, as far away as Ottawa, my home community, as well as Sarnia, Wingham—they're here from everywhere, because they're as concerned as I am, and as many are in this House, that we're proceeding on a radical shift in gaming in Ontario without all of the information.

There are a number of issues I want to talk about in the very short period of time I have to address this. I want to talk about gaming and its impact on mental health and addictions, and the accessibility that might occur if we're to proceed very quickly without due diligence on increasing gaming in downtown locations.

I want to talk about the horse racing industry, and the impact it's going to have on 60,000 jobs across Ontario for hard-working, everyday people who probably never really wanted to come to Queen's Park in their life but now feel that their entire livelihood is at stake.

Finally, Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about oversight and the requirement for it at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. We've talked about it many times here in this assembly because, as we all know, over the years they've had quite a few troubles, spanning three different governments from three different political parties. I don't think, when we're talking about taxpayer dollars, we're talking about people's jobs and we're talking about mental health and addiction, that we shouldn't have that conversation right here.

Speaker, I represent Nepean–Carleton, as you know. It is the largest riding in the city of Ottawa, both in popu-

lation and geography. In fact, recently the government of Canada announced that my riding would be split in two in the next federal election, due to its population. What does that really mean? It means I've got a strong urban and suburban component, but I also have a very large, vibrant and wonderful agricultural community.

1430

When I first became the MPP for Nepean–Carleton in 2006, I became very well acquainted with an institution that turned 50 years old this year, the Rideau Carleton Raceway. I started going there for community events. I must admit, I'm not a gambler or wagerer myself. I'm a cheap Scot. My last name's MacLeod. I'm probably the stereotype. But I do go to the track quite a bit because, no matter what night of the week it is, you can go to the Rideau Carleton Raceway and you can find a community organization raising money for a night at the races. Then, as the winter and the fall became time for our spring session, the Gloucester Fair would host its annual agricultural traditional fair at the Rideau Carleton Raceway.

What I learned about this institution is it was much more than just about slots. It had everything to do with a tradition and a culture that is vibrant right across this great province. It's there because farmers have embraced it. It's there because people from the cities find it a refreshing way to spend a Sunday afternoon, to see a traditional agricultural event.

I came to know that the Rideau Carleton Raceway was much more than just slots and horses. There were people behind those horses. They were breeders. They were horse racers. They were big animal veterinarians. They were farmers who raised oats and hay. There were young people putting themselves through Carleton University and the University of Ottawa waiting tables. I'd be ashamed to see 1,000 of those jobs wiped away in Nepean–Carleton because the Rideau Carleton Raceway isn't viable anymore.

So, Mr. Speaker, in that vein, I became very concerned in March. In fact, I was at an airport with my daughter and I ran into Dalton McGuinty after this had been announced, and I remember my daughter ran over to him to talk to him. As you know, his riding is next door. She knows who he is. She knows who Tim Hudak is, and Andrea Horwath, and she thinks Andrea is prettier than both of them.

She ran over to talk to him, and I remember I couldn't bring myself to talk to him because I was so concerned about this issue. I whipped off a quick email to my colleagues talking about what we needed to talk about with respect to this gaming plan, because there's another piece to this puzzle.

After gaming became easily accessible in my native Nova Scotia, I had a family member who became extraordinarily, extremely addicted to gaming and lost her shirt. Then that went to the next generation and it happened to her son. I saw first-hand what accessibility to gaming can do to a family and a community when it is not done properly.

So the other issue I have with this—and I think it really is required that we have a debate. We have to have a public debate to have that conversation about downtown casinos and how that will impact our communities regarding mental health and addiction. Are those resources there?

The best person to do that is the Auditor General, and I want to talk about the Auditor General for a moment. We know, for example, that he's done in recent years a couple of reports on the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. We know, for example, that that agency has had massive challenges with its own expenses for its employees, but also with how it was dealing with its risk assessments.

In a report not too long ago, the Auditor General said that “commission inspectors at three of the four gaming facilities we tested were unable to complete their goal of inspecting all slot machines, and gaming audit and compliance inspectors were also behind schedule in verifying that gaming facilities were in compliance with approval requirements and their internal control manuals. The commission needed to improve its risk assessments to allow it to focus more of its audit inspection staff on higher-risk gaming facilities and less on lower-risk facilities.”

What's it's saying there, Speaker—and I think you would agree with me—is that a higher-risk facility is going to be a downtown casino; a lower-risk facility is going to be a place where they have been gaming and wagering for 50 years because it's as much a part of its culture and tradition as it is about gaming.

Speaker, I can't tell you enough how concerning this is to me that just two years ago, the Auditor General was saying that the OLG wasn't meeting its compliance demands then. What are they going to do when they bring in MGM and all of these other big casinos like Caesars and put them into Ottawa and into Belleville without doing their due diligence? That's a debate and discussion we have to have here, and it's one that can be best informed by the Auditor General.

I can't say enough that there are social risks, and the auditor has spoken about this previously as well. He says, “Social risks need to be managed to ensure that customers gamble responsibly within their limits to avoid dire financial and family consequences, and to prevent criminal elements from exploiting casinos with illegal activities such as money laundering and loansharking, and from controlling goods-and-services supply chains used by casinos.” He also says that the full-time presence of the OPP must be at all casinos.

Speaker, I think this is very prophetic in that the Auditor General, in his review a few years ago, looked into some of the concerns that we are now having across Ontario. As I was saying to one of my colleagues in the NDP just today—and I'm proud that they have decided to support this resolution, and I thank them for that—it almost seems that in the political system, particularly here in the Ontario Legislature, we can't fill these galleries for a public discussion until someone's livelihood

is at stake, and we don't have that conversation, that full public debate, that full-blown discussion of how to proceed on a very important piece of legislation.

I know many colleagues will reiterate my concerns over the horse racing industry, and I want to thank those who came to Queen's Park from all over Ontario today to be here, because I share their concerns. I share their fears.

In the recent report by the transition panel, we were told that 13,000 horses would have to be killed. They said that if the slots are removed from the racetracks, the racetracks wouldn't have a viable business plan. They've had a revenue-sharing arrangement for over a decade that has been successful. At the beginning, the slots actually cannibalized the horse racing industry; now there's a mutually beneficial partnership that's being taken away. What is at stake? Well, basically, \$1.2 billion in revenue that goes to pay for our schools and our hospitals and to keep the lights on in this place. What's at stake? Some 60,000 jobs, 1,000 in the city of Ottawa alone, and for what? Five hundred for a casino downtown, with all of the risks that we haven't debated here in this assembly?

Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to stand here today—there may be elements you like or don't like in this motion, but at the end of the day, we are the guardians of the public purse and we are the guardians of public discourse in Ontario. It is up to us to ask the tough questions. It is up to us to make sure that those charged with legislative duties in this assembly can carry them out. That's why I think the best way to proceed with these new plans by OLG—with the consequences that we know are there—is to ask Ontario's auditor to review those plans, to look at the human impact, to look at the economic impact and to look at what it's going to do to jobs that are already out there in Ontario, because that's what we owe to Ontario residents.

I will say one final thing in the time I have left. A few months ago, my colleague Lisa Thompson had a motion here in the assembly, and I saw this assembly divide on a rural-and-urban divide. I don't want that to happen, Speaker. I think this is an issue that is important to every single Ontarian, and I appeal to all members here today to appeal back to every single Ontarian. Thank you very much. I appreciate your support.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. From the outset, I want to inform you that I'll be sharing my time with some of my colleagues here, so, whatever is left over, they will decide how to split that up.

It's a pleasure to join the debate today, one that has been ongoing since, really, the beginning of the session, the first session of this House, somewhere back in October last year.

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The government made a drastic decision without any input from the majority of the stakeholders that are intimately involved in this industry. Who are those stakeholders, Mr. Speaker? They are the rural families in

our communities, the mothers, fathers, sons, daughters who work in this wonderful industry, a historic industry for this province, one that's so special. In fact, if you look at it, it's special in the sense that it can't be outsourced. It can't be offshored to another jurisdiction. These are good-paying, tangible, regional jobs with good skills, and wholesome, too, as well. They identify our regions as being special. That's why, again, they are so special to us in this caucus, those of us who live in rural ridings and represent rural ridings, because we know how much they mean to the people but also to the economy, that interconnectedness with not only those who work directly in the industry, the veterinarians, the farriers, the farmers, the feed suppliers, all of those who work at the track, but also the truck sales, the equipment sales, the heavy equipment—all the aspects of this industry that come into play that make it such an important part of our economy.

That's why today I am pleased to stand with the member from Nepean–Carleton to support her bill. One of the things I've learned, as a new member, is to look at the intent of each bill as it enters into this House and into the chamber. I see the intent as being fair, infusing some real measures of scrutiny and accountability through the Auditor General to expand the powers, expand the oversight, of the AG to look at the direction of the OLG and where they're heading. That's, I guess, why we're talking about this and why we think this decision, overall, has been made.

The economic rationale, to date, has not been made and not been fully nuanced, at least for myself and members of this side of the opposition. No one here understands the economic decision that has been made, unless—and I've learned something else: that when nothing else makes sense, follow the money. It's very basic. We see that there are forces outside of our traditional gaming entities that are pursuing a direction of full privatization, of eliminating the government's intervention, the government's responsibility and the government's benefit from gaming in Ontario. We see it happening in the bingo halls. We see it happening with large casino magnates who are making overtures in terms of bidding on licences that have been proposed. They see money. Obviously, gaming comes with a whole host of socio-economic issues and impacts, but the benefit is that the house wins, and if you are the house, as the province of Ontario is, you get to use that revenue and put it into different programs. As we know, this program, slots at racetracks, has been so successful—\$1.3 billion a year. Leveraging that \$345 million that has been generated through the slots—leveraging that into \$1.3 billion a year that goes into paying for the schools and the hospitals and the roads, bridges, tunnels, sewers and everything that we need to have to live in a cohesive society.

I wonder why that direction is being taken. Why are you abdicating your role as stewards of gaming, as the governors, as the regulators, and opening the doors to the private casinos? We see it in Windsor. Just days after the decision to take the slots out of the Windsor racetrack—

just days after that decision was made, Casino Windsor, which is operated by Caesars, laid off 27 workers, just two days after that decision was made. The finance minister justified his decision to pull those slots out of that racetrack because he needed to save jobs at the Windsor casino, but yet we see jobs still being lost, so that rationale doesn't make sense.

I would like to also point to some issues I have with the Conservative Party's position on gaming. Specifically, the leader of the Conservative Party was asked about his party's official position on gaming in Ontario, and ultimately, I see a statement by Mr. Hudak that they should let government regulate it and look after the interests of honest players while getting the government out of the actual slots portion of the operation by privatizing it.

Applause.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You may applaud, but I do not see anything different in that statement than what the Liberals are proposing to do. I don't understand. If you're going to let—

Interjections.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: We're having a proper discourse here. If we're saying that they're letting the private gaming entities come into this province and you're going to privatize the whole thing, then tell me how MGM and Caesars are going to broker a deal with the horse racing associations of this province. I don't see it happening, but if you're willing to make the gamble, then good luck on you.

The program, as it was stated, worked for rural Ontario. It worked for the people in rural Ontario, and it made sense. Any direction outside of keeping that entity in public hands is a gamble that I am not willing to take, and I hope that the government sees the light on their decision and reverses their decision immediately.

Interruption.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I just want to remind the members of the public in the gallery that we welcome you here to observe the proceedings, but I would ask you to refrain from any kind of applause or cheering, as I've noticed a few of you indulging in. Thank you.

Further debate? The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this motion, and I appreciate the member for Nepean–Carleton bringing this motion forward. I'm sure the member knows that the Auditor General has it within his mandate to investigate any entity in the broader public service.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Any time he wants.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Any time he wants. So I'm not sure whether this motion is really needed, because the Auditor General has the capacity to undertake a value-for-money audit, as per the legislation, of any entity in the broader public sector whenever he wishes. In fact, the member from Nepean–Carleton, earlier in her comments, spoke of the Auditor General's work in OLG some years ago, looking at its functions and giving recommendations to

the government, which the government has implemented. So that's there, and I think it's important to keep that in mind, that the Auditor General is free—and, of course, we always welcome the work of the Auditor General. He and his staff do thorough work, and his recommendations are always appreciated.

But what I really want to talk about at this juncture, regarding this motion, is the issue around priorities. It was this morning when the member for Nepean–Carleton, speaking on the motion dealing with full-day kindergarten, was making this argument about how we're in tough economic times, there is no money, there's a \$15-billion deficit and the government should not invest anything in full-day kindergarten, that a full-day kindergarten program is way too expensive, that we should take away that program and should not benefit our four- and five-year-old children from both rural communities and urban communities. But when it comes to spending \$345 million through the slots-at-racetracks program, she wants to maintain that.

She was also quoting the Drummond commission report and talking about how we should be implementing the Drummond commission report, but in the same—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Our side of the House is a bit confused about what he's debating, full-day kindergarten—the reality is, we're actually talking for the auditor to come in, and as he well knows, I can't, as a private member, call the auditor up and tell him to look at a certain area of the broader public service, but—

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

Interjection.

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

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Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Well, Speaker, thank you for eating up my time here. I was respectful when she was giving her advice.

I think it's really important, as to how we can use \$345 million, what kind of benefit it can have in our health care system, what kind of benefit that money, in these tough economic times, these tough fiscal times, can have in our rural communities. If you look at what \$345 million could pay for, it could pay for over two million house calls from doctors in our communities, both rural and urban. It can pay for over 27,800 hip or knee replacement surgeries, Speaker. It can pay for 17,400 bariatric surgeries and follow-up. It can pay for over nine million hours of home care for our seniors.

What can the same amount of money do in our rural communities? Well, Speaker, first of all, we spend more on horse racing than OMAFRA spends in direct farm support. In the 2011 program year, it was about \$319 million. That \$345 million is 18 times what we spend in a year on meat inspection. That's three and a half times what we have spent since 2003 on promoting local food, which directly helps farmers in our local rural communities. That's two times what we have spent since 2003 on

rural economic development projects, which have created or retained 35,000 jobs.

The point is that we need to continue to be responsible, balanced and fair in the manner in which we spend our dollars in these tough economic times. I think members from all ridings, from all communities, understand that point. Our focus at this moment has to be to invest every single resource we have in our health care so that our seniors and our children can get the best health care possible, and also to ensure that we are investing in education—in our schools, our colleges and our universities—so that our children can get the best education as we build our future economy. That's what we need to focus on.

That's what the OLG modernization is all about as well. It's to see how we can increase the revenues we can get from the OLG that get invested in health care and education, so that we have more monies available to us that we can spend in our communities.

I only ask members opposite to engage in making a fair argument—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex, come to order, please.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: You cannot stand here on one day to argue that we should get rid of full-day kindergarten, that we should disadvantage our four- and five-year-old kids coming from both rural and urban communities to save money so that we lay off thousands of teachers and support workers and early childhood educators, but on the other hand, we should continue to spend \$345 million in the horse racing industry. I don't think the argument bodes well, especially on the same day. So I urge all members that we should work together so we can continue to invest money in health care and education. That should be our number one priority, because that's what Ontarians want.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We started out very nicely. I think we're getting a little bit out of control.

I would urge the member who was encouraging the audience to refrain from doing so. Thank you.

Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I know that if the member for Essex had had a little more time, he would have wanted to explain to the House, as well as to the visitors here, why he abstained from the budget vote in the spring, why he sat on his hands when he had the opportunity to defeat the government.

Mr. Speaker, let's recall what happened on March 12—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. My friend from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, if you're going to heckle, I would ask you to sit in your own seat.

I think all the other speakers received the blessing of everyone in the room to be allowed to speak without

interference, and I would expect it to continue for the rest of the afternoon.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Speaker, let's recall what happened on March 12. Without warning, without consultation and, we now know, without a proper economic impact study, the Minister of Finance announced that he would be scrapping the slots-at-racetracks program effective March 31, 2013. It is estimated that today the equine industry supports the employment of as many as 60,000 Ontarians, and I've been told that the equine industry employs thousands of people in my riding. From the beginning, we've said that unless the government changes course, the livelihood of many of our neighbours would be in jeopardy.

We know that many in the industry do not have easily transferable job skills. While the government has characterized the slots-at-racetracks program as a subsidy to the industry, our PC caucus has expressed the view that the program is in fact a revenue-sharing agreement. It has worked well for years, generating billions for the treasury over those years. We contended that the government had made a huge mistake by throwing the slots-at-racetracks program out the window.

While I firmly believe that the government must take immediate steps to get its spending under control and balance the budget, I have never accepted that this should include eliminating the horse racing industry in the province of Ontario. I publicly called upon the government to release any economic impact studies that they had done before making the decision to end the slots-at-racetracks program and kill the horse racing industry in Ontario.

A constituent from our area was thinking the very same thing. He went so far as to make a freedom-of-information request, asking for any economic impact studies that have been done. They responded to him with an economic impact note on Ontario's horse racing industry, which was generated by ministry staff as confidential advice to cabinet. The constituent gave it to me. Two weeks ago, my colleague the member for Perth-Wellington and I released it to the public.

The report is dated March 14. As we all know, the government announced its decision to end the slots-at-racetracks program two days before that. I submit to this House that this is proof positive that the government had made up its mind to kill the horse racing industry in Ontario before it had any idea of the true economic impact the industry represents, the real number of jobs the industry sustains and the reality faced by families whose livelihoods are dependent on a thriving horse racing industry.

Now let's take a look at the interim report of the horse racing industry transition panel. The Minister of Agriculture and Food was very selective in his public comments when he released the report, leading the media to believe that the panel agreed with the government's decision to scrap the slots-at-racetracks program. But people need to read the whole report, not just the executive summary, which is similarly one-sided. Quote, page 27, panel finding: "Without slots revenue or a new

revenue stream, the horse racing industry in Ontario will cease to exist." Quote, page 28, panel finding: "Absent some other new revenue stream, no Ontario racetrack has a viable business plan to continue racing operations after March 31, 2013." Quote, page 29, panel finding: "The essential ingredients for a viable horse racing industry—tracks, race dates and purses, and products—will dissolve once" the slots-at-racetracks program ends. Quote, page 31, panel finding: "If the industry closes, the panel has received expert advice that provision should be made for the humane dispatch and disposal of 7,500 to 13,000 horses in early 2013." Quote, page 32, panel finding: "We urge the government to make a decision quickly."

The importance of that final statement cannot be over-estimated. We know that the autumn yearling sales in Ontario will commence within a matter of days. Without some certainty as to what the government is going to do or when, either the yearlings will have no buyers or their value will likely collapse. These young horses may then end up euthanized or purchased and sent to slaughter plants.

If there are no yearlings, the whole production cycle of the industry may suffer irreparable damage and horse racing will be finished in Ontario. But by supporting this motion today, the House can send a powerful message to the government that they must act now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: This boils down to one thing here. The government was looking for money because they got us into a \$16-billion deficit. And who did they go after? The hard-working people of the horse industry. They went after them because they couldn't find money anywhere else, because they spent it all. That's the problem.

When they say the word that they talk about, that they give them a "subsidy"—no. It wasn't a subsidy; it was a signed contract that the horse racing industry, the racetrack itself and the community signed with the government. You tell me, in any other part of this government, where you can get a 75% return on your money. Nowhere. If that was a bank, I'd be signing up tomorrow.

This industry brings in \$1.2 billion of revenue in this business. Yes, it's down a little bit because of the recession. Yes, some of the American bettors aren't coming over.

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But this industry would bounce back, and bounce back hard, when times get good, when people are working again, when there are jobs in this province. A lot of them will go to the track and to these situations.

What are you doing? You're cutting your legs off at the knees. And where are you going to get revenue like that somewhere else? You tell me one place. It won't be from the banks and insurance companies; it's not going to happen.

So I'm telling you right now that this is going to come back and bite you big-time, when all these people are out of work and the welfare costs go up and the social services costs go up and our health costs go up. I'll tell

you right now: You're going to hear about this in the next election for sure from the people of Ontario and the horse racing industry.

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you, Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to the motion by the member from Nepean–Carleton. We don't agree on a whole lot of things, but one thing we do have in common is that my maiden name is MacNaughton. I too have the Scottish aversion to gambling. I find slots depressing. But I do find that my local racetrack, the Grand River, which I share with Ted, is a wonderful racetrack. It's a great way to spend an evening—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask, if you're referring to other members in the chamber, that you refer to them by their riding name rather than individual name.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I think I did say. It was me I referred to.

Mr. Rob Leone: You said “Ted.” Wellington–Halton Hills.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: That Ted.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Oh, sorry. That Ted; okay.

It's a great way to spend an evening. Grand River is a wonderful track. It's operated by the agricultural society. It has a great relationship with the horse people, and it reinvests a lot of the money into improving the facility. I truly do want to see that racing community that is centred around Grand River to continue.

I want to comment on a couple of things in this motion. First of all, the business of a municipal referendum: Let me simply say that there is a requirement that if a municipality is going to be a host to a new casino or new slots, there must be municipal approval for that. The municipality already can have a referendum if it wants to, but if it wants to consult with the people by having public meetings, if it wants to hold delegations at council, if it wants to do a survey—paper or electronic—it can decide how it wants to do public consultation. That's the municipality's job, not ours.

Let's talk about horse racing, because there obviously is a problem here. The other Ted, the Minister of Agriculture and Food, actually did set up a transition panel, as I'm sure everyone here knows. The transition panel represented three former ministers—John Wilkinson from our side, who was a former Minister of Revenue and knows a lot about money; Elmer Buchanan from the NDP, who knows a lot about agriculture because he was a former Minister of Agriculture; and John Snobelen. I don't agree with much that Mr. Snobelen did on education, but I would be the first to admit that he's an excellent equestrian, and when it comes to the horse industry he probably knows more than his remaining colleagues combined. So with respect to horses, I respect John.

What did they have to say? I think it's really important that we have a look at what they actually had to say. Their mandate was to look at how to move forward.

When they looked at how to move forward, they actually commented that they had so many comments from people who just said, “The way to move forward is to keep everything the way it is, to return the slots-at-racetracks program.” So I think it is useful to look at what they said. They talked about SARP, the slots-at-racetracks program, and said that if, at the outset, SARP had referred to objectives—it did refer to objectives such as the enhancement of live racing and sustaining the agricultural sector—clear benchmarks were not established to monitor the achievement of these goals. The government simply paid over the funds to the industry without guidelines or requirements, feeding a culture of entitlement. In fact, if the folks opposite had set the thing up properly in the first place, with the proper accountability and with the proper benchmarks, I'm quite sure we wouldn't be having this conversation today.

The panel goes on to talk about the fact that the panel's view is that the slot money is public money belonging to the people of Ontario and the government can redirect it to other purposes if it concludes it's in the public interest.

They go on to say that they often heard of SARP referred to not as a subsidy but as a partnership. They ask the question—if it's a partnership, it's a very one-sided one—it may work great for the industry, but what's in it for the public?

They then go on to analyze the industry and conclude that reinstating the slots program is not the thing to do. They do also say there needs to be a new source of revenue, that it needs to be greater than the \$50 million budgeted and what we need to do is have a conversation about—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to welcome residents from my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and the neighbouring riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell today, who are here, along with everybody, to support this important industry.

I stand today to commend my colleague from Nepean–Carleton, who has put politics aside to endorse this Liberal government's now famous and forgotten Don Drummond report and its recommendation to review the existing horse racing and breeding agreements. I will quote recommendation 17-4: “Re-evaluate, on a value-for-money basis, the practice of providing a portion of net slot revenues to the horse racing and breeding industry and municipalities in order to substantially reduce and better target that support.”

I hear the words “re-evaluate,” “net slot revenues,” “industry” and “municipalities.” I did not hear the word “cancel.” This is just another example of this government wasting millions of dollars on projects and reports that may sound good and are intended to make them appear as if they are truly looking for ways to fix their spending problems. But sadly, it's just further proof that they are ignoring all reality, all advice.

I wonder if this document that talks about tough decisions to fix our province's spending problems is just now an embarrassment to them as they show they don't have the leadership or the backbone to listen to the advice and the warnings this document is clearly telling them, that action is required now to get our deficit problem under control and to make Ontario a leader in Confederation again. An Auditor General's report would provide an independent review of this very beneficial program and allow this government to save face and back away from a bad and losing proposition.

Today I heard some shocking information that speaks of how this government conducts business. The Minister of Agriculture had not even heard of the cancellation of the agreement until the budget was read. Can you believe this? This makes one question just how this government works. Its decision was made without the input of the ministry it so affects and without the benefit of a cost-benefit analysis that, as flawed as it was, was only completed two days after the budget was read.

Even a quick review shows an industry that contributes over \$1 billion to the province's coffers, employs an estimated 60,000 jobs in our rural communities and provides over \$50 million to the municipalities they reside in. This does not include the economic spinoff that's estimated to exceed \$1.5 billion.

I say to this government that it's time to wake up and start to run the province as the people of Ontario expect and demand. At a time when this government so desperately needs to increase its revenue and control our ballooning deficit, we see it killing one of its major revenue sources, money that we all need to pay for health care and education—all this in favour of an ill-fated program to force casinos into a lot of communities without the approval of the residents. Speaker, this is not only wrong. I commend my colleague from Nepean–Carleton for her efforts to wake up this McGuinty government to the harsh economic realities of the real world and to make them think about the 60,000 jobs of the horse racing and breeding industry, the families they support, and the people of Ontario who benefit from the \$1.1 billion in revenue it contributes. An immediate, overnight 10% increase in unemployment: Just like most of this government's programs, it just doesn't make sense.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: We're here today because the Liberal government has decided to renege on a signed agreement with the racetracks in Ontario, including Sudbury Downs in my riding of Nickel Belt.

When it was first announced, the people affected asked to come and meet with me. They were not what the Liberals want us to believe: rich horse owners. Not at all, Mr. Speaker. They were young families. There were strollers and young kids around. Families, men and women, came and met with me, and those young families told me their stories. They came to northern Ontario and settled in Nickel Belt because they knew that if they

worked long hours, if they worked seven days a week, if they worked really hard, they could earn a living. They could earn a living and feel secure enough to get married, to have children, to buy a house, have a mortgage, make car payments, because they knew if they worked hard in this industry, they would do okay. But now all of this is at risk. Those young families are being told that their livelihood is being taken away to make room for 29 new casinos.

Since that first meeting, Mr. Speaker, I've learned an awful lot about this industry. I now know, thanks to FedNor, that did an economic analysis of the industry for my riding, that horse racing is a job producer in northeastern Ontario. It is actually one of the economic drivers.

Now that more and more economic information is coming out, it's clear that this is not an economic decision; it is a political one. It is not based on good finances. I urge the Liberals to rethink this wrong-headed decision before literally betting the farm on new casinos in urban areas.

Please look at everybody in here today. Please look at the 60,000 people in Ontario who will be affected. Please look at the 600 people in my riding who depend on that industry to earn a living. Doing otherwise is a shame.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate. The member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to have a few moments to speak to this fantastic resolution of my colleague the member for Nepean–Carleton, Lisa MacLeod. I think it's very important that we're having the debate here. I can't understand why anyone in the Legislative Assembly this afternoon wouldn't want to pass a motion like this, because it does a number of things. One, it gets down to the facts and dealing with the Auditor General on this particular program. My colleagues in our caucus know that sometimes the government opposite doesn't necessarily want to get to those facts. We've seen it time and time again as we move towards a \$30-billion deficit.

But the resolution, other than asking the Auditor General to take a look at this program, does something that I think is very important, and that's the issue of making it mandatory for a municipality to have a referendum if a new casino is moving forward. That's very important. Certainly the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex's bill that is on the books will do that. In my riding, we're in very close proximity to Rideau Carleton. I estimate there are over 1,000 jobs in the industry that feed the industry at that track and at tracks all across Ontario. But it also affects the casino that's presently in my riding in Gananoque, the casino at Thousand Islands. What's happening is that that community has had that facility for 10 years. Both the town and the township had a referendum that showed they wanted the casino, and the community has embraced it. They had a rally of over 400 people, showing that they were firmly in support of that facility.

Now, I know that some folks down the road in Kingston, maybe a few folks, are interested in maybe having

that casino move. I'm sure in my heart of hearts that the member for Kingston and the Islands would want his community to have a referendum, just like my communities had when they asked for that. He wants people to have a say. But by the public meetings, I'm not particularly sure that that's where they're going to be at.

Just in closing, the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex visited the Mark Steacy Stables in my riding. They gave us this book, with letters from every employee, all of their suppliers, showing that they wanted us to protect the horse racing industry—not just in the village of Lansdowne but all over the province.

I urge all of my colleagues to vote in favour of this motion.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: The government is willing to gamble against the odds. If you look at what is happening around the world and happening in Canada as well, casinos are starting to lose money. They are not money-makers. The only money-makers are the people in this room. The horse tracks in this province continue to show in the black.

You are giving up a dream and following the wrong direction. If you were a gambler, I would tell you that the odds are against you. It's not that you're going to go anywhere with this. It's not that there's more money for schools, as one of your colleagues said. There is going to be less money, because they will not be working, they will not be contributing, and that billion dollars will be gone.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Nepean–Carleton, you have two minutes for a reply.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much, Speaker. This was a lively and important debate for the people of Ontario, and I'd like to make a few thank-yous to the people who actually participated in this debate: my colleagues from Essex, Ottawa Centre, Wellington–Halton Hills and Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. The colleague from Guelph: I'm happy to say there's a busload from her riding today, and the next PC candidate, Anthony MacDonald, is here today. To my colleague and neighbour from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, thank you. To my colleague from Nickel Belt, my very good friend from next door to me as well from Leeds–Grenville and Beaches–East York, we've proven today we can have a serious debate on the future of gaming in this province, and we should.

We know that the casinos in Ontario, run by the OLG, lost \$46 billion in 2009. We know that they've had a difficult track record with their spending, and we know that the numbers put forward by the government are being challenged by an industry in our agricultural communities right across this province. I'm proud to stand with the NDP and Progressive Conservative caucus in supporting these people in the gallery, supporting those 60,000 jobs and ensuring that that \$1.2 billion that they contribute to our economy continues to contribute to our economy.

I still think the best way for us to proceed with this radical shift in gaming is to have all the facts and make informed choices. The best way to do that is to ask this assembly to direct the Auditor General to review those numbers, to see what it means for mental health and addiction, see what it means to our agricultural communities, see what it means to our policing sector in those urban communities. Then, as an assembly, together, 107 members here can make informed decisions, and our communities can make even more informed decisions when it goes to a referendum in their community.

I stand by the people who stand by me, and I want to thank the people in the gallery today for being here with us. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Mr. Rob Leone: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member from Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm informed, Mr. Speaker, that a number of people from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell would like to meet their member of Parliament to talk about the horse racing industry and—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Point of order, Speaker, if I may.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I just would like to inform the member that that's not a point of order at this time.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Point of order, Speaker: One thing I did neglect to say, and I did write it down. All members of the assembly are invited to a reception being hosted by me immediately after this debate to meet with the horsemen and horsewomen who have come here from their own communities and from across Ontario. It's in the Ontario PC caucus room, and you are all invited. Thank you.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I allowed it, but my good friend knows that that's not a point of order either.

Mr. Bill Walker: Point of order, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce Gord Dougan, Randy Rier, Henry Martin and Ted Clarke, from the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, and supporters of the Hanover racetrack.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All members know that those are not points of order. I'd like to carry on with private members' bills.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT (BLOCKER PADS), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION (BLOQUEURS)

Mr. Jackson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 102, An Act to amend the Education Act to restrict the use of blocker pads / Projet de loi 102, Loi

modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation pour restreindre l'utilisation de bloqueurs.

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

Mr. Rod Jackson: Thank you, Speaker. It's good to see I'm so popular with the gallery.

First of all, I'd like to thank everyone for being here today, joining in the debate for the second reading of Bill 102, an amendment to the Education Act for blocker pads.

I just want to start by saying that this issue is not a partisan issue. I know that we all care about kids, especially our most vulnerable kids in our schools. Today, I'm reaching out to you to ask you to simply do the right thing.

A few months ago, my colleague from Dufferin-Caledon brought something very disturbing to my attention. It was an article that appeared on a CTV News website. This article showed images of a few children with autism walking down a busy street in Barrie, surrounded by education assistants carrying large foam red blocker pads, like the type you would see on a football field or a rugby field. A parent of one of the children was at first shocked when she saw it and then was blind with rage. She had no idea her son was being treated in this manner. She was never informed of the practice, and she never gave permission for the use of such practices.

After the story broke, a flood of calls came to my office in Barrie, and that's when I began to further look into the issue and ultimately decided to advocate for the removal of blocker pads in schools for any other use than sport. I'm also personally affected by this issue in a small way. I have friends who live with autism. My son, who is eight years old—his best friend is a child with autism. I volunteered for people with autism from a very young age.

I'd like to emphasize that this matter is not a Barrie-centric anomaly. My colleagues in the Simcoe region, the members from Simcoe-Grey and York-Simcoe, have also mentioned that they've had community reaching out to them in response to the pre-emptive use of blockers in schools.

The well-being of our students concerns every Ontarian and future generations that will enter our school system. Throughout the process of developing this private member's bill, my colleagues have been overwhelmingly supportive and compassionate about this issue. We are here today because ensuring dignity for every Ontario student matters.

Parents have been telling me that they're utterly shocked to discover the practice in their children's schools. One parent of a child with special needs just today said that if force or other physical interventions were generally used by parents in the same manner in response to children acting out, the children would be removed from their home for their own safety. The bottom line is that many parents, including myself, are deeply concerned by this policy. I have two small

children myself. I cannot imagine anyone alienating them for being different, treating them like they're a danger to society and undermining their well-being in general.

To add insult to injury, parents were never consulted, informed by the schools, nor was this practice detailed in the children's safety plans. The Simcoe board's own special education advisory committee, otherwise known as SEAC, was not consulted on this practice either. When the decision to reintroduce blocker pads in Simcoe schools—and I stress "reintroduce"—was made, it was not accompanied by any regulatory guidelines or special training. In the end, SEAC wrote a letter to the board with their position and introduced a motion that reads: SEAC recommends "that the board cease use of all blocker shields with students as they negatively impact on the dignity and human rights of the students and create a negative social message which promotes fear and exclusion."

They went on to discuss a list of concerns with the practice, including: lack of consultation; blockers are not in safety plans, nor have they been prescribed by medical practitioners; the practice doesn't align with legislated social inclusion for persons with disabilities, Ontario regulation 299/10; and the message sent to the public is negative and discriminatory against students living with disabilities. This is from the board's own SEAC.

Since this, advocates of all kinds—human rights, special needs and self-advocates—many of whom sit in this gallery today, have been coming forward alongside practitioners and countless stakeholders to speak out against the pre-emptive use of blockers in classrooms. The Geneva Centre for Autism; Simcoe Community Services; Catulpa Community Support Services; Community Living Ontario; Integration Action for Inclusion; Canadian National Autism Foundation; James Lockyer, who sits in the gallery—or was here a moment ago—one of Canada's most famous lawyers for human rights who also advocates for the banning of blocker pads in schools and just about anywhere, as well as countless others have written letters to express that the systematic use of blocker pads is not only dangerous but demeaning to our students.

Despite the absence of community consultation to justify the implementation of a blocker pad policy in the first place, the community has sure come out of the woodwork to guarantee that their voice is heard. The Simcoe County Board of Education is the only board in Ontario, or even in Canada, that I have been able to find that systematically uses blocker pads pre-emptively against children, like they're just waiting for something to happen.

The news of this usage has spread throughout the province, but it has also spread throughout the United States and in Europe; it's actually making the news in Europe. It's something that's happening in my city that I'm ashamed of.

These pads degrade human dignity. Imagine seeing your children being marched down the street in full public view, escorted by people carrying blocker shields

for the first time. Imagine seeing that for the first time. If that's not bad enough, imagine actually being that child. How do you feel? Don't tell me they don't know the way they're being treated.

Are there really any positive outcomes to come out of this? No, clearly not. Are children benefiting from this? Clearly not. The only thing these pads are actually accomplishing is the undoing of community integration, the labelling and public humiliation of the most vulnerable students in our society, and the creation of a culture of fear in the classroom. I was honestly surprised at the reaction of our local board. It was one of sheer indifference, citing worker safety. In this case, it's a total cop-out, plain and simple. You don't just blindly implement a measure without considering the greater picture. Don't take it from me; the Geneva Centre for Autism maintains that policies must preserve the dignity of each individual when balancing health and safety concerns.

You can't just wholesale decide to implement a policy at the drop of a hat. The reason we have a process and consultations is to insulate decision-makers from unintended adverse effects. We are here today to address these adverse effects on our most vulnerable students and ensure that another board doesn't stray down the same unfortunate path in the future.

In any case, I'd like to discuss our priorities and worker safety in the education system for one moment, because I know that's of concern to some members. First of all, let me be clear: Kids come first, especially the ones who are most vulnerable in our society. Many years ago, children with autism were institutionalized and segregated from the rest of our community. All this did was humiliate them and make them dependent on the government and the institutions in which they lived. As a result, our society has progressed and matured. These institutions were closed, and efforts were made to integrate people with special needs into our communities. We do this by preparing them for the workplace and teaching the skills they need to take care of themselves and be productive, caring members of our community.

Second, there is no trade-off between worker safety and the dignity of students. Blocker pads are not essential for classroom safety—not for the workers and not for the students. There's no place for them. Most school boards in this province choose to implement alternative strategies instead of systematically using blocker pads. Similarly, education ministries in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba either do not support the use of blocker pads or, to their knowledge, blocker shields are not in use at all. Though working with children with special needs may represent a unique set of circumstances, proper training can almost always mitigate the use of blocker pads.

I had the pleasure of visiting the George Bailey school, run by Kerry's Place. This school helps prepare students with some of the most extreme cases of autism right across the spectrum in our real world. They do this without the use of any personal protective devices or restraints. Not only do they not use them, but when I

asked them if they did, they looked at me in a surprised way and stated that that was a 1960s solution. The message I received was clear: There was no place for blocker pads or restraints in the treatment of children with special needs, period. There are well-proven, effective ways to deal with these children with special needs, including non-violent crisis intervention programs. Professionals trained in this type of program regard the use of blocker pads in their escalation continuum as an extreme last resort.

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I asked a professional that I spoke with if, in his 25 years working with children with special needs, and autism specifically, he had ever used blocker pads or personal protective equipment or restraints. Without hesitation, his answer was no. Another professional explained why using blocker pads as a first response, as a band-aid solution to behaviour problems, was so ineffective it was even damaging in its practice. She spoke about a high school student with autism whose family recently came to Canada. The child consistently acted out and eventually was sent to a doctor, who discovered his teeth were rotting out of his mouth from poor health care when he was younger. For a non-verbal child, acting out is sometimes the only way they can communicate that something is wrong—in this case, intense pain. Blocker pads may inadvertently take away that voice of a non-verbal child who is doing his or her best to communicate complex emotional messages. Essentially, this professional was most concerned that this policy encourages education assistants to use blocker pads as a management system for youth instead of focusing on the root cause of the problem behaviours themselves.

Another story I just want to tell you before I conclude is about a tour I got of the George Bailey school by one of the students. A student took me through the school and introduced me to the different rooms and the different facilities within the school. He introduced me to teachers who were working with other students in the school and even gave me a short little lesson on Russian history, which would put my professor friend from Cambridge to shame, I think. We came to one room and he made a special note and said, "You know, one year ago I destroyed this room," because he got so agitated and so violent. He was telling me that he was throwing computers and made a mess of things. But one year later, he's giving tours of the school, introducing me to teachers, talking about why he changed—because people actually cared about modifying his behaviour and taught him how to communicate, how to deal and not act out. I asked him, "Are you happy? Are you happier?" He looked at me and almost started crying, and said, "I couldn't be better. I can't imagine being in that place that I was in less than one year ago."

Promoting the dignity of all students with an inclusive learning environment must be a classroom priority. Most other jurisdictions nationwide have found alternative strategies to manage children with special needs, meanwhile ensuring worker safety at the same time. It is time

for Ontario to follow suit and stand up for the well-being, dignity and human rights of our most vulnerable in society. I implore you to do the right thing: Support this bill for the kids who are affected by this policy as we debate it here this afternoon and for the future generations that pass through the education system. Thank you.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I am so pleased to have the opportunity to speak to amending the Education Act with respect to the use of blocker pads. I want to thank the member from Barrie for bringing it forward because, for me, it raises very important issues that need to be addressed. If this bill moves to the committee stage, I also look forward to MPPs considering the issue in more detail. We need to have a meaningful discussion so that we may do what I think we are all striving for with this bill. It's meeting educational and developmental needs of some of our most vulnerable students, and meeting those needs in a way that respects the dignity of our students and their families and recognizes the difficult job done by educational workers.

Disability rights are not always at the forefront of people's minds, and that's not a good endorsement of our society, but it's a reality of the world that we live in. One should be determined to change it. Thankfully, there are some who show that determination and hold society to account for its failings. It is so important that they do so. So I want to take a moment and thank those who work so hard on disability issues through their advocacy, raising awareness and their demands for change. Oftentimes, we do not recognize a disability or the full extent of challenges that come with it, and we do not recognize the importance of support for families and the necessity that that support exist within our communities. We did not fully recognize the importance of government support either, that for so many families affected by autism, rash or unadvisable policy decisions at the government level can have a profound impact on their day-to-day lives.

As an MPP and the NDP critic for children and youth services, I take my role very seriously. I understand that I am here at Queen's Park to be a voice for children, adults and families impacted by autism as well as other challenges faced by so many of our young people. So when families come forward with a problem like this one, it is my job to listen and to take action.

Make no mistake; these are no small challenges for families with children with autism—and adults as well. I have spoken before in this House of the stress that many families are under as they care for their loved ones: the sleepless nights, the constant reassurances to calm their child each time they enter a social situation which they perceive to be a new one, the fight for services they so badly need, and the steady insistence as they strive for the acceptance of others and the rights of their child.

The determination and diligence of disability rights activists, those who live with disabilities and their families and friends, help us all to overcome our prejudices and, yes, our ignorance. These advocates, parents and

researchers, and many others, play an essential role in helping us understand the issues but also the invaluable contributions that children and adults who live with autism can make in our society. Let us not forget that important point: that, with the right supports for these children, they can do amazing things. I greatly appreciate the important work these families and advocates do, identifying and facing the challenges before us as we consider ourselves truly equal in society, where all persons can live to their fullest, whether they have autism or whether they have any other kind of challenge.

We have heard from many of these activists with respect to the use of blocker pads in schools, and they have raised legitimate concerns: that the blocker pads are damaging to the dignity of the students, that they are dehumanizing. The point has been made that as we struggle to break down barriers, the images of the pads can suggest instead that we're putting up barriers. Social inclusion is a concept that I've always valued for a better, more just society. We must appreciate, understand and accept our differences. In our schools, we must be careful that we do not send a message that any group of students should be feared or avoided; otherwise, our goal of inclusion will never be realized. That, I believe, is the basis of the concerns that saw this bill being brought forward, and I share those concerns.

But this bill raises a much more complex issue that I believe will not be adequately addressed by the present wording of the bill. That issue is, how can we best meet the needs of the students with special needs?

Mr. Speaker, school boards are chronically underfunded, and that is particularly true in the area of special education. One result of that underfunding is that we do not have enough educational assistants to meet the demands and the needs that are put upon them, and students are paying the price. Children with autism benefit greatly from familiarity with those who work with them. When I met with representatives of Autism Ontario, they expressed to me that one of the greatest needs in the treatment and care of children with autism is that education assistants stay in their positions longer so that this familiarity can develop. The developmental educational needs of children with autism are best met when they are most at ease, in a predictable environment with familiar people, following a regular routine. These would be key elements to a successful program in our schools, and they aren't difficult concepts to understand, but the underfunding of special education makes them extremely difficult to attain.

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Educational assistants are dedicated workers, devoted to the students that they work with. They do an exceptionally difficult job in very trying circumstances. When speaking with educational assistants, it's clear to see that they care deeply for their students—and they couldn't do the job if it were otherwise. They appreciate more than most that they're working with an exceptional group of students requiring a greater level of understanding. But they also have legitimate concerns for their own safety,

and those concerns are based on their own experiences, not what might happen. The reality is this: Unfortunately, violent episodes do happen, and they happen often. In the southwest region of the Toronto District School Board alone in the last year there were 498 violent incidents reported, and sometimes these violent episodes are at the hands of students significantly larger and stronger than the worker. We need to take a much closer look at the full problem before us. We should not be satisfied by a simple ban. We need as well broader solutions that work with the children with autism, their families and the educational assistants. We need to understand what we can do to reduce the violence in the first place.

There are factors related to understaffing that increase the agitation within these students. I understand that in some areas the ratio of workers to students used to be two full-time educational assistants per teacher dealing with eight students. That ratio is now 1.5 EAs per teacher dealing with anywhere from six to 12 students. When the workload has increased, is there a greater chance of disruption, causing others to happen? I think we can all appreciate that in the circumstances the ability to calmly defuse a situation is seriously curtailed.

How can we expect to meet the needs of children with autism in our school system if we do not respect the challenges and concerns of the people who work with them? Yes, we must provide the best care and treatment possible, and we need to ensure that we treat everyone with the respect and dignity that we would expect ourselves, but to do that we need to respect those into whose care we put our students with special needs. We need to value the work that they do because it can be invaluable. We need to provide the support and resources they need, allowing them to feel a greater sense of fulfilment to remain in their jobs, building and maintaining the familiarity that is so important. We need to pay them a decent wage that reflects the demands of the difficult job that they do. The alternative is a never-ending cycle of new faces on the job, which is a drastic step in the wrong direction and serves nobody's best interests.

These are some of the things we should be considering in this bill, as well as the banning of blocker pads, because it seems to me that the blocker pads are a symptom of a much larger problem.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will support this bill at second reading. It needs to go to committee to be amended with some more solutions to a very complex issue. This bill provides a wonderful opportunity to have a discussion that is very long overdue, a meaningful discussion that invites input from families, from experts in the field, from education workers and from school boards. We need voices and minds to come together to try to find the best road forward, and we must take advantage of the opportunity we have before us. As I mentioned earlier, I believe everyone affected by the issue that this bill reflects has the same goal: to best meet the educational and developmental needs of the students. We have a better chance of achieving that goal by working together,

airing our views, considering differences and finding workable solutions.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I must, first of all, in my first opportunity to address a measure from the member from Barrie—it's a little bit belated, but I'd like to congratulate him on his election. I've had the opportunity to share the floor with him and to be with him at a few events. He's a good member. I welcome him to the assembly and I certainly thank him for bringing forth Bill 102, An Act to amend the Education Act to restrict the use of blocker pads.

We have in our discussion so far focused on one aspect of the issue, that being autism. It is worth noting that if you read both the explanatory note and the bill itself—and I pronounce no judgment on this, but the bill itself doesn't mention the word "autism." It does talk about the restriction of the use of blocker pads, but it does so in a very general sense, and I think it's in the sense that the bill proposes the restrictions on blocker pads that I think we should be discussing it and treating it in the House.

As my colleague from Hamilton Mountain said, perhaps it's a measure that does deserve further study, and I couldn't argue with that. I think that's a very good suggestion. I think it comes, really, to this: We're talking about an issue of safety. I think we can all agree, regardless of where we come from or what our take is on this, that we should be focused on the safety of our students while they're in school, and we should also be focused on the safety of our teachers and our support workers while they, too, are on the job. It also comes down to a part of there being a necessity to provide dignity in education.

I think that's really where the member is coming from here, that you're entitled to a measure of dignity while you're in the education system. I think we all agree that we have to take reasonable measures to ensure that, in a safe and dignified environment, both the student and the support worker or the teacher remain reasonably protected in the circumstances. Every student in Ontario deserves to learn in an environment where he or she feels safe.

But the other part that I also want to introduce here is that while the member is debating the measure in the Ontario Legislature—and perhaps it will be the will of the House to send it to committee to wonder if there are any other facets that the member may have wanted to expand upon at second reading that we can consider in committee and expand upon in third reading—in the end, much of this remains in the jurisdiction of school boards to set policies that ensure the safety of both their students and their staff. I know the member doesn't wish to override school boards in this respect, but perhaps—and again, I've read the act so I'm just trying to read in the member's intent—to provide some guidance to school boards so that the school boards' policies and guidelines can be clear, can be consistent, can be defensible and can provide exactly that environment of safety and dignity.

The other thing that I think we should give some consideration to—and again, having read the act, the act doesn't describe what scope the word “restrict” has. I know the member didn't intend to use the word “ban,” but again, as we continue to consider the bill and its impact and its long-term effect, what do we mean by “restrict”? I put this forth as a constructive comment. I don't mean to use it as a means of criticizing the bill, but I would like to ask the member to think of the word “restrict” and what scope you intend on it, because when we bring it back, let's talk about the scope of it.

I understand that in his area, the Simcoe County District School Board in fact had a community discussion on it and talked about the use of foam blockers in schools.

Speaker, I know some of my colleagues have some thoughts on it, too, and I've spoken a few seconds longer than I intended, but I thank the member for bringing it forward, and I thank you for the opportunity to discuss it.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It is a pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak in support of Bill 102, which would amend the Education Act to prevent the use of blocker pads to manage children and youth with special needs. I would like to commend my colleague the member from Barrie for bringing this forward and taking the initiative, because I think it deals with a very important issue in our society, which is the rights of people with special needs and the need to promote inclusion in our society.

I was, like most people, pretty shocked when I saw the images of students from the Simcoe county board being herded—and I use that term advisedly—along the street by staff using large rugby blocker pads. And I would say that there were pleas made by both the member from Barrie and by our colleague the member from Dufferin-Caledon to have this practice ended. This was directed to both the Minister of Education and the county school board, but despite that, there was not an end put to this appalling practice.

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There is no need to treat these students in such an inhumane and disrespectful manner. Concerns have been raised that the pads are necessary in order to protect staff from harm, and we certainly agree that we should do everything that we can to protect staff. But the fact remains that many individuals and organizations have come forward to say that there are other ways of dealing with this: more staff knowledge in training in the use of other measures to deal with students that might have behavioural issues, because there's no question this does happen from time to time. Some of these measures are far more efficacious and can also be used without violating students' human rights.

Some of the groups that have come forward have included Community Living Ontario and the Geneva Centre for Autism. I think we all agree that the Geneva Centre is one of the foremost experts on dealing with children and youth with autism spectrum difficulties.

Their position is that the dignity of each individual must be preserved when balancing health and safety concerns. Introduction of red blocker shields only serves to promote fear of students who are already at great risk of marginalization and social exclusion. The indiscriminate use of the red blocker shields as protective gear throughout the school day may in fact trigger more aggressive acts from students with autism spectrum disorder.

In short, Mr. Speaker, this really goes against everything that we have been pushing for in Ontario in the last number of years as we use the blueprint of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Many of you will be familiar with one of my own personal heroes, Mr. Jean Vanier, who, as we all know, is the founder of the L'Arche movement. L'Arche, as many people know, sees all people with disabilities and abilities as having equal value and encourages people to share life together. I'd just like to take a moment to quote from Mr. Vanier and what he says on this issue:

“Those who are weak have great difficulty finding their place in our society. The image of the ideal human as powerful and capable disenfranchises the old, the sick, the less abled. For me, society must, by definition, be inclusive of the needs and gifts of all its members. How can we lay claim to making an open and friendly society where human rights are respected and fostered when, by the values we teach and foster, we systemically exclude segments of our population?”

I believe that those we most often exclude from the normal life of society—people with disabilities—have profound lessons to teach us. When we do add them, they add richly to our lives and add immensely to our world. I would agree, Mr. Speaker, that we have much to learn, and for this reason, I would urge all members of this House to support this bill this afternoon.

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

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm delighted to rise today and would like to commend the member from Barrie on Bill 102, An Act to amend the Education Act to restrict the use of blocker pads. I think his sincerity and his experience spoke for themselves. His conviction on this issue simply resonated through everything he said.

I would also like to say that the member from Hamilton Mountain did bring the issue of worker safety to the table, and I think this is why it's important that this issue be further considered in committee. I think we all believe that every student in Ontario does deserve to learn in an environment where they feel supported and respected. We know that it is, in fact, up to the local school boards to ensure that there are policies to ensure the safety of both their students and staff. However, the work refusal in the Simcoe county board shows that, perhaps, some of this just wasn't happening.

My experience of autism goes back to my medical school days, when autism was ascribed to the coldness of the mother, and there was a complete lack of realization that this, in fact, is a neurological disease. My insight came from serving on the board of Giant Steps Toron-

to—it's actually a school funded by the York region board of education—with a very high educational assistant-to-student ratio. The whole idea was integration into the classroom. That's where I learned so much about the issue of behaviour and potential ways of modifying behaviour very successfully, and the importance of training for those who were going to be working with these children, whether it be in the school setting or another setting, a camp setting. It's all an issue of a behaviour that may be frightening to those who are not properly trained in what autism—and other developmental disorders, actually—involve. There's a stigma issue here, too, and the more that we can do to ensure the appropriate training, the proper consultation and assessment plan for each individual student—so that worker, student, parent—everyone—is on the same page as to what the learning plan for this individual child is.

I'm happy to say that our government has made some major investments in terms of training. In fact, there is some \$57 million since 2006 through targeted funding that has been put to building capacity and improving the learning environment for students with autism and autism spectrum disorder, including some \$5 million to the Geneva Centre for Autism to train teachers' assistants and, perhaps in this case very importantly, \$1 million for the Geneva Centre for Autism to provide principal training. That seems to have been an issue in the case specifically in Simcoe county.

I commend the member for bringing this forward. I feel a full discussion at committee on this issue, the use of restraints in various situations, is entirely warranted.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Tip O'Neill, the famous Democratic Senator and Speaker in the United States, once said, "All politics is local." I say that in reference to my colleague Rodney Jackson from Barrie. He has epitomized that all politics is local. The moment he found out about this blocker pad issue in his community, and his vast displeasure that it exists in Ontario, he took it to his colleagues. I was one of those colleagues. Not only did he bring the issue or the problem or the thing that he had great dissatisfaction with and something that's quite inhumane to his colleagues, he then provided a solution in this bill, showing that all politics is local and that one MPP can make a difference. That's why I'm proud to support him today as the Ontario PC education critic and speak on behalf of Tim Hudak and the rest of caucus in supporting this new, dynamic member who has gone above and beyond for kids in his community that are vulnerable.

He does so from time to time against the will of this government. From time to time, regardless of what the idea is on this side of the House, they find a way to—I don't know—let's just say "oppose it."

I think that is the problem because there has been a systematic use of blocker compromises in his community, in Barrie. It has compromised human rights and the dignity of our most vulnerable. In his opening speech,

he talked about a young fella that took him around and toured him through a community. He used that example, and it was particularly poignant—it was about the last minute of his speech—when he talked about this young fella having had outbursts. They weren't controlled because he was never taught how to deal with responses. A year later, he was able to take my colleague and another one of our colleagues on a tour and ask a lot of questions and be precocious and be a real school community leader.

That is in distinct opposition to what this government has allowed to occur. They have allowed to occur a culture of fear in the classroom with these blocker pads. It severely undermines the social inclusion of this vulnerable group of students.

1600

From time to time in this assembly, we talk about the issues that are most important to us or that are raised by our constituents, or about an injustice that we feel needs to be corrected in the assembly, because we were elected to bring that voice. That is what the member from Barrie has done. He believes, as do I and this caucus, that this bill is necessary.

The education minister has had her chance to stand up for these children. She has failed to do so. She could have issued a directive to stop this practice, but instead, she sloughed off the matter to the same local school board that allowed it to occur in the first place.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, I am ashamed that the former Minister of Community and Social Services would be heckling this member and defending that practice, because it is disgusting. It is below us. It is beneath the dignity of this chamber.

He is bringing forward a social issue, and the reality is that it needs to be supported. Most jurisdictions across Ontario do not support this measure. He indicated that other jurisdictions across Canada refuse to allow this practice to occur.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: If I hear one more time from this government, after a decade in office, that it's Mike Harris's fault, I think I'm going to throw up. I mean, come on. You are responsible for the social ills that affect our province today. That is your problem.

Due to the re-emergence of this practice, this bill is necessary. I'll be supporting my colleague. He has brought a serious initiative forward. He typifies that adage that Tip O'Neill brought to the United States government: "All politics is local." He is defending the people he represents. At the end of the day, this crowd is not going to support it. I can't understand that, Speaker. And to blame Mike Harris?

Interjection: Did they really?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: They just blamed Mike Harris. How could you do that? That totally delegitimizes your debate. It delegitimizes your opinions. At the end of the day, private members' business is not about blaming each other; it's about getting progress. My colleague is trying

to bring progress to a situation in his community that he finds unjust, that affects children. It affects vulnerable children. He is here today to stand up for them, and we in the Ontario PC caucus support him. We'll continue to support him in the Ontario PC caucus.

We feel this bill is necessary because the Ontario Liberal government won't act. He will. The distinction is very clear. This problem has existed. He saw an issue. He's doing the right thing, which a member of provincial Parliament should do who represents their community. He brings it here, and I'm proud of him. There needs to be a bill. There needs to be a law. There's no trade-off between worker safety and the safety of the kids in our schools. That is what he is putting forward here. A child was accidentally smothered a decade ago with a blocker pad.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Oh, thank you very much, Speaker. I thought I had six minutes on the clock. My colleague would also like to speak.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I'd like to begin my remarks on this particular bill this afternoon by recognizing the member from Barrie for bringing forward the proposed legislation.

Every student in Ontario deserves to learn in an environment where they feel supported, respected and safe. The proposed Bill 102 brings to light the use of physical restraints on special-needs students by some school boards. It is the responsibility of school boards to set policy that ensures the safety of the students and the staff. Every school board should make its decision in consultation with the community and seek input from the special education advisory committee, better known as SEAC.

I understand that the member from Barrie initiated the proposed Bill 102 because the staff at Simcoe County District School Board have been using foam blocks or blocker pads in some of the schools and the school board is seeking the best advice possible to ensure that the best decisions are made for the safety and well-being of the students and staff in the board.

The proposed Bill 102 reflects a similar approach to that we use in the health sector, implemented back in 2000. In 2001, the then Minister of Health and Long-Term Care passed the Patient Restraints Minimization Act. The act set out when to use restraints on patients, and emphasis is on the minimum use of restraints. Because of this act, the College of Nurses has developed practice standards requiring all registered staff—RNs, RPNs, nurse practitioners—to ensure the use of restraints to be the last resort.

Research has shown that the use of restraints such as blocker pads increases agitation and disruptive behaviours and does not reduce negative outcomes. I am particularly concerned about the use of any kind of physical restraints without the consent of the patient, in this case without the consent of the parents. And there must be

proper training of the teacher and the support staff and, furthermore, documentation of the use of the restraints—documentation is critical—and ongoing review of the restraints.

I also believe that the proposed legislation raises the awareness and education about this concern, and that's the right thing to do. And the fact is that the local school board can address this issue, because I know, as a former trustee for the Toronto District School Board, that we have taken the position not to use blocker pads and not to use this type of restraint to address students' concerns about safety. So by bringing forth this particular legislation to the House, we now know about these concerns.

If the will of the Legislature moves this forward, I think at the committee level, if it goes forward to that level, we need to look at how this issue comes forward, what we can do to ensure every student in our school, as well as the staff, is safe, but more importantly, look to the health sector to learn from them how to improve, because at the end of the day we're all talking about one thing: the safety of our students and the safety of our staff.

I certainly believe that there is momentum now when this issue is brought before the Legislature, and all of us have a duty to address this issue.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I want to thank the member from Barrie for bringing forward this Bill 102. What I will say is that it's unfortunate that we have to have a bill on it. In mid-April, five months ago, I wrote the minister on this issue, and I'll just read you a few excerpts:

"I was proud to support the move to finally close the last three institutions that once housed individuals with a developmental disability."

"I am proud to support the inclusion of students with special needs in our schools and workplaces."

"The practice that is happening at Barrie North Collegiate goes against every statement of inclusion and participation that politicians from all three political parties espouse. Why would students feel safe approaching a student with special needs in their classroom after seeing such appalling activity? Why would an employer hire a student with special needs after watching these students escorted in such a way?"

"When we made your office aware"—and this is a letter that I wrote to the minister five months ago—"of what is happening, your response was dismissive and, quite frankly, disappointing. To tell me that it is the decision of the school board is abdicating your responsibilities as the Minister of Education for all Ontario students. The reality is that the Minister of Education does have the ability to stop it. It's under the provincial policy program memorandum."

I wish he had done that and we wouldn't be here today talking about it, and the students in Barrie would have been protected.

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

The member from Barrie, you've got two minutes to reply.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the members from Hamilton Mountain, Mississauga–Streetsville, Whitby–Oshawa, Oak Ridges–Markham, Nepean–Carleton—with her usual zeal—Scarborough–Agincourt, and Dufferin–Caledon, of course.

There are a few things we know here. We know that with the proper training, workers can assist children with special needs the proper way, appropriately. It may be an issue of resources and resource allocation, but I'll tell you one thing: It's not a result of the hard-working education assistants who do work with these children. It's not their fault. They're doing the best they can to get through their day safely. They don't have the proper tools in their training or at their disposal to be able to get it done. They're using a last-resort solution.

1610

The last thing I'd like to leave you with is another little bit of a story I didn't get a chance to get to, but I think it illustrates in a fairly graphic way these blocker pads and the usage of them. Just the other day, my colleague from Perth–Wellington, when we were talking about this and he saw the pictures of it, said, "You know, I've seen these exact same pads used to herd and corral pigs at pig farms." That image alone is enough to revolt, I think, anybody into using this really acute bill that's dealing with an acute problem and get rid of it, get rid of it now. If it starts a larger conversation, as some of the members have suggested, that's great too. But the point is, we need to deal with this acute problem immediately. If it leads to another discussion that leads to more resources or different resources being allocated to help children who have special needs and children with autism in our schools and make sure that they function in our society in a meaningful and great way, as we know they can, then that mission is accomplished.

I thank all those who spoke for their support on this bill. I look forward to seeing it in committee and having a greater discussion about it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

MUNICIPAL AMENDMENT ACT
(ELECTION OF CHAIR
OF YORK REGION), 2012
LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES MUNICIPALITÉS
(ÉLECTION DU PRÉSIDENT
DE LA RÉGION DE YORK)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal with the first ballot item, number 49, standing in the name of Mr. Moridi. Mr. Moridi has moved second reading of Bill 60. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Richmond Hill.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Would the House refer this bill to the Standing Committee on General Government, please?

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

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING
CORP.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. MacLeod has moved private member's notice of motion number 25. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. MacLeod?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a motion, Speaker

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): It's just a motion? Okay, thank you.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: But I will say this: Thanks to all members of the assembly for the very vigorous debate that we had. I appreciate that.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT
(BLOCKER PADS), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'ÉDUCATION (BLOQUEURS)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Jackson has moved second reading of Bill 102. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is referred to—Mr. Jackson?

Mr. Rod Jackson: I'd like to refer it to regulations and private bills, please.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PUTTING STUDENTS FIRST ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 DONNANT
LA PRIORITÉ AUX ÉLÈVES

Resuming the debate adjourned on August 29, 2012, on the motion for 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.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order: Mr. Speaker, I don't mean to be disrespectful, but there were some noes on some of the previous votes. I would just ask that a

little bit more attention be given to the actual votes, because I heard definite noes on some of these votes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Unfortunately, I didn't hear it, and I didn't have anybody stand up in objection—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: But, Speaker, you were doing something else, and I had to wait for you to finish that before I rose on the point of order. This is the first opportunity. I would just ask—maybe the table clerks can assist a bit. I don't know what to say, but I definitely heard noes on a couple of these votes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I hear what you're saying, but if somebody said no, it's really up to them to stand up and bring it to the attention of the Speaker. I did not hear it. It's done.

Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: On a point of order: Speaker, a matter of important urgency. I ask that you bear with me. I have just had a notice that the Newmarket OSPCA has initiated euthanasia of its entire animal population because of a ringworm outbreak. We have been here before, Speaker. I am going to ask the minister to immediately look into this. We cannot have a repeat of what happened a year and a half ago.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would say to the member that that's not a point of order. You may want to speak to the minister privately.

The member for Beaches—East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to preface my remarks on Bill 115 today—I think I need to put this in context. I have always had the highest regard for people in the teaching profession. I know that many members have stood up and made that statement, but I just want to give a little bit of context around that. I have always thought that teachers and support workers give of themselves in such a tremendous way in order not only to help the societies in which they live, but generally to help those who are the most marginalized, whether that be through poverty, through racism, through lack of opportunity, or more recently in the Canadian context of those who are newcomers to Canada and who may not understand one of the official languages or may be unfamiliar with the cultures they find here. I have seen teachers alone, through their work, lift up the poor and the underprivileged and give them confidence and an opportunity to go forward. And I have seen them perform amazing feats in doing their job and in doing it right.

As I have said before in this House, and probably will say again, growing up in Regent Park, it is very easy to see what a difference good teachers and a good school system make to those who are the most marginalized and find themselves living in poverty.

Interjections.

Mr. Michael Prue: I know, but the Speaker seems oblivious at this point. Mr. Speaker, I can hardly hear myself. I don't know that you can hear me at all.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): There are several side discussions going on in the chamber, and

the speaker is having trouble delivering his comments. I would ask everybody to quiet down.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a little quieter now.

Egerton Ryerson, all those many years ago here in the province of Ontario, when he set up the school system, set it up so that every child could be educated. He set it up so that the school system would work not only for those who were rich or who came from families which could afford a good education, but that every child could afford that education and every child would be given the opportunity, in those days up until their 14th or 16th birthday, to avail themselves of a public education, paid for with public dollars, taught by public teachers who worked for the state—not for churches, not for individuals, not for the rich. It is that public system that we have come to pride ourselves on in this province.

It was because of good teachers—teachers who cared, teachers who really saw some promise in a poor kid from Regent Park—that I was able to go on to university and ultimately end up making speeches in this House. I want to thank them. I want to thank them for what they did, for what they saw and for what they were able to do for countless others like me. I think we need to have that kind of context about the teachers, because I have heard some people speaking, over these last few days—not many, but a few—who would somehow put the teachers down, who would somehow put the unions to which they belong down, who would somehow say that what they are trying to do is greed or what they're looking for is things that they cannot have because the economy is not good. But I think if you put in context who and what they are and what they have been able to accomplish and all of those people in our society that they have helped in the past and even unto this day, you have to look at where we go from here with them in that vein.

It has been my opportunity over the last few months to travel and to meet people from other places. But I want to tell you of one experience that I had in Cleveland. We have a conference which many members of the Legislature attend. It takes place in several places, mostly in the United States, and it's the council of midwestern state and provincial governments. We also belong, of course, to the eastern conference of state and provincial governments, Ontario being the huge size that it is.

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I was at the midwestern conference in Cleveland and there was a considerable debate there about education in the United States. I stood up and I talked with pride about what was happening in Ontario, talking with pride about what is happening here, because the United States has seen themselves go from first place when it came to post-secondary education in the world to 16th place in one generation. They've gone from number 1 to number 16 out of the 21 OECD countries that are monitored. They have seen their test scores fall and they have seen all kinds of things happen as a result of successive governments that don't want to spend money on education and

who see this as a way of, I guess, saving taxpayers' funds.

I talked to them about the Ontario experience. I said some of the same things that the Minister of Health stood up and said yesterday. She stood up and said eight things that made the schools in Ontario the best in the world. She didn't get to the eighth, she only got seven out, but I don't have a huge disagreement with what she had to say. We have excellent schools, and they are excellent schools primarily because we have excellent teachers.

We have insisted over the years that teachers have not one but two university degrees. They all have a minimum of a bachelor's degree in either arts or science and they are all required to go for further education, to get a bachelor of education degree, before we allow them to teach. And we don't pay them a lot of money. For those who think that it's some kind of pampered job, they start around \$33,000 or \$34,000 at the bottom level. They have a grid system so that after 20 years, they get paid in the \$75,000 to \$80,000 range, and more if they have additional degrees or master's degrees or Ph.Ds. But we don't pay them a lot of money.

I want to say that the majority of teachers that I have known over my life—and I swear the majority of teachers that you have known over your life—are dedicated to the job. Many of them could make more money doing something else but they love teaching, they love the children and I think they love the results of their work, because they can influence people to be better than they would otherwise have been.

I wanted to put that in context because here we are debating a bill. We are debating a bill and I have heard the government members use three primary reasons why we're doing this. The first reason is that it is important to freeze their wages. I want to say that the teachers agree. The teachers agree, and do not, and are not, and have not since last April sought an increase in their wages. They are asking, to a person, that their wages be frozen. I don't know where the government rhetoric comes from on this, when members stand up and say, "We have to freeze their wages; otherwise we have to cut programs."

No teacher in Ontario is seeking an increase in their wages, and that has to be fundamentally made clear—not one of them. Not one union, not one teacher has stood there and demanded a wage increase. If you can show me on the government side a single individual—I have yet to read of it, I have yet to hear of it and I am unaware of it. So I would hope that the government members stop using that as an excuse. There is no money expected by the teachers' unions or the teachers themselves in this round of bargaining. In fact, as far back as April, when they tabled their bargaining demands, their bargaining demands included a two-year wage freeze—as far back as April. So there's the first one.

The second one is that they said that they needed to order them back to work, and I have heard this from government members: "We need to order these teachers back to work to make sure that they don't strike on September 1." Again, I have been monitoring this very

closely since last April, when the first bargaining proposals went forward, and I have yet to hear of a single board or teacher saying that they want to go out on strike. I know how nasty strikes can be in the public service. I was a public servant myself, and I witnessed first-hand how nasty those strikes were when the teachers were forced out in the 1995 to 2003 era. I remember walking the picket lines around East York Collegiate and some of the public schools with the teachers at that time. They felt they were vilified. They felt that their cause was just. They felt that they were doing it in order to protect the students, whom they cared most hugely about. I have yet to hear of a single teacher or a single board saying they wanted to strike. In fact, the unions have not even asked for a strike vote. They have not even asked that it be sent to an arbiter or to conciliation yet, at this point. They have not even gone through all of the things they have to do in order that a strike could legally occur. So I would hope the government would stop using the rhetoric that this is legislation to send them back to work. They intend to be at work and they will be at work, whether this bill passes or not, on September 4, because they believe that much in the children they are teaching and the families in Ontario for whom they work.

The last thing, which was very surprising to me, is that many members of the government have stood up and talked about how it is important to impose a contract across all of Ontario that is synonymous with that of OECTA, the Catholic teachers. You know, I've consulted and had a few small discussions with members who are trustees. There are 72 school boards across this province. They were caught flat-footed. They thought that was their job. They thought that's what they were supposed to do. They thought that they were going to negotiate with the teachers and come up with local solutions that fit local problems. In fact, the teachers were all well and determined to negotiate with the trustees and with the local boards, as the law requires. All of a sudden, we have this bill. What happened?

I think, sadly, we know what happened. We know that the government is intending to be tough. The government wants to flex its muscles against its former friends, the people that you love to call partners. I don't know how many times I heard, "These teachers are our partners." I will tell you, when I went out onto the lawn to talk to the teachers two days ago, they did not feel like partners. They felt like they were being treated almost like the enemy. If you want to treat people as partners, then you have to listen to them; you have to negotiate with them; you have to make them party to the final agreement, and you have not.

Now, it's very simple. I mean, one can look at statements in this House from various ministers and backbenchers in the Liberal government, and my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative Party who don't think it goes far enough but are going to vote for it anyway, and this is going to pass. At some time in the next few days, this is going to pass. And at some time in the next few days, something else is going to happen. The government

knows it; Conservatives know it; New Democrats know it; all the people who write in the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail* and the *Sun*, all of the people who broadcast television know it. There's going to be a court challenge. We all know that. You know only too well that that is going to happen. In fact, because we live in a litigious society, I probably would not expect anything else. These are people whose fundamental rights are being taken away, have been abrogated by an act of this Legislature, I think without cause. I really don't know what that cause is, because nothing that the government says in defence of it is, in fact, correct. So we have a group like the Canadian Civil Liberties Association this morning weighing in, saying that this is an illegal thing that is happening. I have great respect for the Canadian Civil Liberties Association; I was a dues-paying member for many years. Although I don't pay anymore, I still admire what they do and I still admire the lawyers who work there and who advise us when Canadians' rights are taken away, because one of the things that makes me proudest to be a Canadian is that we have those civil liberties, and I am thankful that the Canadian Civil Liberties Association is looking out. Now, we have seen other grand designs of government unravel in my time here. I remember when I first got here—I hadn't been here very long—and Premier Eves stood in his place and announced that they were going to sell off Hydro. I think members who were here then will remember that. The announcement was barely made when a couple of unions got together and ran to the court; it didn't take very long and that whole process was thrown out. The fact that Ontario Hydro is still in public hands is testament to the fact that the courts will overturn government decisions that are not well-thought-out.

1630

We have also seen what has happened in British Columbia. Heaven knows, I've heard countless members of the government stand up over many days and talk to my colleagues in the Conservative Party, in the official opposition, about the BC nurses' union case and how the government could not act in the way the official opposition was asking because you were going to find yourself in a whole lot of trouble.

So now we have this. There was a news conference this morning, and I fully expect that a court challenge will be undertaken. This whole thing will be an enormous potential cost to the people of this province. It will be a cost to the taxpayers, who invariably are going to have to foot the bill of any government defence, and of the province. It's going to be a cost to the teachers and the support workers, who are going to have to pay the costs of going to court. It may wind its way all the way to the Supreme Court, as such things often do. It's going to be a cost to the students, because I am afraid there is potentially going to be some acrimony. It's going to be a very real cost to the school boards of this province, the trustees, who have seen their jurisdiction and their real *raison d'être* evaporate.

There is the whole thing about what led up to this. The government likes to talk about having negotiated success-

fully with the Catholic and French teachers and their associations. But the other boards were at one point equally as accommodating. In April 2012, the OSSTF, in meeting with the government negotiators, put down the following conditions that they were willing to abide by in order to get a deal.

They agreed, number one, on a two-year wage freeze. They agreed back in April. What has happened since then that makes the government think that they want a wage increase? They wanted a wage freeze, and they still do.

Back in April, they sat down and said they wanted a retirement incentives program that would allow for more new teachers to be brought on board and perhaps to end the practice, or so much of the practice, of having retired teachers come back in and fill those spaces. When I heard the member from Scarborough–Agincourt talk about this the other day, I think she was heartfelt. We have to make room for new teachers. The OSSTF were prepared to do that as part of the negotiating process.

They also agreed and put forward that they could help the government cut administrative costs in the millions of dollars and showed the government how to do it and how the teachers were willing to take up some of that themselves.

They also talked about running their own employee benefits program at no cost to the government, saving the government tens of millions of dollars.

That's what the teachers sat down and tried to do in April. Then we come fast-forward to August and we have an imposed Bill 115. They were summarily rejected, and I think they've been summarily rejected throughout the process. This is what causes me grief and causes me to be apprehensive about a court challenge. The government says that what happened to the nurses' union in BC may happen here, or at least they used to say that when the Conservatives raised this spectre. The government says now that the teachers are on board. I'm not sure how real that is.

I'd just like to quote the Premier, if I can find that. This is what the Premier had to say to the official opposition on this issue as late as May 31, 2012. I quote the Premier: "I would recommend to them"—the Progressive Conservatives—"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 and 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 the mistake were we to adopt this particular approach."

Mr. Speaker, I think my time is up. I think the government has adopted this particular approach. It causes me great apprehension, and I would hope that saner thoughts prevail.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, you may mean questions and comments.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order, Speaker: Questions and comments.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: My goodness, what a zealous member from Timmins–James Bay. Thank you very much, in any event, Speaker.

If the entire affair with the discussion of contracts had been conducted with the civility that we have just seen from the member for Beaches–East York, I doubt that we'd be here debating this particular bill. There's a lot that he had to say that I think is very much in accordance with the intent that the minister has pursued ever since the middle of winter.

For example, the key parts to remember here are that teacher and support staff contracts are set to expire on August 31. We've just got to get a little bit of work done here. That's why Ontario has been working with many of those education partners for almost six months to establish that new sustainable education funding framework.

In fact, it's got some results to show, because in July the government signed an agreement with OECTA, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, and it represents a road map that balances the need for Ontario to reach the province's fiscal targets and does some of the things that my colleague from Beaches–East York has been advocating: protecting our investments in full-day kindergarten, smaller class sizes and the classroom experience.

I completely agree with him on that. In fact, that's what this Putting Students First Act is intended to reflect. It's a fair and balanced approach that's going to benefit Ontario's youngest teachers—we shouldn't lose sight of those—and also help preserve 20,000 teacher and support staff jobs.

There is some momentum behind it because teachers at more than half of Ontario's boards have now signed agreements with the province. Now we need the rest of the teacher unions and the boards to just do the same. So I thank my colleague for his comments.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just dropped my standing orders.

Mr. Speaker, to the member from Beaches–East York, I agree: It's pretty clear what this government's up to. They were trying in the worst possible, desperate way to create a crisis. If they were able to create a crisis and to show that, oh, my God, Dalton McGuinty is going to rise to the crisis and be everybody's saviour, maybe they would be able to do something when it came to the by-elections that was favourable for the fortunes of the Liberals in those by-elections.

The sad part is, and the member pointed it out, that no crisis exists. As the member pointed out, the workers offered a wage freeze for two years before negotiations ever started. The union said, "We withdraw our strike votes. We will not have strike votes." There have been school boards that have said, "Listen, the government is

interfering. We want to have good, fruitful discussions with the unions. We understand that discussions like that take time, they're hard work, and you've got to do some heavy lifting, but that's how you get an agreement." So the government said, "Well, where a crisis doesn't exist, we'll create one à la Snobelen. That way, we'll be able to be seen as trying to do something to stop potential strikes that were never going to happen this fall, and be seen as being tough against teachers," which the government tends to think is a good idea.

So this is really about how many seats in the Legislature this government can win and very little about how many kids are going to be in the classroom come this fall.

I just say to the government across the way: This is a pretty cynical way of approaching politics. I think it leads to the cynicism of voters. I say to those of you who are upset: Don't stay home. Don't be mad. Get to the ballot box and vote against this Liberal administration come next Thursday.

1640

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I listened attentively to the member from Beaches–East York and his comment, "Listen to them. Negotiate with them." I think in fairness, Mr. Speaker, we have worked with our education partners now for over six months to try to reach an agreement, and there are pros and cons—always looking for improvement. At the end of the day, the contract expires tomorrow and we need to address some of the financial constraints and challenges. Everybody has known since February that the contract expires August 31, period. Okay?

The member from Beaches–East York never discussed today that this proposal for the OECTA MOU also talks about fair hiring practices because there are many young teachers whom all of us in this Legislature have spoken to, have heard their concerns. They have completed teachers' college, they have multiple degrees and haven't been able to get a job.

Interjections.

Ms. Soo Wong: Mr. Speaker, I don't appreciate being spoken to when I'm speaking. That's totally disrespectful.

We know that we have to support our young teachers. They are now not even on the supply list, Mr. Speaker. This proposed OECTA MOU sets out fair, transparent rules of hiring practices. We need to do everything we can to support the young teachers. That's what they've been asking us to do. They've been asking previous governments, and none came forward. Now we're able to come forward with clear language, transparency and accountability to make sure younger teachers are protected. At the end of the day, there will never be a perfect agreement, but we're doing our very best, especially in this difficult time, and this is the right thing to do.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I've been listening to the debate on this for several hours now, and one of the things that I'm really concerned about is that I see this as purely political posturing right now, and I disagree with this totally. Is it about the kids? Are they really making it about the kids? I don't think so. I think they're really making it about their unions, the union bosses, their union buddies, and yet they're trying to come down tough on this. I just have some really serious concerns.

We, as the PC caucus, want to put some amendments to this particular bill to really give it legs. Right now, it's a bill without legs, as we see it. Again, we are concerned about the kids of Ontario. We're concerned about, all of a sudden, if it doesn't get—if it extends—

Interjection.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, the member from Timmins–James Bay.

Interjection: The guy from way up north.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: The guy from way up north; right.

What we say is this: The kids need to be in school—bottom line. For that regard, we will support this bill. However, it does need to have legs to make it fly better. When we get it into committee, we want to examine it clause by clause.

We believe that principals need to be the ones to decide about a substitute teacher. They need to decide, not the unions. In fact, if I have a child in school and we have a shop teacher who has a lot of seniority and that shop teacher has been asked to fill in in an English class, I suspect that probably it'll be just a spare for the kids and there's no education. They need to be looking at filling the gaps with the most qualified teachers so that these children can still—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The member from Beaches–East York, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Michael Prue: I thank my colleagues the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, Timmins–James Bay, Scarborough–Agincourt and Chatham–Kent–Essex for what they had to say.

Just a couple of comments: The member from Mississauga–Streetsville said that half of the boards have signed on. I'm not sure how accurate that is. As of Monday, only three out of 72 had signed on. I don't know whether there have been any additions, but I doubt very much that another 35 boards have signed since then. Surely we would have heard of that. It may be up from three, but I don't think it's very much above that.

The member from Scarborough–Agincourt had to talk about the fact that the contract ends tomorrow. Of course, that is true, but a contract ending does not mean that a strike will immediately happen. A contract ending means that the negotiations continue. This is part of the labour law of Ontario, and I think the member should understand that. All that means is that the contract runs out; the old one is in force until a new one is arranged. That is the law of Ontario and has been the law of Ontario for 100 years. In any event, even if that wasn't the case, this is retroactive legislation. This is retroactive, so even if it

takes a month from now before it is ultimately passed, after it has gone through committee and third reading, it's retroactive. So I fail to see really what the point was.

My colleague from Timmins–James Bay said it was a crisis precipitated around an election. He is probably right. I have heard the Conservatives say the same thing. I tried to stay away from that in my speech. I tried to be rational, hoping that some member of the Liberal government would look at the actual history and who is being affected. But, in any event, I understand the motives and what is likely to happen.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to speak, although I have to say I wasn't sure whether I was going to speak to this bill or not, An Act to implement restraint measures in the education sector. There are lots of members, there was lots being said, and I wasn't sure exactly what I would add to the debate. But, as is often the case, I've found in my political career, I was prodded and poked by the Conservatives, and so that kind of got me going yesterday when I was here. After all, that's how I got here in provincial politics, because of the actions of the Conservatives undermining the education sector and the municipal—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Yes, yes. My first meeting with some of you was from the gallery as I watched those debates, because I felt that the autonomy of the municipalities was being undermined, and I felt that education was being undermined. That's how I got here.

I started to think, after listening to the debate yesterday, that there really are some things that I want to say at this juncture, and I'm not so much going to parse the legislation because, again, that has been done in many ways. I'm not as interested in negotiating or debating the fine points of the negotiation as in thinking about and talking a little bit about the process surrounding where we are, because I believe that this point in our history in Ontario is going to be looked at. It's an important juncture, given who we are as a government and given the trajectory that the province has been on, and maybe it's my training as a mediator that makes me want to look at all sides, and I want to figure out exactly what it is that we're engaged in at this point. So I want to talk a little bit about where we are at this juncture.

First and foremost, what I want to say is that I want to solidly reinforce what the Premier and the Minister of Education have said repeatedly: that it is our first choice—our first choice of a path to a collective agreement is through negotiation. You talk to any member in our party, in our government, and that is our first choice. That is what we wanted; that has always been what we wanted. We believe in the collective bargaining process, and we want it to work in this situation. As it stands now, obviously, it has worked in some of our relationships and in others, it hasn't. That is why we're here debating this legislation. But, as a first principle, that's what we

wanted to have happen. That's how we've behaved, that's how we've operated, since we came into office. So we did not have a personality change. We have not had a personality change. That's what we wanted to happen. That's how we wanted to get to a collective agreement.

That's the first thing that I wanted to speak to, because I find that in these discussions, in this kind of political discourse, these moments in history, the rhetoric gets ramped up and there are white hats and black hats and there are good and bad, and I don't think that serves the people of the province. I think what serves the people of the province is to hear honestly and in a heartfelt way from all of us what we believe, what we want, and where we find ourselves, what we find ourselves having to do.

1650

I think that people can understand an honest outline of where we've gotten to. What they have trouble with and what they are forced to do in a situation where there's nothing but finger-pointing and blame is, they have to pick a side. I don't think that gives credit to the people of Ontario. I believe we underestimate the people of Ontario a lot, as politicians. I think the people of Ontario can understand complexity, they can understand nuance, and I think we need to pay them the respect not to let ourselves devolve into the sound bite or the rhetoric at every turn. I want people to understand that that was our first choice; that we want, and we still want, that bargaining process.

Secondly, I want to just reflect for a moment on our record in relation to education. We worked on many fronts with teachers, with education support workers, with administrators, to put systems and mechanisms and personnel in place to improve student achievement. We talk a lot about test scores and graduation rates. They have gone up, and that is fantastic. But that's not the whole story, and that's another thing that I think people need to understand. The professional development opportunities; the opportunities to share best practices and to build professional learning environments that we've put in place; the improvements in special education, particularly in the area of autism, that we've put in place; the student success initiatives in secondary schools, like dual credits, that we've put in place to give kids an opportunity to stay in school who otherwise wouldn't stay in school; inclusive education and anti-bullying policies that are now enshrined in legislation—that was Bill 13; smaller class sizes in kindergarten to grade 3; and full-day kindergarten.

I'm outlining this record because I want to draw a distinction between us and the rhetoric of the Conservative opposition, which, as I listened to it yesterday—none of the initiatives that I have outlined were supported by the opposition; none of them. As recently as yesterday, one of the members from the official opposition was heckling that he had come to Queen's Park because of his opposition to secondary school initiatives that helped kids struggling to complete credits. That is the difference between us and them. We have been solidly on the side of publicly funded education for students as a govern-

ment, and that is where we remain as individuals and as a government. That is who we are. That's part of our DNA. That's the work that we've been doing since 2003.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Member from Timmins–James Bay, would you come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me come back, then, to Bill 115 and this moment in our history and our relationship to the education sector. I'm not going to promise, I'm not going to pretend, that it's not a difficult moment, because it is a difficult moment. The member for Nepean–Carlton was sniping at me yesterday that she understood that there had been some disagreement and some discussion in our caucus about this issue. Only a Tory would denigrate a healthy debate. Only someone who does not appreciate the importance of honest, heartfelt discussion would criticize a team that allows that debate, then comes to a conclusion and stands together and takes a stand. That is how we function, and I think to diminish that is to diminish the democratic process, Mr. Speaker.

I am part of a team that has formed one of the strongest, most cohesive governments in Ontario's history. Our leader, Dalton McGuinty, has been a champion of publicly funded education, the system, his entire political career. There were bound to be trying and difficult discussions at the point where we need to find ways to deal with the deficit, a deficit that was a result of a global economic downturn. The party opposite doesn't want to admit that the global economic downturn has brought us to where we are. We had balanced the budget three years in a row. The economy across the globe went down. We had those issues to deal with. So it was expected that we would have to have these difficult conversations because of the economic situation that we find ourselves in.

It pains me personally, and, as I said earlier, I think it pains many of us, that we weren't able to come to a different resolution. But that is the political reality, and I would say to all of us and to everyone in the education sector that we face that reality together now. That's the reality that we are all engaged in. I think that political reality is hard on many people, and the hardest thing about that rhetorical down-spiral that we get into is that natural allies alienate each other for long periods of time. We don't want that to happen. That's not a healthy thing. It's not a healthy thing for the political process and it's not a healthy thing for the education sector. I believe that we are natural allies and that we should try not to alienate each other.

I want to make a final point, and this is a direct appeal to all the people in our publicly funded schools, all the people who work from early in the morning, after school and on the weekends to support our students and provide them with a rich and enthusiastic learning environment. I understand that this is a difficult juncture for you. You have lots of questions. You're part of teams and your staff and your federation, your union or your association. What I hope is that you'll express your confusion, your anger, your questions and your support in those venues. I

hope you'll avail yourselves of their information and resources. I hope you'll talk to all your MPPs and your leadership. Tell them and us what you feel and what you think, and be as frank as you need to be with all of us.

But I say this, not out of any self-interest or in the name of political support: Many of you are teachers or support workers the same age as my children; some of you are older and you are very experienced. Those kids need you. They need you in their clubs; they need you on their teams; they need you in the classroom and outside of the classroom. Don't rob yourselves of those experiences. Those are the places that you bond with kids—at the robotics competitions, at the science fairs, in the orchestras and the bands. Work with those kids.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: I would never question the sincerity of my friend the Minister of Municipal Affairs. She started off by saying she wasn't sure if she would participate in this debate, and I'm rather surprised that she did. Certainly, when she was a school board trustee, when we first met her, she made a number of statements about the former government's education policies, and I'm sure this must be a very difficult issue for her personally, to deal with this Bill 115.

I would just ask her a couple of questions, because we've received input from the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association. Of course, I know that the member is a former Minister of Education and probably well acquainted with this organization. I personally know the president of the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, Marino Gazzola, and we've been asked to raise this issue with the government.

The note we've received is asking questions about the fact that the proposed legislation places restrictions on the system-wide use of diagnostic testing and introduces seniority as a key determining factor in the hiring of teachers. The trustees' association is saying that seniority should be the only consideration when assigning a supply teacher or long-term occasional teacher. They go on to say that teachers could opt out of using detailed, student-specific diagnostic testing and they suggest that schools rely on consistent, in-depth assessment tools to track the progress of each student; the value comes from using the same assessment tool over several years and allows for targeted intervention. This would also remove the role of parents and the benefit of the expert team approach school boards currently use to identify and help struggling students.

So I'd just like to ask the Minister of Municipal affairs what she would say in reply to those questions that have been raised by the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I enjoyed the comments by the minister in regard to this particular debate, but I've got to think, as a former school board trustee here in Toronto, if she was in the position of the school board trustees today,

if she was still at that board, she would be in orbit. The fact that the government is essentially meddling in the issues that the boards themselves are normally equipped to do, essentially creating a crisis where a crisis doesn't exist—can you imagine if the Conservative government had done this at a time that the honourable member was a school board trustee? She would have been out in front of Queen's Park. She would have brought in every trustee and everybody that she could, including teachers, saying, "Hey, hey, ho, ho, Mike Harris has got to go."

But now it's a bit of a different thing. She's on the other side. She's in the government. I've got to believe that she's a progressive. I know she's a progressive. This has got to be pretty uncomfortable stuff for the minister to be able to deal with, and to boot, this whole thing is time-allocated. The government has now tabled the time allocation motion that says essentially we're going to get about three hours of committee on Wednesday, maybe four; we're going to get an hour and maybe 15 minutes of committee hearings on Thursday morning; and then we're doing clause-by-clause.

1700

I know the minister, like me, believes in the idea of democracy, and I just think that when governments start using time allocations to run roughshod through these types of debates, especially when the legislation is retroactive—nobody in this House is saying this is going to be held up infinitum, but clearly there had to be, and I told the government House leader this, adequate time at committee for people to be heard. I've got to believe that as a former school board trustee, the honourable member would be leading the charge and she'd be saying, "Hey, hey, ho, ho, Dalton McGuinty, time to go," if you were on the other side.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: I thought the speech was excellent by the member, by the former education minister. I think one thing she emphasized, which is so very true, is that there isn't anybody I know in the government caucus or the government cabinet who wanted to see this solved by legislation. I think there was a genuine hope back in February, knowing it would be difficult, but a genuine hope back in February that this would indeed be resolved through negotiation, tough negotiation at that.

It's always a luxury—I know where the Conservatives stand. I read Tim Hudak's article in the Star. It said, "Oh, you've spent far too much money on education. You've been too good to the field of education." I understand that. I don't agree with it, but I understand it.

But my friends in the New Democratic Party have the luxury of being in opposition. I had that as well. You'd be interested to know that I've had some very frank discussions with people who have denounced you over the social contract. Now, I'm not out there publicly defending you, but I'm going to tell you I've explained to them why the government, in the circumstances it faced in the midst of a tough recession in the 1990s, brought forward the measures that it did—not because they're

anti-labour, not because they hate people in the teaching profession or others in the public service, but because they faced a very difficult set of choices.

The same is true in Saskatchewan, and I've brought the book *Minding the Public Purse* into this House on many occasions. The public won't read this, but I hope members of the Legislature will. It's written by Dr. Janice MacKinnon, who was the NDP finance minister in Saskatchewan in the most difficult times, when one of the things they did was close 52 rural hospitals. Is it because the NDP hated health care or the people of Saskatchewan? It was confronted with difficult circumstances, and it had to act that way. And I suggest that if you weren't in opposition today, you'd be much more sympathetic to the position the government finds itself in today.

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

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I think my number one question today here is, I'm wondering when we talk about clarity what that actually defines and what that means, because I think people are more confused than they ever were, and I can say, going out and talking to the constituents in our area, that they'd like to know what your form of clarity is, because they're more confused than they were yesterday and the day before that.

You know, the situation is that you're in a position right now—this afternoon, actually, we were talking about saving \$354 million for the horse racing, but when you take into account that we spend \$1.8 million more than we take in, that money is gone within nine to 10 days. So, to me, when we look at things, we have to look at all the band-aids that we have actually done at this point.

I guess my point is that people really want to know what clarity we have and what we can do to make the situation better. People are confused. They feel they're being vilified, one against the other. I can say in my office—I can't speak for anybody else—I do have trustees, boards coming in, and they're more confused than anybody else and just looking for some form of clarity.

I guess the bottom line is that you do the proper thing, which is the protocol. You sit down, you get into a room and get everybody in there to have an open discussion to figure out where you move forward with that. Doing everything at the last hour confuses people more so than it did the hour before that, and it ends up that you vilify one against the other so people don't really know what the problem was in the first place and how they got to where they are.

I think most people here today just want to know—the word “rhetoric” is thrown out today or “clarity” is thrown out, but how do you say that when things are more confused than they were just two minutes prior to that?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister, you've got two minutes to reply.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the comments of my colleagues.

I say to the member for Wellington–Halton Hills, I don't really want to go into—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm sure you don't.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, we talked about the fair hiring and the diagnostics. I think there were some changes made to the settlement, and there's been a conversation about those; I understand that. Again, those were details that had been worked out first at the negotiation table with two of the federations and then in conversation with the Conservatives.

But I was trying to make a broader point about the trajectory we found ourselves on, that we wanted to come to a collective agreement through a negotiated process. That didn't work.

To the member for Burlington, just for some clarity, we had said that if we couldn't get there, we were going to put in place legislation. That's not what we wanted to do, but that's where we have ended up.

I say to the member for Timmins–James Bay, this is my team. This is the team that I am on and this is the team that has led the charge on improving publicly funded education since 2003. It's one of the platforms that we came in on, it's the work that we've been doing and it's the work that we want to continue doing. We have some natural allies in the education sector and we want to keep working with those people.

My driving motivation for speaking is that I really believe those relationships are the most important thing that we have going for us in terms of education in the province. I want everyone in the education sector to have the best year possible. I want them to be able to take part fully in their school year. Talk to us and deal with us in whatever way you have to, but please have a great school year.

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

Mrs. Jane McKenna: First of all, I'd like to say I'm very grateful to our critic for education, the MPP for Nepean–Carleton, and also to our leader, Tim Hudak, for having shown leadership on this file.

First and foremost, when you look at everything that has happened, I think people mostly want to stand and hear what we have to say and to understand how we got here today. I understand what you say when you're saying it was the right thing to do. But if you'd done the proper protocol and the right thing in the first place, we wouldn't be sitting here doing what we're doing right now.

I want to start by saying that when you don't have a leader, you have chaos, which we can see we have had over this time. When you lose control of finance, you lose control of your destiny. We have clearly done that at this point right now. Someone's behaviour in the past is indicative of what they're going to do in the future, so I stand here and look and I think about a few things.

First and foremost, I think of how we've worked in the past and how situations—I'll just give you one example. Your wage freeze on Ontario public service managers has reportedly saved \$34 million since 2009, but in 2011

alone, your government paid bonuses totalling \$36 million to 98% of civil service managers.

Interjection.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: OPS. Some estimates peg those performance bonuses at around \$130 million since 2009. To recap for you: \$34 million saved, \$130 million spent. I look at how you've done in the past with that—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Speaker, on a point of order: I want to quote, I believe, 23(b) in our standing orders: "Directs his or her speech to matters other than ... the question under discussion." I'll just have you rule on that, Mr. Speaker, please.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you for the point of order. I'd just ask the member to keep her comments to what is in front of us.

The member for Burlington.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you. In regard to Bill 115, the government commissioned the Drummond report and then swept aside half of its recommendations. This government still has no credible economic development strategy to fix the problem in front of them, no action plan, and no road map that will restore balance.

1710

We're moving toward Dalton days. For the last nine years, this government has thrown money at everything under the sun with little thought to anything but the marketing plan. There is a deficit that is more threatening than \$15 billion, and that's the leadership deficit we're seeing from this government. The government likes to assign blame everywhere else than their own actions, but even if you believe that line of reasoning, there's no sign that the government is learning the lessons of a wider world. Reckless leadership, government that is arrogant and entitled does more harm to Ontario than all of these imaginary causes. We, alone, are to blame if we fail to take control of our own destinies and overcome the obstacles in our path. We must meet the challenges of today with clear eyes and confidence.

Ontario PC leader Tim Hudak has been clear and consistent. He doesn't want to derail a school year; nor do I. As a matter of fact, the Ontario PC caucus would prefer no disturbances at all so that our kids can be in the classrooms, laying the foundation for their future. We would prefer that the Liberal government would finally come around and enact the broader public sector wage freeze that the Ontario PC caucus has been calling for since the last election. Maybe we'll get there yet. We're seeing signs that there has been a change of heart across the floor, which might explain why, after years of asking for pay freezes from the public sector while dishing out bonuses and spending hand over fist, we're seeing this government show up with something that vaguely resembles a wage freeze. True, it's a baby step on the long road back to getting Ontario back on track, but it's an encouraging sign.

This August, Ontario PCs were essentially looking at two choices. We could go with the government's business-as-usual approach and green-light a 5.5% pay increase when the province clearly could not afford it, or

we could pause the pay increase for a portion of the public sector, take comfort in the fact that our kids will be able to go back to their classrooms come September and keep working towards a broader public sector wage freeze.

This bill is the first sign that the Ontario government has had a moment of clarity, had their five minutes of truth. After nine long years, they have finally realized that the cupboards are bare and their spending is out of control. This government has run out of money, and now it's running out of fumes.

Ontario can't buy labour peace any more. The province has over a million government employees and around 4,000 collective agreements. The government's status quo approach to reining in labour costs will not get the job done. The province needs what the finance minister has referred to as a true zero freeze, and more than that, it needs strong, decisive action. It needs real leadership. Our party will continue to promote the bold ideas needed to curb spending, balance the books and pay down our debt.

In conclusion of that today, I'd like to also say that, at this particular moment, \$500 billion in Canadian companies is being held because of insecurity in times of where we are right now. Even the federal government has said to reinvest in your companies or pay dividends to shareholders to get this economy going. We have not given an economy for people to either want to stay here—capital's mobile. Bay Street knows it. We have high debt, high taxes and high hydro. People aren't going to stay, and they're not going to want to come in.

We need to create an environment after nine years to make it the place where people want to be, to flourish, to grow. We can't just talk about the band-aid effects that you're talking about on how to cut spending. We need to have an economic development strategy on how to move forward to make things better.

The Premier doesn't want to be known as the Rae days. He wants to be known for what he's doing to move forward from here. Thank you so much.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm very happy to be able to finally join this debate. I hadn't had the opportunity all week.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's a two-minuter.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I know it's two minutes, I know, and I'm going to get it all in in two minutes.

I want to tell you, to the minister across the way, I drop my kids off at school every morning. They are the most precious things that I have in my life, that I would give anything for. I know you feel the same way, Madam Minister, and so does any good parent, godparent, step-parent, anyone who minds children in this province.

We trust, when we put them on the bus or when we drop them off at the front doors of that school in our small communities, that the teachers who are there are not only going to teach them, of course—that is their job—but they're going to protect them, they're going to

challenge them, they're going to love them and help them and push them.

Those are the things that I see out of the teachers in the school, Pavillon des Jeunes in Belle River, that my kids go to. They have gone to full-day kindergarten for the last eight years, prior to this government's position on full-day kindergarten, or imposition of it.

Hon. James J. Bradley: So you support it now. That's good.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's a great idea, of course. It's something that makes sense.

But what I want to ask the government is—your decision to take away the rights of the teachers is telling them that they're not worth it. I think that's the clear message that you're sending: They're not worth the value that we hope they instill in our children, and we're not going to value them because of the economic conditions in the province.

Hopefully I'll get a chance to hit on it again. I'm going to save one of those bullet points for my next speech. That's what the school system means to me and, I know, other parents across the province. I hope this government realizes how valuable our system is.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: It becomes an increasingly interesting debate because on one side you have one of the parties, the official opposition, the Conservative Party, saying, holus-bolus, "Just jump in and put a wage freeze on everybody in the public sector. You don't have to go through any negotiations first. You don't have to do any preparation. Just bring in legislation and do it."

On the other side, when the government brought in legislation after a number of months of discussion and negotiation, the NDP predicted—and I think it's a pretty easy prediction, as I think the member for Beaches–East York conceded; I don't want to put words in his mouth. But there's almost an expectation that with legislation of this kind we're going to see litigation taking place. I think that's an expectation that we have to accept as a government and as a Legislature.

The NDP has hung its hat on its opposition to this bill, I think largely on the fact that, "Well, at least I've listened to the leader. It's going to cost the province millions upon millions of dollars in legal costs."

The difference—and you have not differentiated, and I don't blame you; your job is not to defend us, it's to find an appropriate wedge, and I accept that. But the difference between the situation with—what the Conservative Party is recommending is no pre-negotiations to it, simply the hammer coming down. What the courts clearly indicated was, that won't work. The courts will not accept that. What the courts will accept, in our opinion, is an effort at negotiations. We notice today, for instance, news that the college teachers' union has proposed to the college teachers that they accept a contract that has two years with zero increase, and we recognize that there are some negotiated settlements.

I go back to the fact that our government would have preferred a negotiated settlement. It simply was not possible. Just as with the NDP in years gone by, we were compelled to take different kinds of action.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to compliment the member for Burlington on the speech that she gave in the Legislature just now. I think she offered, in a very sincere and open way, the views of her constituents in the riding of Burlington with respect to Bill 115, and not only that, the overall education issues that we all try to work through and confront.

I think she put on the record a number of very accurate statements, obviously, about the position that our caucus is taking with respect to this bill and the broader issue of the overall cost of salaries in the broader public sector. Certainly, we've been consistent in putting forward the view that the deficit is a ticking time bomb for the next generations. Certainly, the Don Drummond report confirmed that if nothing is done in terms of spending restraint, we're most likely on a path to an explosion of the provincial debt and a debt of something like \$411 billion, I believe, by 2017-18. I think most people in my riding certainly understand that if you're digging a hole, the longer you continue digging and the deeper you get in that hole, the more difficult it is to get out of it.

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Obviously, we've taken a very practical approach to this issue and the issue of pay in the broader public sector. We believe that it would be fair and reasonable to freeze the pay of those who are in the employ of the provincial government as well as the broader public sector for a two-year period so as to ensure that we're taking meaningful steps to reduce the deficit. I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that we're going to have to undergo a larger prioritization exercise. We're going to have to take a thorough evaluation of all the government's spending if we're going to balance the budget. Certainly, the Don Drummond report provides a road map. It may not provide all the answers, but to the extent that the government rejects some of the recommendations in the Drummond report—like his recommendation that the government at least put off the full implementation of full-day junior kindergarten—the fact is, they have to find some offsets or we won't balance the budget by 2017-18.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The member raises a good point, and that is the government, aside from saying that they were going to—well, they didn't say that they were going to create a crisis, but they effectively tried to create a crisis for their own reasons.

They also said, "Oh, my God, this Legislature isn't working." I remember the House leader of the government side, I think it was this week or last week, saying, "Nothing happens in this place and it's slow as molasses." I just think about the opportunity the gov-

ernment lost this morning. The government could have called Bill 2, the bill for the seniors' tax credit. The government could have called Bill 50, the ambulance act that the Minister of Health and the Premier talked about today. What did they do? They didn't call a government bill that's currently on the order paper that's topical and, I would argue, that some constituencies want. Instead, they decided, "Oh, there's a by-election, so let's talk about something we did two years ago so that we can try to put the Conservatives in a tighter spot and, at the same time, we can be seen as, 'Ah-ah-ahhhhhh! Look how great we are!'" It's like the Tarzan thing, right? Well, I've got to say, it's really, really—

Hon. James J. Bradley: That's a bad Tarzan impersonation.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I know it's a bad Tarzan thing, Jim. I understand, because I'm not as good as Tarzan. Tarzan—he was the real thing; I was just imitating him.

But anyway, my point is the government has really been trying to sell two lines. They're trying to sell one line—"Oh, we can't make Parliament work and that's why we need a majority." Well, my God, it doesn't work why? Because they're filibustering their own legislation. They brought in a motion this morning on something that was already decided two years ago, that is currently being funded, and the motion means absolutely nothing but political rhetoric and a way of trying to jam the Conservatives. Then they do what they're doing now in regards to school boards and teachers.

Clearly, this government understands it's trying to help its own political situation. They're trying to advance what's going on in those by-elections. I think that's wrong, and I think those who are upset with the government should vote against them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Burlington, you have two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: It was a privilege to be able to get up and speak today. Number one, only being here almost a year coming up on October 6, it's always confusing to me to sit here and to watch everything going back and forth, because there is some form of manipulation with everybody's words at times. But at the end of the day, I took this position and was blessed to get this position, and I come in here for my constituents of Burlington to work as hard as I possibly can.

But I also come to be as honest as I possibly can and to give them the answers that they need and want. What they want is to know where we stand after nine years. What they want is to know how we're going to make it better and what are the big-picture things. They're sick and tired of looking at the band-aids, with the horse racing, with the savings of \$354 million. In 10 days that was spent; that's long gone. They're looking for us to figure out how to get the economy going again and how to make it the best place it can possibly be.

It's symbolic to say that for the first time ever we're receiving equalization payments. If that doesn't speak

enough about the government of Ontario, then I don't know what does.

It's frightening for my children, my grandchildren, my constituents, your children and your grandchildren that all they're going to inherit is a massive debt because of arrogance and an entitlement to do things that are not in the best interests of the Ontario people. I'm sad to stand in this House because right now we are trying to do what is fiscally responsible. We have our leader, Tim Hudak, who has been consistent over and over again. I am thrilled to stand with him, beside him and with the rest of my PCs who honestly believe that they're doing the best job they possibly can. I'm also thrilled with our education critic, like I said. She took the lead on this file, so thank you for all of us as PCs.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker. Ten minutes? Great. I'll start off where I left off, I guess.

I want to touch on our economic conditions here that ultimately have precipitated this rather rash decision on behalf of the government to legislate collective agreements on our province's teachers. One of the conditions is obviously the provincial deficit, the fact that we're floating somewhere around \$13 billion to \$14 billion at a time where, most recently, this government has continued on a path of giving away multiple multi-year tax cuts to the largest corporations in the province—cheered on by, of course, the official opposition, who see that as one of the mantras of fiscal prudence and economic generation, which it actually isn't. I don't want you to take my word for it. Take that of the finance minister, Jim Flaherty. Take his word for it, because just recently he has called on the largest corporations in this country—him as well as the governor of the Bank of Canada, Mark Carney—to stop hoarding their cash. They are hoarding.

Mr. Michael Prue: Five hundred billion bucks.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Well, this year, they are \$280 billion in surplus, excess cash just waiting to be spent. They're saying, "Get that out the door. With these tax cuts that we've been giving you for decades now, we thought you were going to reinvest that into the economy." Ultimately, it hasn't been reinvested. Now you've got Jim Flaherty stating that he needs that money out into the economy.

That's what our teachers do in this province. We pay them well. Guess what they do? They buy cars, they buy homes, they buy groceries. And they do it locally a lot of the time, too. They understand the importance of supporting their communities, as do a whole host of our public sector workers, who understand that if you work for the province—you know what?—you should invest back into the province. One of the reasons, I believe, that this province made it out of the recession of 2008 relatively unscathed is because our public sector actually had some financial stability and those workers were able to make those large purchases to keep our economy going.

But what you're saying now is that because there's still a lingering presence of economic doldrums in this province and because of the debt that you've accumulated on various mismanagement exploits, it will be up to the teachers to make up that balance. Of course, the only way for you to get there is to impose a legislated collective agreement upon them, where in fact throughout the last several months they have clearly indicated to this government, to the Minister of Education, that they were prepared to take a 0% wage increase. It's something that has been fully nuanced, well articulated, clearly presented to all government sides.

What I think we have here, Mr. Speaker—let me rephrase this: What we have here is a failure to negotiate.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: A failure to negotiate.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Merci, Madame. I thought you'd catch on to that.

What we have here is a failure to negotiate, and we've seen some precedent for this. We've seen a history of this government not being able to negotiate. They weren't able to negotiate an agreement with our Ornge air ambulance service, one that didn't have massive loopholes in it. They weren't able to negotiate a gas-fired hydro plant in Mississauga in the right location—or in Oakville and Mississauga. They weren't able to negotiate with those—

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Mr. Jeff Leal: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I just want to bring to your attention a very important section of our standing orders, 23(b): “directs his or her speech to matters other than,

“(i) the question under discussion; or

“(ii) a motion or amendment that he or she intends to move; or

“(iii) a point of order.”

I would suspect on our standing orders the member from Essex is drifting somewhat, and I'll leave it in your capable hands, Mr. Speaker, to rule.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would just ask the member to somehow bring the discussion back to what's in front of us. I would also remind other members, too, because some of the questions and comments were straying quite a bit.

The member for Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believed my comments were topical in that they related to negotiation and bargaining, and that's obviously what has led to this piece of legislation in front of us today.

But, you know, we hear the government change the narrative, and we heard it last night. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to join the debate last night, but I heard the narrative change on that side of the benches. For years and years and years, decades, you called those in the education system “partners” and you called those who lobbied on behalf of our education workers, our teachers—those who represented them in collective bargaining—“partners.” You called them “associates.” You

called them “professionals.” But now we hear the narrative that they are “union bosses” who are attempting to flex their might.

Hon. James J. Bradley: We never used that.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Oh, I heard it last night. I heard it last night, and I'll tell you, it's interesting, because I heard that same narrative—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's their language.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: No, I'm looking at the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You never heard the Premier say that.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I heard it, and I'll give you the opportunity, of course, to correct yourself.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would you speak through the Chair, please.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I can tell you where I heard it also today: on the front lawn of Queen's Park where horse people were gathering. The Leader of the Opposition talked about the union bosses as well—

Interjections.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yeah, I know, he did, when in fact one of those union bosses, the head of the CAW, Ken Lewenza, has thrown his support behind the horse racing association.

Interjections.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Let me get back on the topic.

It has been quite clearly proven that this legislation will be challenged in the courts immediately. Who knows how long that process will drag on? Maybe that's the intent, to bury this in the courts so that people forget about it, they'll forget about the damage that has been done. But we won't forget about it. Certainly we've heard that the teachers won't forget about it, because what you have done is completely abdicated your responsibility in sitting down and negotiating. The teachers and the associations I've spoken with have very clearly identified that they were willing to work with you, as willing partners. But we understand that, at some point in this government's life, they will have to make a move to actually justify their existence.

We see that actually happening right now as the final days of the by-election campaign in Kitchener–Waterloo draw to a close and you attempt to disguise some of the failures that this government has had over the last eight years by, obviously, creating this crisis. It's been very well explained, and I get it. I'm new here, but I couldn't imagine that one seat would be so important that you would not only manufacture a crisis but go full on with it, take it to the full extreme and absolutely create havoc in our education system: fear when there shouldn't be, distraction when we can't afford to have distraction in this province, and a real lack of leadership, ultimately a complete lack of leadership, when our kids are the most vulnerable in this fight here now.

We know that there's no hard way to negotiating. That's why. It's hard. It takes a lot of effort. Okay.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: We still can.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: We still can. Well, take your legislation off the table and get back to the bargaining table. If you still think you can do it, then put all your efforts into negotiation. That is called good faith, a measure that this government hasn't shown throughout the entire process. If you don't think that's going to have a lasting effect on your political fortunes, then you are very much mistaken.

Finally, those who will suffer in the short and the long term will be the children in our school system and those wonderful teachers and educational professionals who dedicate their lives each and every day, each and every morning, to ensuring that we get the best-quality education we possibly can.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very much pleased to have added some comments to today's debate. It is probably one of the most important we will have in this session. I look forward to continuing it with my colleagues. Thank you.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: On a point of order, Speaker: I would ask that the member try to correct his record. I was actually quoting the member for Trinity-Spadina, who was suggesting that they were intimidated by union leaders and that we should have learned, that we should be backing down. I was very clear in my remarks that the only time—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister, it's not a point of order. I do not believe the member made specific comments as to who. He was all over the map.

Questions and comments? The Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm sure he was referring to the Conservatives, who like to call people who are the head of unions "union bosses." They make no apologies for it; to their credit, they don't make any apologies for it. I don't agree with them, but there we are.

I want to draw a contrast for the member, who is a new member of the Legislature. I enjoy his remarks, and I do want to recommend to him the book *Minding the Public Purse* by Dr. Janice MacKinnon, former NDP Minister of Finance in Saskatchewan from, I think, 1993 to 1997. She mentions in her book, "I consulted" my good friend "Floyd Laughren about the circumstances confronted by governments in difficult economic times in the mid-1990s." What I want to contrast here is the NDP in opposition and the NDP in government. To be fair, and you know how I always like to be fair, one could say a lot of political parties that when they're in opposition they don't say exactly what they say when in government. There's a group of people out there who have become disenchanted with the NDP, as I mentioned in my previous remarks. I was trying to explain to them the social contract, that the NDP was not anti-labour, that the NDP wasn't trying to be mean to people. It was confronted with very challenging economic circumstances. They tried, I think, to negotiate, as we have tried to negotiate.

To their credit, some of the teachers' federations have made those efforts. We've seen some contracts concluded by some of them. At the present time I notice, for instance, that the OSSTF is endeavouring to obtain some contracts with local boards. I think there has been some goodwill, but it has been extremely challenging under these circumstances.

But I want to point out to the member that he should always look at what the NDP has done when given the levers of power compared to what the NDP has said when it's in opposition. It's a difficult challenge for you, I realize.

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

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I'd very much like to follow up on the comments of the member for St. Catharines. Quite frankly, each of the parties try to do the best they can with the situations that develop, as the member from St. Catharines mentioned regarding the social contract and certainly when the Conservatives were in power and the transfer of funds that took place, and how they tried to deal with those issues.

But I think some of the issues are not quite being dealt with here. From my perspective, we seem to be dealing with the symptoms and not the cause of the problem. I'm not referring to provincial spending in any aspect. I'm referring more to the party perspective and that you need to play that sword and thrust and parry, but also the cultural mindset that takes place within many sectors within the community and how we have to address those issues and try to make sure that we move forward in the best interests of all the people in the province of Ontario.

We look to the recent past, to the dealings with the doctors. You know, today's clippings kind of sends up a trial balloon of what the expectation may be with what's coming with police and fire. I would also hope the government is looking at some aspects and what we're hearing about posters at the bus stops now, OPSEU and the flyers being sent out within that community because they think they're next on the list. Today's clippings would certainly indicate that police and fire would be more easily discussed or are being discussed at this time.

Some of the questions that I hope the government would be able to answer is that I'm hearing on the radio stations in Peterborough, for example, whereby in the sector being dealt with currently they're saying they agreed to a full-time two-year wage freeze but that's not happening. They're saying it's more a matter of the government taking control of the boards to make decisions on behalf of the boards.

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I would certainly hope that the government would be able to answer some of these ads that we're hearing out there so that the populace at large can understand and then, quite frankly, we actually deal with the cause and not constantly deal with the symptom of what's happening in the province.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The cause of the problem is simply the government. That's the answer to the question.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Oh, that's easy.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, seriously. Who is the one who is creating the crisis here? My colleague the member from—Essex-Kent?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Just Essex.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just Essex. Okay, I got it wrong. My colleague the member from Essex made the point very, very clearly that the government is trying to create a crisis in education where one doesn't exist. You were quite right: The offer at the beginning of all this was a two-year wage freeze. God, I've negotiated on the employer's side, and if somebody came to me and said, "Listen, my opening position is a two-year wage freeze," it would be a lot easier.

It's heavy lifting. You've got to sit down; you've got to work out the details. The government says, "No, we're not going to do that. It's more important that we have a crisis. We don't want to deal with the facts; let's deal with the crisis. Because if we have a crisis, we can go into the by-elections and say, 'Look at how good we are at dealing with them bad old people who don't want to go and teach. Oh, my God, who's going to stand and talk for the kids?'" Well, these guys aren't doing nothing for the kids. Quite frankly, all they're doing is helping themselves. They're saying, "Listen, if we create a crisis and we can get people looking up here rather than at the Ornge scandal, rather than at \$180 million to settle the Mississauga gas plant, rather than look at eHealth," rather than looking at what they've done to the horse racing industry and are doing, "if we can get them looking up here, they might forget about the litany of bad, bad decisions we've made as a government for the last nine years and maybe, just maybe, they'll forget when it comes to voting in the by-elections."

Let's be real. This is about Liberals trying to do what Liberals do best: being political opportunists in order to try to influence the outcomes of by-elections. That's all this is about.

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

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It's a pleasure for me to stand up today to speak on this issue. First, let me thank all the teachers in my riding, Ottawa-Vanier. We have the most wonderful schools in my riding. We have excellent management in our schools. We have excellent teachers, and the results show. Look at the results of the schools in my riding. They're excellent.

I'm very proud of l'AEFO and OECTA, but let me talk about l'AEFO. They agreed with the proposal. My question today is, why is it good for OECTA and l'AEFO and not good for the others? My question is redirected to you.

I know that it's not just the wage freeze that is on the table. There are other issues, like the accumulated sick leave. I know it's a very touchy issue, because when I was a nurse this was eliminated, in 1978. I had 350 days;

this was eliminated. So I know it's a very, very touchy issue.

I want to reiterate that we have a son who is a teacher. We have a son who is trying to get full-time, and he cannot because of all the rules and regulations. It's not an easy topic to deal with, and I wanted to associate myself with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

I'm very proud of what we've done as a government to improve the education system, but thanks to our good teachers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Essex, you've got two minutes for a response.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to give thanks to all of my colleagues who joined the debate. I didn't take your names down, so I won't be able to name you, but you know who you are.

In 2008 the global economy hit the wall, and we're still feeling the effects—am I correct here? Because we continue to talk about how we are in a stagnant economy: productivity rates, job losses, job numbers haven't grown. There's no real growth. But what you're saying is that to make up for that, we're going after the teachers. That's what you're saying today: "We're going after you." They said, "Okay, we understand you're in a difficult position. We're going to give you zero, zero on a raise. We're not going to take anything this year; we're not going to take anything next year." You said, "We want less than zero." You know who needs to get back into school? It's the Liberal benches, because you can't get less than zero. You can only pull more and more and more away from the workers in this province and the teachers who add so much value to our economy. That's what you did. I'll tell you, it is going to be a sad semester across this province.

Mr. Paul Miller: A lot of morale problems.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: A lot of morale problems, a lot of difficulties, where students are going to, I'm certain, feel that tension—that they don't need. It's tension that didn't have to be created. It's a crisis that could have been absolutely averted. How? You negotiate under the parameters of fair and free collective bargaining in the province of Ontario. Do you disagree with that? If you do, ultimately, you stand with our friends in the opposition. They don't like it; they don't want to do it; they can't do it.

That's the other thing: the business elite who want to get rid of the unions, similar to what's happening here. That's business. This isn't negotiating. You can't sit down across the table and negotiate? It happens every day in boardrooms around the globe, and you can't do it with a group of teachers who have already told you they were ready to deal and ready to work with you. Instead, you've created a crisis and gambled with our kids' future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for York West.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Speaker, I thank you very much for the opportunity to have a few minutes and hopefully add to the debate.

I have been listening very carefully from the beginning, since we introduced this bill, and I have listened to most members on both sides, including our own side, and I'm very pleased to see, first of all, that we have the support of the Conservative caucus on this bill.

I have been listening very attentively as speakers addressed the various issues, or, if I may, non-issues of the bill. I have to say that we as legislators come into this chamber and we bring our own individual brand of passion to the particular debate. The passion may vary based on whatever may be on the table for discussion. I have to say that some of us in the House may deliver that particular message with a different zest, with a different passion and with a different spirit. That may be part of being colleagues in this House. If we agree or disagree, that's another story. Who is right and who is wrong? I think that sentiment goes around in this House.

The fact is that some of my colleagues have been addressing it as a façade: "It's because of a by-election." Let me get this out of the way before my time runs out, Speaker. The by-election in Kitchener–Waterloo was not our doing. It was not our doing.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, oh. The by-election in Kitchener–Waterloo wasn't your doing? You offered her a job.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: She could have waited to resign. She could have waited.

Mr. Michael Prue: One hundred and eighty-seven thousand reasons.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: She could have waited till the next election.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I have order?

Mr. Mario Sergio: When it comes to my colleague on the NDP side, I was very much taken yesterday by my colleague from Trinity–Spadina and the member from Bramalea–Gore—

Mr. Paul Miller: Malton.

Mr. Mario Sergio: —Malton. I have to say, with respect to my colleague—because we all say what we want to say in this House in the pretense that whatever we say is right. The way people interpret it outside, because we have these wonderful cameras—it's up to the people how they will interpret it. I have to say to the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton there—he says it's a distraction. Well, this is a very important issue; it's not a distraction.

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But I was more taken by my colleague for Trinity–Spadina's remarks when he said yesterday, "Why would you go and destroy what you have built over several years and the love that you have acquired with the teachers and the unions, the respect? Now you're going to lose it all." I have to say this, and I say it really, truly—and I want to address especially the teachers, Speaker, and then I'll tell you who the teachers are. When this is over and done, we will be enjoying more love, more understanding from the teachers and the

teachers' unions because they will understand exactly what we are trying to accomplish here.

Speaker, if we didn't make those difficult decisions five, six, seven, years ago, we wouldn't have the quality of education that—they are saying we have the best education in the world. If we have the best education in the world, it was not up to them. It was up to the difficult decisions that Dalton McGuinty and this government made a few years ago.

Today, we can see why those decisions were made, Speaker. We can see that. It wasn't me the other day but Buzz Hargrove—I think we all know who Buzz Hargrove is. He said the other morning that we have the best education system in the world. Hallelujah, hallelujah. Do we really need Buzz Hargrove to tell us that we have the best education system in the world? But it was refreshing to know.

So, in answer to my colleague from Trinity–Spadina, I have to say—

Mr. Paul Miller: Where's that Rosario?

Mr. Mario Sergio: It was Rosario, my good colleague. I have to say this: He's got a wonderful point. But the point is this, Speaker: How did we get to bring the education system in Ontario to be in the best in the world? How did we do it?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You started with Mike Harris's system.

Mr. Mario Sergio: It was not Mike Harris. We pumped—

Interjections.

Mr. Mario Sergio: They don't want to hear it. They don't want to hear it, Speaker.

We have sunk billions of dollars into the education system. Today, we have the best teachers in the world.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Timmins–James Bay and the member for Essex, come to order, please.

Mr. Mario Sergio: I've been listening to all of you very politely. I think you could concede that particular time, but given who they are, Speaker, it bothers them.

Let me say this on behalf of our teachers, Speaker: Who are our teachers? Who are our teachers, Speaker?

Interjection: Our brothers and sisters, everybody.

Mr. Mario Sergio: You got it. They are families, fathers, mothers, part of our community, and they have kids as well. They have kids as well that they take to the cottage, and they have kids that they take to do shopping to get ready for the new school year. How would they feel, Speaker, this coming weekend, being a long weekend, under the threat of the school year not going to be open? What are we going to do? I think it's time that we take it seriously as legislators and say—and it would be a wonderful thing if we could do it. If we could give credence that we come into this House with the best knowledge to deliver the best we can do for our people, Speaker, it would be wonderful.

The fact is that if we were able to do that, Speaker, we would do all the best for the people without splitting our

people out there, Speaker. We could do that, but we don't. You know why, Speaker? Because we tend to be human and we tend to play politics. But you know what, Speaker? When all this is over, the people out there will understand that this was the right thing to do, the best thing to do.

Speaker, we have this wonderful commodity that is called time. They have time. We have time. We all have time. It is what we do. It is what we do with this particular time. The fact is, Speaker, that since February, six months ago, we have spent considerable time to come to an agreement. You know what, Speaker? We cannot set sail on yesterday's wind. We cannot do that. Therefore, I think it's important that we give our teachers, that we give our kids, that we give our taxpayers peace of mind, knowing that the schools will be open next week, that the teachers will be going to school next week, that our constituents and taxpayers know that the school will be open. I think that's important.

When you look at the content of the legislation, I don't think it's that difficult for our teachers to understand, because they are professional people. Do you know why it was so important for our Premier to do the best, to sink in billions of dollars and produce the best education system and the best teachers? Because our future best teachers will come from today's education. That is exactly why, Speaker.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: That's a good line.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Therefore, as my time is coming to a close, let me say this, Speaker.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's a good line.

Mr. Mario Sergio: It is a good line because it is a fact. Sometimes we think teachers are this very strange group of people. Well, you know what? Our neighbours—sometimes we shovel our own driveways together with them, and they could be a teacher. They go shopping. We see them all over the place: at church, at the coffee shop. Speaker, they are taxpayers as well. I know, when it's over and done, Speaker—and I hope that we can get this over with soon—we're still going to have their respect and they will have our respect. We will have our love for them and they will have their love for us.

I thank you, Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Seeing the time on the clock, I'm tempted to adjourn, but before I do, I would ask all members to join me in thanking the pages for giving up their summer vacation and being here with us. Many are moving on to grade 9, so we would like to wish them the best, since they're moving on.

With that, we're adjourned until Tuesday, September 4, at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1758.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

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

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

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

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

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Vic Dhillon, Michael Harris
Rob Leone, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Reza Moridi, Jerry J. Ouellette
Liz Sandals, Jagmeet Singh
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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

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

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

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