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Wednesday 5 September 2012

Mercredi 5 septembre 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 5 septembre 2012

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 4, 2012, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate? The member for Ottawa–Orléans.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Nepean–Carleton, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: That's okay. You know what? They've been saying for years over in Ottawa–Orléans that they need a good MPP. Guess what happened in Orléans yesterday? After nine years of Dalton McGuinty's Liberals promising to fix the 174/417 split, a sinkhole swallowed a car whole last night on the drive home in Ottawa–Orléans. I think it's time for a change in government, and they need a new MPP in Ottawa–Orléans. So thank you very much, Speaker, for drawing attention to that issue that occurred yesterday.

But it is, of course, a pleasure to be here this morning to speak on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus and our finance critic, Peter Shurman, from Thornhill, regarding the healthy home tax credit for seniors.

The question we have, given the sense of urgency on issues like the province-wide need for a legislated wage freeze across the entire broader public sector as well as the scandal at Ornge and the need for the Liberals to bring Bill 50 forward, is, why are they place-holding and filibustering their own legislation? We are concerned on this side of the House that that is what the Liberals are doing. They're not serious about passing legislation. If they were, Speaker, this bill would have passed before the summer session—the intersession that occurred last

June, but here we are. We're here debating a piece of legislation that was effectively window dressing after the fall election last October. Here we are a year later.

In many instances, this government will ram legislation through this House, but on this issue, they haven't done that. Why, I suspect, they chose to delay and dither is because only a tiny segment of the population will actually benefit from this tax credit. We all know, Speaker, that those who have a little bit more money can do a little bit more in terms of renovations. This actually does benefit those who are, I would suggest, the haves of the senior population, not the have-nots. We all understand in this assembly that those of less affluence are likely less able to do renovations in their own communities or on their own home, and that presents a particular problem, especially when this government is suggesting that they are going to help people get by, particularly seniors.

We understand that those less affluent seniors will no more readily be able to pay the \$8,500 portion of the \$10,000 under this bill. They won't be able to do it today because they weren't able to do it yesterday. We felt at the time that it would have been far more equitable to bring in an HST cut-off on home heating. We felt that that would have helped all Ontario seniors, but also all families across this province who are suffering as a result of the 300,000 jobs that were lost in the last three elections under this government's watch.

The government really hasn't provided, as well, any details to us in this assembly on how this would be done. They only suggest that there is an estimated cost, but at that point in time they're really not talking in detail about those costs.

The problem with this bill, of course, is that it segments further inside that group to address accessibility or functionality concerns. One of the concerns many of my colleagues have had in this assembly—I know, for example, that my colleague from the NDP will be bringing forward a piece of legislation on sprinklers for retirement homes. That helps seniors, because that's a necessity in our long-term-care homes. I told him I would speak positively toward his bill, because I think the safety of our seniors and of our population is incredibly important.

But this, of course, is a government that only likes to have some trinkets and baubles out at election time and immediately post-election to make it appear as if they're doing something. As I've just said, this piece of legislation won't really do much for many. The reality is that an entire segment of the population is cut out, and those who are less affluent are less likely to use it, even though they may require the services more.

We still believe that the best way to address some of the concerns we have in Ontario is to help all families and all seniors stimulate the economy by providing a pan-Ontario benefit such as the removal of the HST off electricity and/or home heating fuel. We know, for example—and I'll go back to what happened after we resumed sitting after the election almost a year ago this week—that a majority of people on this side of the House supported removing the HST from home heating.

We know that a majority of Ontarians supported political parties that wanted to remove the HST off home heating. We know that a vote took place in this assembly, put forward by the Ontario New Democrats and supported by the Ontario PCs, that would have removed the HST off home heating. We felt that would have been more fair, more equitable, more comprehensive. It would have assisted everyone, not just the few.

The government, as I said, has not really provided much detail on how this piece of legislation and this program would be funded, and that is a problem. We are facing a \$30-billion deficit. Don't take my word for it; take Don Drummond's, the chief economic adviser hand-picked by the Premier himself, who told us that if we don't get our spending under control in Ontario, we're going to put those core public services that we cherish and that we value at risk. He said that we needed to make a series of important decisions, tough decisions that would get us out of that hole.

This is another program that is undefined, with very few details. We don't know if the money that will be allocated to it is going to be spent wisely or appropriately, or on the people who will need it most. If the government really wanted to help Ontario's seniors and has a \$60-million short-term money allocation available, there are other ways to assist. I'm thinking specifically of investments in more long-term-care beds in our province. I suggested moments ago that there is an ability for us to remove the HST off home heating and hydro.

I've also suggested that the government could support my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek with his private member's motion to ensure sprinklers are in long-term-care homes and retirement homes, because that will save seniors. That speaks to their safety. That speaks to what a value is here in this assembly by a shared number of members of provincial Parliament.

0910

Now, when we came back, there was a sense of urgency in passing this particular piece of legislation, but as I have mentioned, it is almost 11 months that this bill has been left to languish on the order paper. It has been left to languish on the order paper because the government does not see it as a priority. But \$60 million—if that is indeed how much they intend to spend—is an awful lot of money when you're facing a \$30-billion deficit. It is not clear to us, as I have said repeatedly during my 10 minutes of debate so far, that this money will be spent for those who need it the most.

Speaker, we have been recalled back to this assembly early. Last week we were told that the government need-

ed to pass immediate legislation legislating teachers back to work, for a mandatory wage freeze for teachers so they wouldn't get their 5.5% increase on September 1. Now here we are, Speaker, at September 5; that legislation hasn't passed yet. In fact, as Christina Blizzard said the other day, this government appears to be filibustering its own legislation, because as we saw last week, instead of wanting to debate their own motion, they chose instead to put sort of a frivolous, non-binding, polarizing, wedge-driven debate on full-day kindergarten. If they truly wanted this assembly to work, they would get back to work. They would be focused on things that were more substantive, not the smallitics. They wouldn't be dragging their feet on legislation like Bill 2, the second bill that was tabled.

Speaker, we all know in this assembly that Bill 1 is always put forward by the Premier. It's about an ancient act of the parliamentary workings in this assembly. It's a bill that never gets debated but never dies on the order paper. It is that symbolic; it is that important to our democracy. You would think a bill, Bill 2, would have been equally as important to this government, because it was their opportunity, after having been re-elected, to put forward something which they believed in fervently, something that they thought they could pass—a bill that would have been intended to help people. Instead, they chose to allow this to languish, as I have said repeatedly in this assembly, on the order paper.

We are now debating it today because we are at work an extra week early, and the government really doesn't have much on its legislative agenda with the exception of Bill 115, which I had mentioned previously: the teachers' legislation, the so-called Putting Students First Act—which brings me to my concern. My concern is that the government, today, is allowing legislation to remain on the order paper without any action whatsoever. They may use it as a political ploy.

I'll use another example, although it did pass last week: Bill 11. It was one which they allowed to languish in order for them to stoke up fears and angst among municipal leaders in Ontario; it was designed with misinformation, but the reality is it took forever to get that bill to a vote. That wasn't the opposition's fault; the government has the orders of the day. I also want to refer to Bill 50. Bill 50 could have been debated today. The government stands up—in fact, the Premier stands up almost daily to say that he expects the opposition to pass Bill 50. Speaker, we can't pass Bill 50 unless the government puts that on the order paper and we debate that bill and the government calls it to a vote.

So here we are now, a year later, finally getting around to third reading of Bill 2, the second piece of legislation—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I just want to refer to standing order 23(b), in terms of the debate dealing with the question under discussion, which is Bill 2 and not Bill 115 or Bill 50. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you for your point of order. It's duly noted, and if I feel that the member is drifting too far, I'll certainly stand up and remind her.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate the intervention of the member from Peterborough. It can't be very comfortable to have to sit here and not debate legislation that your party says it supports. I must say I certainly did appreciate the support of his party last week when we did put something forward in this assembly in terms of calling the Auditor General in to review OLG's recent gaming plans.

But, Speaker, we're going to talk about this bill, as it is so-called important to this government. We know, for example, that if you're going to let something languish on the order paper for 11 months, it can't be that much of a priority. Yet at the same time—and I say this to my good colleagues here in the third party and in our own party, the official opposition—you would think, after raising Bill 50 each and every single day in this assembly since we returned, that Dalton McGuinty would want to put that on the order paper for debate. He would want to put his money where his mouth is.

But I think the question is, is he prepared to talk about Ornge and that scandal in this assembly? I don't think so, and I don't think he wants to give us a platform. He just wants to use that bill as cover when he's in question period to say he's doing something. It's almost like this bill, Bill 2, which should have been a priority because it was the second bill they put forward—you would think there would be a sense of urgency to pass this. Instead, it was on the order paper for 11 months, and you have to question whether or not this government really does care about this legislation, or if it's just a time-filler to say they're doing something.

It's almost like justice, Speaker. It must not only be done; it must also be seen to be done. This government appears to think that it's all a public relations exercise. Who cares if you get it done; let's just pretend. Let's make everyone think we're getting it done. The question is, do they really, really want to pass this legislation?

I would argue that it was on the order paper for 11 months. They're only hitting third reading now. We've passed legislation in this House quicker than a week has gone by. In fact, we'll pass a piece of legislation today with respect to the Board of Internal Economy lickety-split. It was done yesterday. That speaks to how quickly we can move and act in this assembly if there is a desire to get it done. This government here has made a calculated decision to drag this debate on when they could have put this forward much earlier. But they chose not to, because that is part of their political games.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I talked about this last week, Speaker. It's smallitics. It's when they like to dig into the weeds to play silly political games instead of actually getting something done for the people we've been sent here to represent. That's why I say that while some sen-

iors will appreciate this option, it will not be readily accessible and available to all Ontario seniors. We felt, and we still feel, that the best way to kick-start our economy and protect Ontario's seniors is to give them more money in their pockets so they can make the choices they want to make, not a government choice, not a government option that is not available and accessible to everyone. In fact, some might argue—and they probably have throughout this debate—that this option is actually skewed to more affluent seniors who can afford \$8,500 out of their pockets.

Now, I'm not sure. My mother is a widow, and I know my mother doesn't make a whole lot of money. She was a homemaker her whole life, and I can tell you that if she were asked to shell out \$8,500 to take part in a government program, it's highly unlikely that she would be able to do it without assistance from my sister, myself and other family members. So I then ask the government this question: Why are they making this program so inaccessible for widowed women? Why are they making it so inaccessible for those who have less affluence?

They may not be the people who support the Ontario Liberal Party, but they are all people who send MPPs to Queen's Park and who rely on us to pass good bills in a timely fashion. That hasn't occurred here. And that is why I question the timing of them bringing this back to the House. Is it just simply a time-filler or a filibuster to get through the next week and a half to prove they are still busy? Will this be sloughed off until the government decides later on, at another time, that they need a filler to pretend or, as I like to say, seem to be doing something?

0920

As we know, this government—and I've become acquainted with it over the past three terms—is really geared more toward public relations than sound public policy—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Self-interest.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —and, as my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke says, self-interest.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: As I say to my colleague from St. Catharines, for whom I have enormous respect, the voice of reason often in this House is the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I'm very fortunate that, in our seating plan, I have the opportunity to sit with him and seek his good counsel and guidance on a daily basis. I know, for example, he has spoken about this in the past. He has the same concerns I do, and, as a leader in our community, particularly in eastern Ontario, he and I bring a very important perspective to this assembly on Bill 2.

Speaker, if the government wants to pass this—I'm not saying we're going to support them, but if they want to pass this, I would urge them to bring it to a vote today. It would be important enough for us to have that conversation. But as I've said, I think they're going to allow this to languish, this debate to go on. Maybe we'll be here this time next year still debating Bill 2. Although it was deemed the second most important piece of legislation to

put forward after the election, we know by far it is not at all important to them, given they have waited this long to actually call it again for third reading.

Speaker, in my final seconds, I would like to thank you for your indulgence during this debate. I'm looking forward to hearing ideas from all corners of the assembly on this important issue in helping our seniors. I would like the government to acknowledge that this is by far a bill that has waited too long and will help too few.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's a pleasure to comment on the comments of the member from Nepean–Carleton. We are here discussing Bill 2. As someone new to this House, I also assumed that Bill 2, the first thing introduced by the government, would also be a high-priority item, which it may or may not be, since we are discussing it 11 months later.

I'd like to point out that one thing I've learned in my time here is that the party across, the governing party, is really good at the titles: the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act.

Hon. James J. Bradley: We learned that from the Conservatives.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm glad to hear that both parties are really good at the titles, but they're really, really good at the titles.

We will vote in favour of this when the government brings it forward, and when people come to my office I will try to explain to them how it works. A lot of them are going to be disappointed, very disappointed, because this bill is more about the press release than it is about helping seniors. It will help some; it will help the privileged few. The argument is that if somebody wants a grab bar for 50 bucks, they can apply and get \$1.50 or \$2.50. But it doesn't work that way; you're not going to do it for little stuff. If you really want to help seniors, you should broaden it out, as we said in committee.

What the government is doing here is doing as much as it can to promote itself with as little action as possible. That seems to be the modus operandi of this government. That's why we're sitting here two weeks or a week early discussing things that could have been discussed much earlier, or later, because as we all know, the teachers are still in school.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from York West.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's good to see you in the chair.

I was paying very close attention to the remarks by the member from Nepean–Carleton. I have to say that my seniors are no different than the seniors in any other part of our province, and their family members are no different either. I travel to two or three nursing homes almost every week, because I have family members in nursing homes, retirement homes, and there is a constant cry that I hear from those people and their family members: "We wish we could be in our home." Even though they receive good care, good attention, the family members and

the patients say, "I wish I could have stayed in my home longer."

We should be grateful as legislators that we are doing something and not being simply legislators. I believe that if any law that we approve in this chamber here were to improve the life of one senior, we should do it. We should not be so petty-political. Even if one senior were to benefit from this particular law, it's worthwhile doing it. As we all know as legislators, not every law that we approve in this building is aimed at or is going to help everybody. It doesn't work that way, Speaker. There are certain laws that apply and help certain members in our society and other laws that apply to others. This one here goes a long way in making sure that our seniors can live more comfortably and longer in their own homes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I listened attentively to my colleague from Nepean–Carleton because I sit beside her. I do want to comment on the comments from my colleague from York West. We'd better help more than one senior at \$60 million, or it's money badly invested. But I want to ask him: If it's so important and such a priority—this was the first piece of legislation tabled in this Parliament. The first piece, of course, was An Act to perpetuate an ancient parliamentary right, which is a standard Bill 1 in every new Parliament. So this was the first piece of legislation. Almost a year later, it's still languishing on the order paper. We're in third reading. If the government wants to pass this legislation, bring it to a vote. What in the Sam Hill are they talking about? Give me a break here.

In the afternoon, we're going to be dealing with Bill 30, amendments to the Employment Standards Act. It's already at 12-plus of debate. That's what we're going to be debating this afternoon. In every question period—and you're here for those question periods, Speaker, because I see you and I hear you—the Premier standing across from me keeps saying, "Oh, we're serious about Ornge. We brought forward Bill 50. Why can't we debate it?" We're telling him right now: Bring that bill forward. It's up to you to bring Bill 50 forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew knows we're not discussing Ornge, so keep to Bill 2. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. No, we're not discussing Ornge at this particular time, but we are discussing the priorities of this government, which apply to every piece of legislation, and it is on their insistence that Bill 50 come forward. Well, I say to the Premier: Bring it forward. Put up or shut up. Come on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Where do I start after that particular diatribe? Listen: We, as my colleague the member from Parkdale–High Park said yesterday, generally support this bill. Do we think it's going to make a huge impact on seniors? Probably not, but it will be helpful for

some, there's no question, and for that reason we're going to support it. But there are a whole bunch of things that we could have done to help seniors live out their retirement in some dignity.

For example, all of us in our constituency offices—I don't care what side of the House you're on—get people who say, “I don't make enough money in my pension to decide between being able to afford to buy a prescription or paying my hydro bill.” People are struggling, especially those seniors on fixed incomes, in a most difficult way to make ends meet at the end of the day. This particular bill, yes, will help them retrofit their homes if they have the money, but I think there are a whole bunch of other things we should have included in this bill or we should have done as an initiative in order to help seniors.

We are no longer putting up any speakers to this bill, I want to say as the NDP House leader, because we believe we've made our points on this bill. We generally support it, so we're just waiting for the vote to get along. It's rather interesting that the government has not got this particular bill passed yet.

They're able to make an agreement with the Conservative Party to pass probably the most divisive or most controversial bill of this session, and they can't come to an agreement with the Conservatives to pass what is pretty much a fluff bill. I think it reflects on the inability of the government to manage this House.

0930

I understand and respect what the Conservatives are doing. They want to hold this up and continue discussion to make some points. That's fair; that's what debate is all about. That's what this place is. But I think it reflects badly on the government's ability to manage this House when they can't get Bill 2 passed, that was introduced sometime last year. So I look forward to the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Nepean–Carleton has two minutes.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Speaker. I do appreciate the opportunity to thank my colleagues from Timiskaming–Cochrane, Timmins–James Bay, York West and, of course, my seatmate from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

While it is very clear that our party is not supportive of half-baked measures that don't help all of the population and are incredibly inaccessible, we do urge this government to act. I mean, this is appalling, that they would wait 11 months to put forward this bill for third reading, after passing legislation with far less scrutiny in this assembly. We feel that it is time they put this type of motion to a vote. It appears as if they are trying to filibuster their own legislation in a week in which they've called back the House a little bit early.

There's one thing I think my colleagues in the NDP and I will agree with, and that is that this government appears to want to be sitting these two weeks to help them in by-elections that will occur tomorrow in Kitchener–Waterloo and Vaughan. I find that very interesting, because this appears, as I've said before, to make them look as if they're doing something. It's about public re-

lations. If they really cared and they wanted to solve this problem of inaccessibility in seniors' homes and they wanted to really do something to make them more healthy, they would have passed this legislation 10 months ago. This has been on the order paper 11 months. It's Bill 2. If it were a priority by this government, they would have passed it. They run the show; they're in charge of orders of the day—certainly not the official opposition, and definitely not the third party. It is that government there.

Speaker, I will end on this note: Get it done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I'm hearing quite a bit about Bill 2. The government brought it forward—and my esteemed colleague for Nepean–Carleton got it right. She has a very astute, keen sense of what's going on politically here. But Bill 2, as pointed out by the member from Nepean–Carleton, is the flagship of legislation that this government has put forward. If this is supposed to be the defining bill of what this government is, the definition is fluff. It does nothing for the people in my home riding of Northumberland–Quinte West.

You know, I heard the member from York East mention about going to nursing homes and talking to seniors who say to him, “Oh, we wish we could stay in our homes.” Well, I'm hearing on the ground back in Northumberland–Quinte West, when I'm out there meeting people and seniors on fixed incomes, that they are trying to stay in their homes, but again, as mentioned earlier, the HST on the electricity and home heating is making it rather difficult, and many of those seniors on fixed incomes are going to have to sell their homes because they can't afford to stay in their homes. So which is it? What is this government actually trying to do?

The member from York West says that if this piece of legislation helps one citizen in the province, then it's done its just. No. We would like to pass legislation in this chamber that actually has more of an impact on all Ontarians, from all political and socioeconomic backgrounds.

So when the government sits here and talks about how it is going to benefit people—it was mentioned by the members from Timiskaming–Cochrane and Timmins–James Bay that the NDP is going to support this bill. I ask those members of the third party, how many constituents in their ridings are actually going to benefit from this bill? Not many, Mr. Speaker.

This piece of legislation does nothing. It's window dressing for this government. It defines what this government has done for the last nine years: nothing to improve the lives and the standard of living for the people not only in Northumberland–Quinte West but in the province of Ontario.

I'm disappointed that this government brings forward legislation that will actually help individuals who can help themselves. Quite frankly, individuals who are going to access this program don't need the help in the first place. If you want to do something that's going to have

an impact—as mentioned earlier, Mr. Speaker, you are, as the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, putting forward legislation that will actually save lives with sprinkler systems. That is something worth debating and passing, that's going to actually have an impact on the lives of many people across the province. It's going to save lives. That's the kind of legislation we should be debating and discussing, not a frivolous piece of legislation that people aren't going to actually use.

Here we are debating a bill that has been on the slab for 11 months now and finally the government decided to bring it forward. What else are they doing? Bill 50. The government says it wants to push Bill 50 and that we in opposition are stalling it. It's the government that brings forward legislation as they see fit in a timely manner and that they want to debate. When we're facing a \$30-billion deficit and a \$411.4-billion debt, we need to look at legislation that's going to create jobs. That's what my leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC Party are focusing on: job creation. The reforming of the apprenticeship program to a 1-to-1 ratio is going to create 200,000 highly skilled trade jobs here in the province of Ontario. That's the kind of thing, the kind of forward thinking and leadership that this province needs—none of this frivolous legislation that isn't going anywhere to help people like seniors on fixed incomes stay in their homes.

Mr. Speaker, when I was campaigning during the last election, I was in the great town of Brighton—I would encourage all members in the chamber here, if you're ever in Northumberland–Quinte West, stop by Brighton; it's a lovely community—and there was a senior couple who really tugged at my heartstrings. I sat at their kitchen table and they're sitting there, with the wife almost in tears, saying they only had enough savings to stay in their home—which her father had built and where he raised his family; that's where she grew up—enough money for maybe two years, because their energy costs were skyrocketing and their property taxes have skyrocketed under this government. They want to stay in their home; they want to be there until they can no longer function and have to be placed where proper care can be given.

0940

That is something, again, that the NDP—the third party—and ourselves can agree on. We want to make the lives of our constituents that much better by taking the HST off home heating, whether it's electricity or fuel. Keep those seniors on fixed incomes in their homes. That's why I'm here, as a strong voice, advocating and asking this government to please do the right thing when it comes to bringing legislation forward. We really, truly do care, and I believe that my colleagues on the other side of the chamber care, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes we need to listen to the advice of others, because we don't always have the answers ourselves.

When it comes to Bill 2, I would encourage the government to actually look at what the substance of Bill 2 is. You have to ask yourself, Is this actually going to have the type of positive effect that we want to see when we sit here in this chamber and bring forward pieces of

legislation? Is it going to actually have a positive impact on the lives of those seniors who need it most? Quite frankly, I don't think this piece of legislation does that. I think, again, it's posturing. I get the politics, even though I'm new to the chamber here. I understand the politics of what the government does—Putting Students First. Again, coming back to the fancy title, the feel-good title—it makes you feel warm and fuzzy. Who doesn't want to put students first?

I ask the government, when you're bringing legislation forward, to think about the actual legislation that you're putting forward; think about it. Sometimes I get confused as to whether or not the government has actually thought through the impacts that legislation is going to have on the lives of Ontarians. The horse racing industry comes to mind: 60,000 people in Ontario rely on that industry for jobs. Why would the government want to get rid of the horse racing industry, 60,000 jobs? We're trying to create jobs.

I want to just say in closing that I'm opposed to Bill 2, and I thank you for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: When I was first elected, I committed to doing things a little bit differently. What I heard, time and time again, when I was on the campaign trail was that people were sick and tired of the bickering. They were sick and tired of politicians acting like children. As I've said, I've committed to working together. But I have found that that is much easier said than done. It's very difficult, especially when we get bills like this that come forward that do seem quite disingenuous.

In the time I worked in the constituency office of my predecessor, I would have a steady stream of people coming through the door—seniors—who had difficulty maintaining their homes for a variety of reasons. Some of them had older homes; they were no longer working. It's difficult to afford some of the really expensive repairs that homes so often need. I had people coming in for repairs to their roofs, windows, doors, insulation. There was also the matter of making their homes more accessible, so that would be lowering the countertops, putting in the rails, allowing them to have a ramp to come in.

This bill really doesn't address any of that. As the member from Northumberland–Quinte West said, it's really designed to help individuals who can afford to help themselves. The people who can afford to take advantage of this credit really don't need it.

I'm not disputing the \$60 million, because the \$60 million is a fair bit. It's over \$560,000 per riding, which I think could do a lot of good, but not the way that this is designed. Maybe if we had an income threshold; maybe if that was put towards increasing home care. There's a variety of things. So for that reason, I will reluctantly support the bill, but more can be done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I am first of all encouraged by the last comments that were made in the Legislature in

terms of support for the bill. I'm disappointed to hear that the official opposition is going to be voting against this particular bill.

Everything that is being done now, I think, in all jurisdictions, is done in the context of the economic circumstances that are there. I have mentioned on many occasions in this House the book written by Dr. Janice MacKinnon, who is the former NDP finance minister in Saskatchewan. I wanted to keep the book away from my friend Dwight Duncan, our present finance minister, because it talks about the tough decisions that had to be made, and I know that all finance ministers face that.

The context of this bill is that we're in challenging economic times. You always would like to do more, and if you're prepared to allocate more funds, then you are able to do more. But within the context of the financial circumstances that confront the province, I think this is a significant bill that will help seniors.

One of the moves we're seeing today that I think is a progressive move—again, in Ontario I see it happening; it's likely happening in other jurisdictions—is the move to try to have seniors stay in their homes a longer period of time. We know that, by and large in our society, people are living longer now, and the challenges we have health-wise often increase as we get older. So I recognize that a bill of this kind, providing some assistance to people to be able to stay in their homes, is going to be well received and is going to be very helpful.

Would governments like to do far more? By gosh, they sure would. But I think this is a significant step forward and one which I would encourage members of the Legislature to vote in favour of.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. John O'Toole: I was pleased to respond to the member from Northumberland–Quinte West, I think, most appropriately, when he talked about how all of the members here should visit the lovely town of Brighton. I know there's some famous people that come from Brighton. One of them used to be here until the last election; he was the mayor of Brighton at one time, Lou Rinaldi.

But I would only say this: The most impressive comments he made were talking about when he was campaigning as a new candidate and sitting at a kitchen table listening to constituents who were finding it hard to make ends meet in today's Ontario, Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. This bill, if you look at it on the surface, is one of those sound-good bills, but even the NDP member said the people who could benefit from this don't really need this kind of support. It's so true. And then for the people who are duped into it, if you spent—to qualify for the \$10,000, you'd have to spend about \$80,000. Now, the tax on that kind of expenditure would be \$10,000. The HST is 15%; on \$100,000, it would be \$15,000. So you'd be paying \$15,000 in taxes and the government's going to give you back \$10,000. This whole thing is a construct of a very Machiavellian kind of attitude towards fooling people. It's a shell game, technically.

I can only say this: What I've heard from my constituents is the lack of access to long-term care. So what did the McGuinty government do for seniors? They're going to regulate retirement homes. The story on retirement homes is, there isn't five cents in a retirement home from the provincial coffers. However, they've instituted a new charge. It's a seniors tax. When you're a resident in a retirement home now, they're going to charge you about \$15 a month of tax on that—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to make three points.

First of all, it will be really interesting to see—and the member from Parkdale–High Park pointed this out—if we look about a year from now, how many people actually got approved under this particular program, because the government is really good at announcing these kinds of programs and making the restrictions as far as applications so tough that not a lot of people actually go through the application. That will be interesting.

0950

I just want to say to the members from the Conservative Party, I hear the argument, “This is not good enough, it doesn't go far enough; therefore, I'm voting against it.” Well, you know, jeez, at one point, you've got to—it just seems to me that doesn't cut it with people. I think, in the end, if it does some good, what the heck's wrong with supporting it? It's not as if this is a bad bill. Does anybody in the Conservative caucus believe this is a bill that will hurt seniors? No. I don't think there is. So, on the basis of it at least does some minimal good for the seniors, we should be supporting it. I don't accept that as an argument.

The other point that I just want to make is the Conservatives are really pushing the fact that they want to cost everything out and make sure there are offsets for everything that's going on when expenditures are made in the province of Ontario, and God bless. That's their choice as a political party. But it is the right wing in Ontario—now the Liberal Party is a right-wing party, so I'll lump the Conservatives and Liberals together, because it's clear that the Liberals are trying to cut the grass of the Conservative Party—you're the party that has essentially cost this province \$15 billion in tax cuts. The tax cuts that have been doled out by way of tax cuts to the corporate sector and the most wealthy in this province etc. equal about \$15 billion. Hey, what is the deficit in the province of Ontario? They weren't interested in doing offsets when they were underfunding public services so that they could fail. I just say we've heard this song before. That's something that people shouldn't buy into.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Northumberland–Quinte West has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I want to thank the members from Kenora–Rainy River, St. Catharines, my esteemed colleague from Durham and the member from Timmins–James Bay for their insight into this bill.

I think, though, that my esteemed colleague from Durham, Mr. O'Toole, made a very good point in the fact

that what this actually does is create more bureaucracy, more red tape, and this is the type of legislation that's actually preventing Ontario from moving forward, especially when it comes to job creation.

Again, it's going to be as the member from Timmins—James Bay pointed out. I would like to definitely see—and I wait with great anticipation—when the numbers come out as to how many Ontarians actually took advantage of this program that they're rolling out, because quite frankly it's the individuals who can afford it who are going to actually invest in their homes, especially with the uncertainty of the stock market as it is. If I had money to set aside, whether I would invest in my home, building and making renovations so that I can actually increase the value of my home, or put it into the stock market like we do with our RSP contributions, and we get that monthly statement and see how much money we've actually lost on the stock market—the wiser individual would take that money and sure they would make renovations so that life could be a little more comfortable in their homes.

But, again, HST off home heating makes a larger impact on the lives of Ontarians and seniors.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today to join this debate because we have to address the real crux of the problem, and this is the fact that the Liberal government is not taking their job seriously. They're actually making a mockery out of this revered House by pulling up a bill, Bill 2, which was first introduced a year ago, when they should be addressing bills that will take on the challenge of real issues that we're facing today.

To put my comments into context, I'd like to quote from an article that was in the Toronto Sun yesterday, and that quote is—and bear with me, Speaker, because, again, it puts in context my comments through my debate here—“By the end of last week, the August 27 ‘emergency recall’ of the Legislature—supposedly to get serious, at last, about Ontario’s fiscal crisis—closed out with all the drama of a damp washcloth.

“It was clear the Liberal government is no more serious about climbing out of the hole it has dug than it was after the last election. It was all a stage play, meant to distract Ontarians from the things the Liberals don't want you thinking about right now—their appalling record of overspending and tripling the debt, of scandal and waste.

“They want you to believe that our massive debt crunch just fell out of the sky.”

Similarly, Bill 2 has just fallen out of the sky to be debated this week. If our Liberal government was serious at all about getting down to business, this government would have called Bill 50 or Bill 115.

Let's talk about Bill 50 just for a second. It was designed to protect the people who are principled, who are trying to draw attention to wrongdoings. But sadly, this government would rather see folks like this be suspended from their jobs as opposed to protecting their rights. This just isn't acceptable, and we have to draw attention to it because it must stop.

Sadly, today, instead of addressing Bill 50 or Bill 115, we're here talking about Bill 2, the healthy homes tax credit. This is just appalling at a time when we, specifically in Huron–Bruce and throughout the province, are facing a very, very serious spending crisis. We simply cannot afford to direct money in this manner when we have unprecedented challenges in our health care system that require long-term vision to come up with affordable solutions. Bill 2, this Liberal bill, will do little to help seniors in my riding of Huron–Bruce. Most seniors cannot afford to spend \$10,000 in order to receive a \$1,500 tax credit.

Because of the Liberals' tax-and-spend ways, our province is in economic crisis, and it's time they faced up to this fact. Credit downgrade after credit downgrade—our fiscal outlook is getting worse and worse each day. Seniors do not have the means to afford costly renovations when they're coping with reality, and that reality is rising costs for the heating of their own homes when they're saddled, over and above that rising cost, with the HST on home heating costs.

There's a far better plan, and that's giving seniors, and indeed all Ontarians, a little bit of a break. That 8% off the cost of home heating to put back in their pockets would mean a lot. Fifteen hundred dollars for a select few is not acceptable. As my colleague Peter Shurman said in this House—he's the PC caucus critic for finance—the percentage of seniors who will benefit from this tax is incredibly small. Mr. Speaker, this bill will only help a very tiny group. It benefits those who can already afford renovations and it does nothing to help, as I said before, seniors who cannot afford to renovate.

Sadly, the McGuinty government could do so much more by helping all families across the board in this province. They could help create business, create jobs. They could cut red tape that causes our province to lose these jobs. They could cut down the size and cost of government and they could ensure accountability and value for taxpayers.

While they propose tax cuts for home renovations over \$10,000 for seniors, people in my riding are wondering if they're going to be able to keep their heat on this winter, especially after, Mr. Speaker—it's appalling to share with you—the McGuinty Liberals announced just a few weeks ago that they would be cutting funding in half to municipal social services, these agencies that help residents pay their utility bills when there's nothing left at the end of the month. They're cutting it in half. What are they thinking?

Last winter I received so many calls from constituents who could not afford to pay their hydro bills, and local county social services agencies were there for them. Now, even that cupboard is going to be bare. I don't know what this winter is going to be like. Unfortunately, the number of families that these agencies will be able to serve will be cut in half because of the Liberals' shortsightedness, their mismanagement and their poor decisions.

Social service agencies were notified last month. I just want to repeat and draw attention to the fact that reduced

funding will start—guess what?—in the middle of winter. This reduced funding is going to start in January, at the height of cold winter temperatures.

They see this as a measure to get the province's debt under control. Half of these funds that they're going to save by cutting social services in municipalities in my riding are going to go to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the other half is going to help pay off the provincial debt—again, bad decisions, mismanagement.

It's time this government stands up and faces the fact that their unaccountability and mismanagement are continuing to drive our seniors and everyone in this province deeper and deeper into a hole.

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I want to talk about just mismanagement for two seconds, Speaker, so bear with me, because my comments that are coming up have bearing on my overall message today. It's the mismanagement and the wasteful spending and the poor decisions that are going to be a burden on the seniors that they're saying this Bill 2 tax credit is going to help.

Another example was just mentioned on CTV London last night. The public learned, if they were watching CTV in London last night, that the Samsung sweetheart deal of \$7 billion has missed yet another extended deadline with respect to its deliverables associated with that \$7-billion sweetheart deal. It was given to them by the Liberal government, and guess what? Mr. Bentley, the Minister of Energy, refused to answer any questions with respect to this missed deadline. Seemingly, as this new season starts, green is the new Orange, where, unfortunately, unaccountability and avoiding questions is the norm.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): On a point of order, the member from Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to make reference to standing order 23(b): "directs his or her speech to matters other than" the bill being discussed. I believe we should be chatting about Bill 2 this morning, Mr. Speaker. Thank you so much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): That seems to be the order of the day. I would ask the member to stick to Bill 2 and not drift anymore, please. Thank you.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The fact of the matter is that the mismanagement and unaccountability of our Liberal government are causing undue stress on our seniors, and Bill 2 does nothing to alleviate the increased hydro costs, the increased cost of living that, through bad decisions like the sweetheart deal, are being realized as the Liberals continue to see promises broken go on, in terms of missed deadlines.

If the fact of the matter was addressed seriously, how many seniors are really going to benefit from this tax credit? This is a bill that's going to do very little for few people. At the end of the day, as was astutely mentioned just a moment ago, how many people are really going to benefit from this particular bill? Will it even see the light

of day, or is it just going to be another broken promise that we've come to realize from this government?

If the Liberals had made smarter fiscal decisions from the beginning, cutting assistance to the province's most vulnerable would not be necessary to cover a debt that continues to go downhill. Families in Ontario are struggling. They're struggling every day to pay bills and provide necessities for their families. It's time the Liberal government wakes up and realizes this. But, rather, the Liberals would save seats of cabinet ministers and line the pockets of their friends while people in Ontario go without paying their hydro bills.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Point of order, Mr. Speaker: You can't say that—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you—

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's unparliamentary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. I'll handle that. I would ask the member to withdraw that damning comment.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I withdraw.

The fact of the matter is, in Huron–Bruce, people are suffering. People are broke, just like this province is broke. This tax credit is going to do nothing, as we see the Liberal government squander hard-earned tax dollars away on sweetheart deals. People are suffering, and then you go further and cut in half municipal services that help these people. It's a downloading—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Excuse me. When I stand up, you sit down. You do not go across the floor and have debate. You go through me. And I appreciate the government side for not yelling and screaming when I'm trying to move on in this discussion.

I'll now move on for questions and comments. The member from Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was listening, of course, to the member from Huron–Bruce, a place where I spent two years in ministry, so I just want to give a shout-out to the people at Brucefield and Kippen, where my church was for two wonderful years in the 1990s. Incredible people out there, mainly and mostly farmers, and it's true: They are suffering. Many of them are suffering, and rural poverty is a truism; absolutely. And it's absolutely true that no senior is going to be sent from their house just because they can't put grab bars around their bath or widen their hallway.

Seniors leave their homes for a couple of reasons. These are the two: Number one, because they can't afford to pay their bills any more in the home—or renters, of course; and number two, because they need human help, they need home care. This bill addresses neither of those issues. Neither of those issues is addressed. The member is absolutely right, and so is the member from Timmins–James Bay, when he said that we would love to see—in fact, we would ask the government to table, after a year or two of this bill being passed, because I know it

will, how many seniors have actually taken up this program, and how much of that so-called \$60 million is actually spent on this program.

My suspicion is that very, very few will want to know about it, will find out about it or take advantage of it. And the people who do are not the seniors who live in poverty that really need this government's help; those seniors will be left untouched by this bill. Those with \$10,000 to spend, who spend their winters in Florida: Yes, maybe one or two of those will take this up. But for the vast majority of seniors, this bill is a do-nothing. It's not going to help. It's not going to hurt; it's not going to help.

I listened to the member from Huron–Bruce. I certainly know, because I lived there for a couple of years, that poverty is a reality amongst seniors in rural areas, and this bill will not help them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mario Sergio: I've been listening to the member from Huron–Bruce. I can appreciate that she's a new member of the House. I can appreciate that she sits in the opposition, and I have learned some things, as a member that once sat in the opposition, that you can blurt, you can say anything, any nonsense you want to say, because you're not in government. But it's not fair. That is not fair, Speaker.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would argue that that is impugning motive onto members, and I don't think that's very helpful.

Mr. Mario Sergio: You didn't let me finish speaking.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'll remind the member from York West that we don't tolerate personal attacks. You will stick to Bill 2. If you don't like the comments, you will do it accordingly.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Mr. Speaker, I was not attacking a member of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pardon me; it's my decision that you were. You will now proceed in a normal manner.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Speaker, the ghosts of Mike Harris are all over this chamber here. I remember that in 1995, the day they were elected, they cut social services by 21%. They totally cut out all the affordable housing. They told women, "hula hoops." So we can't say that this government has not been doing anything for seniors.

Let me address some of the benefits that our seniors are enjoying today because of this particular government. These are some of the benefits that will benefit all Ontarians. We have a tax credit for seniors up to \$1,025 yearly and \$200 annually for personal income tax cuts. We have the seniors in the north. They're enjoying another \$200 in tax cuts. Property tax grants, up to \$675 a year—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'll remind the member from York West that once I say you're done, you're done. Don't continue on.

The member from Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Speaker. It's a pleasure to listen to my colleague from Huron–Bruce and her many good points during her past 10-minute speech.

Three weeks ago, I went home a bit to the Ottawa area. My ancestors settled there, in Nepean–Carleton, in the 1820s. I went to the archives there and visited with some of the people that were working there. Not one of them spoke of this bill. The only thing they spoke about was the Green Energy Act and how it was invading their town and their community, and they wanted it stopped. There was nobody who said anything about this bill.

It's interesting that if business operated the same way this government did in trying to get something done, they'd probably be out of business by the time it was done. It was 11 months ago that this bill was introduced, I believe. I come from a farming community, and we'd certainly all starve to death if things didn't get done a little quicker than this.

1010

I also want to point out that this program will be in the \$60-million range if it's fully implemented. This government doesn't have \$60 million to throw away right now. I believe that we have to start controlling our costs. If we don't start doing that, we are going to end up with a \$30-billion deficit faster than we think we are, plus our debt load is going to increase to over \$400 billion. To spend money at a time like this on a program that probably isn't going to be used that much by seniors does not make sense to me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to join in the debate and comment mostly on the comments from my colleague from Huron–Bruce and from my colleague from Parkdale–High Park.

Two of the main things that force seniors out of their homes are that they can't afford to pay the bills and they can't get home care. My mom would be one of those examples. She lives in her own home, and the bills are catching up to her. My mom is disabled. My mom could use this program, but is this program going to keep my mom in her house? No—and that's the difference.

Yes, this program will help some people. One thing I take offence to is that what we can't spend money on—we have a debt. We have to prioritize where we spend the money, not just cut, cut, cut, because if we can keep people like my mom in their houses longer, we will save the overall system money. To say, "We can't spend money here," is that a reason why we should spend money on programs that won't benefit the majority? No. Is this a good program? Is this the best program that could have been developed? No. Is this a program that will help some seniors? Yes. Could we create much better programs, and could we look at the overall picture? Because the overall picture is, we have to be able to treat people with dignity and do it within our means, and not just by creating programs that make good press releases.

At the end of the day, this program will pass. We're hoping to see actual numbers to prove to us and prove to the people of Ontario that this program is actually made

for the benefit of seniors and not for the benefit of the governing party.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Huron–Bruce has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate your indulgence today. This is a very emotional topic because we're talking about people we really care about and we hold close to our hearts, just as we've heard from the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

I appreciate the comments from our member from Parkdale–High Park. We totally agree, in the sense of how many seniors truly will benefit from this at the end of the day a year or two from now. I think we all know what that answer is going to be, so we need to stop wasting our time on this and address bills that will really seek out answers and proper steps, such as Bill 50 and Bill 115, instead of stalling them and putting up smoke and mirrors.

In terms of the comments from our MPP from York West, I think all we have to say is that we agree to disagree on this, because the reality is, when we're spending \$1.8 million an hour on debt that has grown over the last nine years, not 15 years ago, not 25 years ago, but in the last nine years, it's unacceptable to me, my family, my riding and the rest of the people in Ontario.

I really appreciate the comments from our member from Perth–Wellington, and he's absolutely right. At the end of the day, when we're out talking to our constituents, nobody knows about or cares about Bill 2. They care about how much money is left in their pockets.

As our member from Timiskaming–Cochrane pointed out, we have to be really basic about this and live within our means. My goodness, when we're squandering dollars on scandals like eHealth and Ornge, dare I say, or even the new Green Energy Act and the sweetheart deals that are going down the proverbial hill, we are no longer living within our means. We have to get back to the basics. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Ottawa Centre on a point of order.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. Standing order 23(h) provides that a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he makes allegations against another member. I rise today, Speaker, to seek some advice from you. Clearly, the member from Kitchener–Conestoga made an allegation yesterday that public assets were used for partisan purposes. Let's be clear, Speaker: The member admits he has no proof of the allegation he made. We confirmed with the Ministry of Natural Resources, who manage the government's aircraft, that the King Air plane has not taken off, or landed, at Waterloo regional airport during this by-election. Further, it has not taken off or landed at—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Stop the clock. As a reminder to all members, when I stand, it gets quiet.

There was a question on that yesterday. It's part of the debate. It's not a point of order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will try it again, but I would also use this as a reminder for all members to use this place with the proper decorum that we've always asked for. We talk about ideas, not about people.

APPOINTMENT OF HOUSE OFFICERS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'd like to bring to the attention of members of the House the following appointments that have been made to the list of officers who serve the House. Trevor Day and Anne Stokes have been appointed clerks-at-the-table. As table officers, they will serve the members in a permanent capacity and assist the Clerk and Deputy Clerk in providing procedural advice to the Speaker and to the members.

I am certain that all members will join me in congratulating Mr. Day and Ms. Stokes as they assume their new responsibilities. Congratulations, and welcome to the House. Now you're in for it.

USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN HOUSE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would also like to take the opportunity to address the House on the issue—and on a serious note, I do ask for your attention—of the use of electronic devices in the chamber. As the members will know, there is a nominal prohibition of the use of any communication devices in the House. However, the practice has developed whereby the Speaker will overlook members using certain devices as long as their use is silent, unobtrusive and not complained about by other members. Members may not read directly from these devices while they have the floor, as is the practice, nor may the telephone or camera functions ever be used.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I will ask that your interjections stop.

I remind members of these restrictions as a result of having certain infractions drawn to my attention, notably photos being taken and repeated instances of ringing phones on the floor of the House. I ask all members to ensure their phones are on silent mode whenever they are in the chamber and to observe current practice while at their places in this chamber, in particular, the prohibition against using a camera function.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Premier this morning. Back in the spring, Premier, when you

were working on a budding relationship with the NDP, my party and my leader were providing advice you needed. You grabbed the budget lifeline from the NDP at that time. How's that working out for you?

Now we're bailing you out on your teachers' legislation. The PC Party stands alone as the one group with a proper plan and a compass. We know where Ontario has to go: controlling costs, dealing with an out-of-control public sector, fixing arbitration, sourcing services privately where that is advantageous—all ideas that we have put forward, all ideas you have rejected. Now, absent any indication via a yet-to-be-tabled fall economic statement, McGuinty's Ontario is a rudderless ship with you at the helm wanting the NDP to get down below and row.

Will you finally admit, Premier, that the PC Party has been the only constant and that you should have listened to us last spring instead of partnering up with the NDP and throwing bricks at us—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Again, as a reminder: When I stand, you sit.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: And I thought we were friends, Speaker. I thought we were friends. We were working so well together on the Putting Students First legislation.

Speaker, our responsibility in a minority position, of course, is to find common ground whenever we can. Sometimes we have to tack a little bit to the left, other times we have to tack a little bit to the right, but overall, we're charged with moving forward.

One of the things that we are particularly responsible for is ensuring that we bring forward workable solutions. I would say to my honourable colleague, with all sincerity, that they have put forward many solutions which are simply unworkable.

We remain very much interested in continuing to work with them on a number of fronts, but if they bring forward some workable solutions, then, of course, we will be very interested in sitting down with them and finding a way to move those forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: For over eight years, Premier, you've governed by photo op and political opportunism, while Ontario's debt and deficit grew to historic proportions.

This past spring, you introduced a budget that ignored Ontario PC recommendations to freeze government wages across the board and bring some semblance of even-handedness to the way Ontario's finances are managed. You delayed implementing a wage freeze until you decided to scream "Fire," and that was roughly two weeks ago.

Your party delayed doing what was necessary in the spring budget, just like the NDP is now delaying and obstructing legislation to implement a wage freeze for one segment of the public sector. Meanwhile, the Ontario

PC Party is the only party that has been consistent in providing leadership that Ontario needs to get us out of the mess you got us into. When will you finally take advice from the official opposition and steer Ontario back on course?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, as you might imagine, I see things a little bit differently. My interpretation of recent events in this Legislature was, at first, the PCs were missing in action. They went subterranean. Only recently have they surfaced. They've decided that it's in the public interest that we engage, wherever possible, together in developing good public policy. They made some specific requests for changes in our Putting Students First legislation. We adopted those recommendations, and now we are working together.

Again, if there are workable solutions, we are more than interested in receiving those and finding common ground, but if they are unworkable, like so many of those solutions put forward by the PCs, then we simply can't go there.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: Premier, you shovelled money at the teachers' unions for eight years, and they supported you and your party in every election bid. What a coincidence.

1040

The unions may not like the medicine we prescribe, but at least they know where we stand. You know where we stand. Ontarians know where we stand. The NDP would spend us into oblivion, and you're just as happy to let us drift into oblivion.

The Ontario PC Party is the only constant. We know how to steer the ship. When are you getting on board?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think that's really a rant dressed up as a question. Speaker, I appreciate the enthusiasm, but I disagree strongly with the underlying philosophy. In the context of that question, of course, there was yet another attack on unions and the union movement in Ontario. That's not an approach we can support. We think it's important that we all work together in the greater public interest.

We also say, in contrast to the NDP, that it is time for us to call a halt to wage increases. We think the most important way to get there, the responsible way to get there, is, ideally, at first through negotiation. But as we made clear in our last budget, if that should fail us, if we can't achieve our fiscal objectives by means of negotiation, then we'll resort to other measures, as we have with respect to education in Ontario and our Putting Students First legislation.

Again, I appreciate the enthusiasm offered by my honourable colleague, but unless it's a workable solution, we simply can't work with them.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Also to the Premier: After nine years of giving away the farm, you are only now realiz-

ing the fiscal mess you've created because your handsome benefits and your wage increases to public sector unions are unsustainable. Your record, sir, is worse than Bob Rae's NDP, and now you count on Bob Rae's next generation of NDP MPPs to pass your high-tax, high-spend ways.

In contrast, last July, the Kitchener–Waterloo Record said that only the Ontario PC Party has a comprehensive plan for where Ontario needs to go to get us back on track. Will you stop digging a deeper hole with the NDP, Premier? Will you follow our lead? Will you take our ideas to fix the economy, and will you support our plan for a broader public sector wage freeze across all government?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I am proud that we were able, working with this Legislature, to pass a budget. I applaud the third party for making that process work, as difficult as I know it was.

I would invite the members opposite in the Conservative Party to work with us. For instance, Bill 50, to improve accountability at Ornge, has been awaiting approval by this Legislature. I wish you'd let it come. We called it Friday and you wouldn't let it come forward.

Bill 2 is in committee this morning at third reading, the healthy home renovation, a tax cut for our senior citizens. Why won't you let it pass? It's been there for five months.

We've laid out a clear plan. It's getting Ontario back to balance and has fixed the mess in education and health care that that member and her party left as a legacy to this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The sinkhole on Highway 174 in the city of Ottawa is on solid ground, compared to this minister. Ontario needs to get back on the right track after we've been on the beaten one for the past nine years. We can't afford any more Ontario Liberal and Ontario NDP budgets.

Will you shut down your PR campaigns? Will you stop playing games with Kitchener–Waterloo voters? Will you admit that your last-minute conversion to public sector wage freezes is actually Tim Hudak's idea, and will you follow us the full way? Will you follow us to a broader public sector wage freeze, and will you commit to it today?

Interjections.

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

Minister.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I would refer the honourable member to the budget. That budget in fact represents a clear path back to balance in a timely fashion. In fact, unlike some governments in the country right now, we are meeting the targets we laid out. Expenditure management is part of that, but where we part company is in our priorities. That member wants to continue funding horse racing. We want to fund full-day learning.

That member and her party one day talk about—they stand up in this House and ask us to spend money over here, and then earlier in question period, they say, "Don't spend money." We've laid out a clear plan that gets us to balance in a fair and responsible way and protects the important gains we've made in our schools and in our health care system that will ensure Ontario has a great future, which it does, because of the work of all Ontarians, including members of this Legislature in at least two out of the three parties.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, I'd really like to agree with him, but then we'd both be wrong, and Ontario can't afford any more wrong-headed policies from that Liberal government and their NDP cronies to the left. They couldn't even get a wage freeze right with teachers or doctors.

Take the education sector. We're going to bail them out on Bill 115. School started yesterday, and their so-called wage freeze bill is still before the assembly. But guess what, Speaker? No strike. Why? Because their sense of urgency could only be masked for so long. It was a manufactured crisis to distract voters in Kitchener–Waterloo from nine years of mismanagement. This proves they govern more for public perception than they do for public policy.

Is this what we can expect for 3,999 more—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod:—collective bargaining agreements: more public relations stunts, more photo ops and more stunts? Or can we count on this Premier to stand in his place, agree with Tim Hudak—

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod:—and put in place a broader public sector wage—

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

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. And I wish everyone would stop when I stand.

Mr. David Zimmer: Throw somebody out, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I could start with you.

Be your own judges of the condition of this place.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It looks like the leadership has already started over there, even in advance.

We have laid out a budget which gets us back to balance. We required the support of the third party, who I know were not able to vote for it in its entirety because they don't agree with it.

The people of Ontario have given us a mandate to govern in a minority situation. We will continue to work with the opposition, whether it's the third party or the second party, where we can find common ground that moves Ontario forward. We think that's important. We will continue to build on our education and health care

achievements, working with whoever will assist us in that manner.

I wish the member would check the rhetoric at the door and work hard to build a better Ontario.

TEACHERS' CONTRACTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. For the last three weeks, the people of Ontario have watched with weariness as this government has devoted all of its energy towards winning back majority power and little energy to the challenges that are facing everyday people.

They're worried about their jobs. They're worried about the cost of everyday life. They're worried about whether they can have a doctor. The question that people are asking, though, is, why is the Premier more concerned about winning majority power?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague may not believe in the value of education and our shared responsibility to support it and ensure that it's maintained in a stable and predictable way. My honourable colleague may not believe that it's time to hit the pause button when it comes to teacher pay—and broader public sector pay, for that matter, as well. But we do believe in those kinds of things. They may not be easy to do, but we are saddled with a heavy responsibility in government, and we will gladly embrace that continuing responsibility.

When it comes to the teachers' issue in particular, I am mindful of the fact that school began yesterday in earnest across the province. Teachers were there with enthusiasm, committed to their responsibilities.

We commend them for that, and at the same time we're making it clear we've got to hit the pause button when it comes to pay.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's kind of ironic: People have heard the Premier's claims of a crisis in school for weeks, but they notice that he is more focused, and has been more focused, on creating turmoil than anything else—particularly more focused on creating turmoil than actually solving any problems.

Yesterday—he's right—kids started class, and it was really clear that the Premier's threats were nothing more than a desperate, desperate attempt to pick up by-election votes. Does the Premier really think that people are impressed by these desperate manoeuvres?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The only individual around here who seems enamoured with the word "crisis" is my honourable colleague the leader of the NDP.

But I'm pleased and proud to talk about the progress that we're making in education province-wide. Of course, Speaker, you know that test scores are up by 16 points; graduation rates are up by 14 points; university enrolment is up by 26% in Ontario—that's double the national average. In the riding of Kitchener-Waterloo, in the Waterloo region I guess it is, there are 102 full-day kindergarten classes there at 31 schools. That speaks to

our commitment to early learning in that community. Funding has dramatically increased in all the school boards there. We have funded 461 new support staff and some 400 new teachers right across the region.

So we're definitely moving in the right direction when it comes to education, not only in that community but indeed across the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ten years ago, the Premier was elected with a mandate to bring change. But when families look at him now, they see the same old politics that he used to rail against: negative campaigning, playing the politics of division, cynical attempts to buy support with public money. Is the Premier so desperate to get majority power that he has completely lost touch with the people of this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Of course, I see things a little bit differently. I would remind my honourable colleague of some of the progress that we've made in other areas that are so important to families. When it comes to health care in that particular community, Waterloo region, there are now 134 more doctors; there are four family health teams serving over 100,000 patients. Wait times are down in both surgeries and diagnostics. There have been significant new investments in renovations and expansions—the Grand River Hospital, St. Mary's, and there's ongoing work at the Cambridge hospital.

So I think all in all, we've been making genuine progress and working with families and working with communities, not just in that riding alone, but indeed in every riding right across the province.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. I want to ask the Premier about some of the challenges facing the people that the government has been ignoring. As the Premier knows, his corporate tax giveaways haven't created jobs or economic growth. We've put forward a positive plan over here to ensure that tax incentives actually go to companies that are creating jobs, not companies that are laying people off. When are we going to see some action to actually reward the job creators in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would encourage my honourable colleague to take a good, long, hard look at the continuing growth that's taking place in the Ontario economy. Employment has gone up by 350,000 jobs, from a low in June 2009. So my honourable colleague understands, that's 90,000 more than we had originally lost. Our economy has grown 7.5% over the past 11 quarters since the end of the recession. Our GDP is 2.6% bigger today than it was before the recession, so we have a larger, stronger economy. Consumer spending has increased during the past 10 consecutive quarters, which is a demonstration of optimism on the part of Ontarians themselves. I'll end on this point: Manufacturing sales are today over 30% higher than they were during the

recessionary low. So we're definitely headed in the right direction—more work, but in the right direction.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier can lay out all the stats that he wants, some of them old stats, but the bottom line is he needs to talk to the people of this province who are suffering because they can't find a job, and there's a heck of a lot of them, Speaker.

Families across Ontario, though, are concerned about other things than jobs.

They're also concerned about whether they can get the health care they need when they need it. In Kitchener–Waterloo, where the Premier is going to be campaigning later on today, 20,000 people are without a family doctor. We've put forward some positive proposals to invest in home care and to help relieve the pressure on family doctors and hospitals.

Is the Premier ready to get working on those challenges, or is he going to continue to focus on winning back his majority power?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, there's more work to be done. I think we all would acknowledge that. But I think it's also equally important to acknowledge that we're making progress.

Let me tell you about a great story in the riding of Kitchener–Waterloo, related to a company called Desire2Learn. They just received \$80 million in venture capital funding. That's the biggest funding for—

Hon. Brad Duguid: For an ICT firm.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: —an information communication technology start-up in the province of Ontario, ever. They have 560 employees; they've added 210 since the beginning of this year. They provide an online learning service. It's being used in the US and other parts of the world, Speaker. It started here in Ontario, right in the heart of KW. We're pleased and proud of that progress.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, people know that these are tough times, but they wanted a balanced approach to balancing the books. The Premier talked about controlling costs and living within our means, but time and again Ontario's families have watched this government approve unjustifiable giveaways. Today, we saw government MPPs scramble to hide the cost of private power deals from the Ontario auditor. Earlier this summer, we learned that 98% of public sector executives and managers are getting bonuses. If the Premier is genuinely interested in balance, why is he so studiously ignoring these concerns?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I had the opportunity last night, yet again, to participate in a tele-town hall, which is a great innovation, and I'm sure my honourable colleagues have all had the opportunity to participate in this kind of thing. One of the questions—and without fail, Speaker, somebody is always going to ask a question about elementary and secondary education, and post-secondary education and the costs. I was pleased and proud, yet again, to tell young people about our 30%-off Ontario

tuition grant. This year, it will save university students close to \$1,700 and it will save our college students close to \$800. That helps families in a very real and meaningful way. At the same time, it helps us build a stronger foundation for a competitive workforce, which is exactly what we need to compete in a global economy.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. Premier, when the mess at Ornge was revealed, you claimed that there would be ample opportunity for members of the public accounts committee to question witnesses. When questioned yesterday, you tried to shrug off your repeated refusals to appear. We get it. You refuse to testify, even against the best advice from your friends at the Toronto Star. Premier, what's equally troubling is why you would direct one of your senior political staff to refuse as well. We know that Sophia Ikura has also refused to attend committee hearings and testify. It's obvious you don't want to give evidence, but why are you ordering senior political staff to not testify as well? What do they know that you don't want them to tell?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I say again to my honourable colleague, I think that so far, including this question, there have been 477 questions put in question period related to Ornge. There have been countless questions put forward by the media. They've had 57 witnesses who have appeared before the committee. The committee has done its work for some 89 hours. It has performed that work over the course of 17 days. They've examined thousands of pages of documents, and they've generated nearly 1,000 pages of Hansard.

I understand that the PCs desire that the Ornge committee continue its work for the next two years. I think that is unreasonable, I think it is unrealistic, but more importantly, I think it is irresponsible. I believe it's time for the committee to provide this government with specific recommendations that we might adopt and improve oversight at Ornge.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I didn't detect an answer there.

However, Premier, both you and the Minister of Health received a detailed briefing document in January 2011 on the web of for-profit companies Ornge was setting up. Ms. Ikura was serving as the senior adviser to the Minister of Health at the time. And when the report on patient safety concerning air ambulance service in Ontario was presented to cabinet in May 2012, she was working in your office, serving as your senior health adviser.

She doesn't make the decision not to testify before that committee on her own. Why did you direct her to refuse? What do you know that she knows that you don't want the rest of us to know?

Interjections.

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

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I have not directed anybody in this regard. What I will inform my honourable colleague, and I know he will want to appreciate this fact, is Ms. Ikura is now eight and a half months pregnant. Today she's attending her doctor for a regularly scheduled appointment. So I know they like to see ghosts around all corners, but the fact of the matter is I think it's time to move beyond the games, beyond the partisanship, into the realm of public interest, which demands that we receive recommendations from the committee that we might carefully consider and that we might adopt so that we can bring greater oversight to bear over Ornge.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. It's very clear that the government wants to sweep any bad news under the rug. This morning, at the public accounts committee, I was very disturbed to see the Liberal members repeatedly thwarting our attempts to have the Auditor General look into the cancelled gas plants. We already know that cancelling the Mississauga gas plant cost taxpayers \$190 million. Why is the government trying to hide how many millions of dollars Ontarians will be on the hook for for the Oakville power plant?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: As soon as we were able to negotiate a resolution—and the Mississauga gas plant is now moving to Sarnia–Lambton—we provided the costs, we provided the documents, and further issues are before the Speaker; we'll continue to do that.

I know there's a debate before public accounts which has not yet concluded, and I know that committee is getting some good advice from the auditor, and of course whatever the committee and the auditor decide, we'll obviously comply with. As soon as there's a resolution to Oakville, I'm happy to speak to that as well and provide the numbers, of which there aren't any at the moment. We haven't found a resolution, so there is no final number—we'll provide the details and provide the number.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question again is to the Premier. The public accounts committee, as you are all aware, is also looking into Ornge. Every day we are shocked to hear more and more about how deep this scandal goes. We're hearing further tales of potentially illegal practices at Ornge. This afternoon, I'll be requesting that public accounts continue to meet to get to the bottom of this scandal.

My question is this: Will the Premier, will this government, agree to allow this committee to continue so we can get to the bottom and find out what the truth is of Ornge?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: To the government House leader, please.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I think it's worth repeating: All of us should remember that the public accounts committee

has now sat for 81 hours; by this afternoon, will have heard from 57 witnesses; 477—now 478—questions that have been asked. The committee has sat for 17 days and produced over 800 pages of transcript. The Ornge situation is one that is serious. The government has taken action on a number of fronts, and we look to the public accounts committee to come forward with good advice and good recommendations that we will work on.

I know that the summer days are still upon us and fishing season is not yet over, but I think it's time that the members of the public accounts committee stopped this fishing trip and got down to providing the government with the type of advice that we need to make sure that proper oversight of agencies like this happens in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. To be clear, I stopped the clock, and I wanted to take a second to explain something that just happened. There would normally not have been the ability for the minister to refer the question because the supplementary question was somewhat different than the first question. By way of explanation, I permitted that to happen. Normally the question and the supplementaries must be on the same topic, but because it slightly changed, the minister had to refer it to the House leader. That's why I did what I did.

New question.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: My question today is for the Minister of Education. Minister, last week the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board was placed under supervision by the Ministry of Education. I know that the board has been struggling for a long time. The board has a long history of failing to meet its targets. My constituents need to know that the board is financially stable so they can put students first. Minister, can you please explain why you took this action?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the member from Windsor West. She has been active in advocating on behalf of students in her community, and for that I thank her.

The member is right, Speaker. In spite of extensive support from the Ministry of Education over many years, the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board has struggled to balance its budget. In fact, during five out of the past six years, the board has failed to balance its budget. I have appointed a supervisor following the recommendations of an investigative team from Deloitte that noted the school board's inability to meet its financial obligations. The investigator's report found that there were issues in the board related to inadequate financial management practices and inaccurate budgeting. The report also noted that the board was willing to have teachers go on strike in order to meet their budget obligations, and Speaker, I found that to be very concerning. Supervision will help put the board back on track so that they can make responsible decisions in the best interests of all the students in the community of Windsor.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you, Minister, for that response. My supplementary question is also for the Minister of Education.

My constituents understand the need to take strong action to put students first. I hear from families in my riding how important world-class schools and programs like full-day kindergarten are to them. They tell me how important it is to them that the school year continue. But I've heard some confusion as to what this supervision of the board means to them. Minister, can you please explain what impact supervision will have on parents and families in my riding?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: First, let me assure the parents of the Windsor-Essex Catholic students and the staff of that board that the welfare of the school system is our absolute top priority. The board needs stability and solid financial controls in place so that it can focus on its main job of putting students first.

One of the responsibilities of the supervisor will be to keep students, parents and staff informed, and we will work to ensure that parents continue to have input and a meaningful role in decision-making at this board. The supervisor will seek input from board trustees and senior administration and then consult with staff, parents and families. The supervisor will then release a report publicly which will outline a plan for getting this board back on track, Speaker. We're committed to putting this board back on track so that it can put students first in its community and so that the public can once again have confidence in this board.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, my question is for the Premier. It seems obvious to everyone outside of your government that there was something strange going on at Ornge. Let me read directly from Ornge's annual report. "The very idea of generating our own funds was shocking to many. We have analyzed every option at our disposal, with no limits and no boundaries." We now know, Speaker, what "no boundaries" meant.

The annual report then describes Ornge's road show, which includes an episode on American Choppers where an Ornge motorcycle was built and bought and then brought to the Late Show with David Letterman. Premier, are these the kind of antics you're afraid you would have to answer for at the Ornge committee hearings?

1110

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say I'm a bit surprised at the question, because it seems like there's a bit of a time warp here. We have made it very clear: We acknowledge that oversight at Ornge was not what it ought to have been. We have acknowledged that the leadership at Ornge was not doing its job. That is why we have made the changes there that we have, and that is why the public accounts committee is hearing from front-line workers that things are getting a lot better at Ornge.

I think it's important that we do take the next step as a Legislature, that we pass Bill 50. I think it's also important that the public accounts committee brings forward its recommendations.

Things are moving forward at Ornge. I do think that as we implement each and every one of the Auditor General's recommendations, we would benefit from the findings of the public accounts committee, so I'd like to see those recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My supplementary is again to the Premier. Let me read yet another paragraph from that Ornge annual report. "Ornge has strong support from the province, and a high degree of integration with the provincial health system...."

Premier, you may want to distance yourself from the Ornge scandal today, but no one held up the annual report back then that showed you were joined at the hip and said, "Hey, that's not us." I'm sorry, but you're in the thick of it. Denying knowledge today simply doesn't cut it.

Premier, are you concerned that your intimate knowledge of the workings of Ornge will come out? Is that why you won't testify at the Ornge committee hearings?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Perhaps the member opposite hasn't been listening, so let me give him a bit of an update on where we are in improving things at Ornge.

We've got now 217 paramedics working at Ornge; that's 10 more than we did last year at this time. We're at the full complement of airplane pilots. We've got now 74 helicopter pilots, at 95% of the complement. We are very, very pleased that Bruce Farr has joined Ornge. He's a special adviser, operations. He's got over 30 years' experience with EMS here in Toronto. We've got Robert Giguere as special adviser, aviation. He's a pilot who served in executive positions with Air Canada and Sky-service.

We've got, as a new day has dawned at Ornge, new leadership moving forward. If this party actually cares about patients more than politics, it would move forward on passing Bill 50 and getting us the recommendations from public accounts.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. ONTC workers have requested to charter the Northlander train for a special goodbye, for a goodbye run on September 22. The train is available. The staff have volunteered their time. They even offered to pay for the train.

ONTC employees want to offer northerners a final goodbye with a customer appreciation ride. Why are you saying no?

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

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The ONTC decision was a very, very difficult decision. We understand that there's a lot of emotion and a lot of history attached to the divestment of the ONTC.

The reality is that the divestment of the ONTC and the involvement of the private sector will ensure that over the short term and the long term, there will be a better transportation system in place along the Highway 11 corridor. It will be one that will be more efficient, it will be one that will be more effective, and it will be one that, over both the short term and the long term, will be a more sustainable system and a better system in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: My question again to the Premier: We had a train. Now we have promises.

Northerners weren't consulted on the divestment process. The government cancelled the train without warning, tried to silence northerners' protests, and now they won't even let us say goodbye to the Northlander.

Why does this government disrespect northerners so much that they won't even give us a chance to say goodbye to our lifeline to the rest of the province? Premier, what have you got against northerners?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Speaker, over the course of the short term and the long term that this government has been in place, we have made unparalleled investments in northern Ontario. Why? Because we believe in northern Ontario.

Just to correct a few facts: They had prior warning. On March 29, when we announced the divestment, we said that the Northlander would be shut down. We're moving ahead with that. We said that as the different lines came up for sale, they would be put up for sale. We're moving ahead with that and with regard to Ontera. The reality is that at the end of the day, we are going to ensure that we have a system in place that is effective, efficient, affordable and that will serve the present and long-term needs of the people of northeastern Ontario along the Highway 11 corridor.

SENIORS' TAX CREDIT

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Last November, the minister introduced Bill 2, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement a healthy homes renovation tax credit, for Ontario seniors. In my riding of York South-Weston, many constituents are wondering what the status is of this important piece of legislation. They are wondering what is taking so long for it to pass and become law. Some have even delayed renovations to their homes because they don't know if they will receive the proposed tax credit. These renovations are to help accommodate their changing lifestyle needs so they can live at home longer. Can you explain why this Legislature is taking so long to pass Bill 2?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I want to thank the member for the question. This bill, the healthy homes tax credit, was introduced so seniors can stay healthy in their homes. It gives them a tax credit on renovations they make to make it easier for them to stay at home. It's a very straightforward bill. There has been bell ringing here in the House; there have been antics in the com-

mittee which have delayed that bill at each stage of debate.

The tax credit is completely offset, involves no new spending and is targeted and will have the added benefit of creating some 10,500 jobs. The Conservative Party has blocked this bill at every stage. The bill is before committee for third reading. Mr. Speaker, we need this bill passed. It's in the interests of seniors—

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

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to—

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's a lie, you know.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke will withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you to the minister for that explanation. I'm pleased that this government is ready to work and ready to put seniors first. I hope, really, that all members of this Legislature will work together to ensure the passage of this piece of legislation. This is a very important bill that will help improve the lives of many seniors throughout our constituencies. The tax credit, as you know, will allow seniors to claim a refundable tax credit of \$1,500 for their renovation expenses, and it will be a huge step in helping seniors to live longer in their homes. So it should be passed as soon as possible.

Could you please explain to our seniors the work it took to get this bill through committee and back to the House for third reading?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: After days of unnecessary delays during clause-by-clause review, representatives of Ontario seniors' groups came to Queen's Park to witness first-hand the tactics of the opposition in delaying this bill. The stakeholders were so disgruntled and agitated, they could not contain their frustration. Finally, thanks to their persistence, the members of the opposition got permission from their leader to let the bill proceed.

Here's what the member for Durham had to say in committee, and is on the record: "Out of respect for you here this morning"—speaking to the seniors' group—"... I spoke with Tim Hudak as well as Jim Wilson, our House leader, a few moments ago in the recess. We're not going to be obstructionist because of your time and your frustration. So it's in that vein that we're not going to delay it any further."

1120

Mr. Speaker, they acknowledged on the record that they obstructed that bill. Please let that bill come out of committee—don't let the member for Durham hang out there in the breeze with senior citizens—and pass that tax—

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

Interjections.

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

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Premier. Premier, you've refused our many demands to testify at the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and finally come clean about your central role in the Ornge scandal. You won't heed our calls to do the right thing, but maybe you'll listen to your health minister. Speaking about the importance of witnesses testifying, here's what she said on May 16: "Speaker, there are questions that need answers and we're happy that the committee is meeting." And this from April 25: "I think it's important that members of this Legislature do have the ability to ask those questions, and I'm glad that this process is now under way, Speaker."

So, Premier, can you explain why the standard your government holds every other potential witness to somehow doesn't apply to the guy in charge?

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

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, the public accounts committee has sat for 81 hours and, by this afternoon, will have heard from 57 witnesses.

The Minister of Health, who is the spokesperson for this government on the Ornge issue, has not only taken action in terms of cleaning up the problems at Ornge, bringing forward a bill, Bill 50, which members of the opposition refused to pass, but she has appeared in front of Ornge not once, not twice, but three times, including twice in the same day, to offer an exhaustive explanation of the incidents related to Ornge, and, more importantly, the steps that this government has taken.

As I said, fishing season may not be over yet, but I think it's time that the opposition parties started to concentrate on coming forward with recommendations about Ornge and the oversight of agencies like that for the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm going to try to go back to the Premier. Premier, since you're refusing to finally show some leadership and answer the committee's questions, maybe you'll answer this one: Why? Why won't you appear? Is it because you don't think the hundreds of millions of wasted taxpayers' dollars are worth your time? Is it because you don't think your fuzzy memory about your meetings with Chris Mazza deserves clarity? Or is it because you don't feel accountable to the families who lost loved ones under Ornge's care or while they were waiting for it? Or are you just afraid that some extended time at the committee will lay bare the fact that your lack of leadership and oversight on this file extends from the health minister's desk right into your lap?

Hon. John Milloy: You know, Mr. Speaker, the drive-by smears—earlier today, we had someone who stood up and insulted a young woman who's eight and a half months pregnant and has a medical appointment this afternoon.

The fact of the matter is the public accounts committee has had an exhaustive investigation, and you know

some of the names that have come out, Mr. Speaker? Kelly Mitchell, a top PC lobbyist close to Tim Hudak; Lynne Golding, a prominent Conservative lawyer; Jacob Blum, a top Ornge executive who also happened to be a PC campaign manager; Guy Giorno, a name that the opposition will know very well, who was up to his neck in terms of the Ornge situation; we've heard about Rick Potter, a Conservative candidate in Thunder Bay.

Mr. Speaker, the public accounts committee has spent weeks and weeks and weeks looking into this. What we are asking them and what we are asking the opposition party—all members of the committee—is to come forward with recommendations on how we can strengthen our oversight to make sure that this situation does not arise again.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. On August 17, Ornamental Mouldings in Waterloo closed up shop after 80 years. A lot of hard-working folks lost their jobs, some without any severance.

Interjections.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The members of the Liberal benches might think this is a funny matter, Speaker, but people are losing their jobs all over Ontario—I'm talking right now about some in Waterloo.

In 2009, Kitchener Frame closed its doors, putting 1,200 people out of work—a closure that cost many retirees their benefits.

Does the Premier agree that we actually need to start creating new jobs in Kitchener–Waterloo with an NDP job creator tax credit?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, we've been investing significantly in Kitchener–Waterloo when it comes to job creation. It's one of the most exciting successes in North America, when we look at the ICT sector in Waterloo and how it's exploding.

Communitech is a place where we've put in \$29 million. They've created 425 start-up companies. That's an investment that the NDP thinks is wrong because it's a partnership with the private sector.

The Premier talked about Desire2Learn earlier. I'll touch more on that in the supplementary. This company is growing by leaps and bounds because of the investments we've made in that company, the partnerships we've created, and the partnerships we've created with Communitech.

We're on the right track, Mr. Speaker. The NDP want to take us down the wrong road.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: As Gloria said in the town hall meeting that I had with the people of Kitchener–Waterloo last night, not everybody can work in the high-tech sector. They've lost thousands upon thousands upon thousands of manufacturing jobs in that community.

An NDP job creator tax credit rewards the companies that create jobs, that invest in their companies, that train their workers. It's going to create new jobs in Kitchener–Waterloo and across Ontario.

Will the Premier support the NDP job creator tax credit so that Ontario can create new, good jobs and get Ontarians, just like the ones at Ornamental Mouldings and Kitchener Frame, working again, which is all they want?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, the leader of the third party knows that our Jobs and Prosperity Council is looking at that very issue.

I think what the NDP leader regrets is the fact that she hasn't supported the important investments that we've been making in the Kitchener–Waterloo area, the investments in Communtech that have created 425 new companies, countless jobs; 2,400 jobs created or retained in Kitchener–Waterloo because of those investments.

Desire2Learn just yesterday received an \$80-million venture capital funding announcement from New Enterprise Associates and OMERS. That's the largest-ever venture capital investment in a Canadian software company. They've added 210 employees already this year; they're on the road to increase their employment by another 150.

We're taking Kitchener–Waterloo and that economy in the right direction, despite the opposition from the NDP.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Grant Crack: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Recently the government announced the municipal infrastructure strategy. The McGuinty government is helping small, rural and northern municipalities strategically plan to maintain and build critical infrastructure required by families and businesses to build strong local communities.

Our government respects our municipal partners, and as you know, not all municipalities have the capacity to afford professional planning services, and this means that they might not have a strategic plan in place to build the best and maintain their infrastructure.

Can the minister inform this House about this important new program?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for the question.

Speaker, on August 16, we launched a \$60-million program as a down payment to support municipal asset management and necessary capital projects.

Building Together, our long-term infrastructure plan, includes a commitment to develop a municipal infrastructure investment strategy, and we launched the first phase of this strategy in partnership with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

The goals of the municipal infrastructure strategy include:

- moving away from disparate, one-off infrastructure programs and activities;

- driving better municipal asset management and performance reporting;

- prioritization of municipal projects based on best practices in asset management; and

- ensuring that provincial and federal support helps achieve these goals.

The first phase of the strategy will focus on asset management and will include the release of a guide for municipal asset management plans.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister, for that comprehensive answer.

As everyone is well aware, prior to October 6, I was a mayor in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, so I certainly understand the needs of local municipalities. Each municipality has varying infrastructure needs. Fortunately, I've been able to work with eight of my local mayors throughout the riding.

In the previous answer, the minister touched on the long-standing support that this government has given to public infrastructure. Can he further inform this House about the details of the strategy and the government's commitment to small, rural and northern municipalities?

1130

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, indeed we are committed to helping communities of all sizes address their critical infrastructure needs, and I'm happy to speak to the details of the municipal infrastructure strategy.

As part of this investment, we will provide up to \$9 million in funding this year to help Ontario's small, rural and northern municipalities prepare asset management plans. We will also provide at least \$51 million over the next three years to help address the most critical projects that are identified through asset management plans. This investment is in addition to our 2012-13 infrastructure budget of \$12.9 billion, which includes investments such as \$600 million in Ottawa's LRT program, \$300 million in Waterloo's LRT project and many other very significant infrastructure projects.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is for the Premier. Premier, you've indicated that you want direct questions in question period about Ornge, and I have one. Why did a company that owned no aircraft—not a helicopter, not even a fixed-wing aircraft—win the contract to provide an air ambulance service for the province of Ontario?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I don't know the answer to that question, but I do have a Minister of Health who is responsible for the Ministry of Health, as implicit in the title, and who has appeared before the committee on three separate occasions. So I very much

appreciate the direct question put forward by my honourable colleague. I don't know the answer to that. Should she wish to revisit that, I will refer her to the Minister of Health, who has responsibility for Ornge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Premier, obviously it's very important to the voters of this province, because they entrusted you with the responsibility. You've been unable to answer questions, either in the public accounts committee or now here. So I would ask you, then, to look into this and find out what the answer is. Thank you.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I appreciate the directness with which that question was tendered, which is very unlike the probably two dozen or so more that I've received from her colleagues.

What I need to say to my honourable colleagues as well is that it's time to move forward with Bill 50. We've made those changes that we can at this point in time. We asked for unanimous consent for second and third reading just last week. That was denied us. My honourable colleagues say they're interested in moving forward with this, but when we put them to the test in a very direct way, they deny us that. So I'll ask my honourable colleagues once again to stop acting in an obstructionist and irresponsible manner when it comes to Bill 50 and allow us to move forward with this, because it's in the greater public interest that we do so.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Mr. Jonah Schein: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Speaker, this summer, provincial, federal and municipal leaders of communities all along the Pearson air-rail link co-signed a letter to the Premier. We asked him to immediately electrify the ARL, and we invited him to attend a town hall meeting in our community. The Minister of Transportation responded by letter, but he completely ignored our request and the community's concerns, simply claiming that a diesel ARL will "boost local quality of life."

My constituents do not believe you. Residents of Davenport are worried that the environment and their health and their tax dollars are at stake. When will the McGuinty government listen to Davenport residents?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The issue has been raised numerous times by the member and, really, he's trying to make a sow's ear out of a silk purse, because this is a good project and it's really a tremendous initiative in helping to build a city. Our commitment to upgrading the GO Georgetown South corridor and linking it to Pearson airport is smart city and transit building at its best. We have committed to electrifying the system. Every year, over five million people travel between Pearson and downtown Toronto by car. This expanded rail link will take 1.2 million polluting car trips off the road in its first year alone and create about 10,000 jobs in design and construction.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jonah Schein: Again, back to the Minister of Transportation: Our communities are sick of meeting with Metrolinx bureaucrats who don't have the power to change this plan. If this is such a good idea, why won't the minister listen to folks in our community, come and meet with our community and hear their concerns? Will the Premier or the Minister of Transportation meet with west Toronto residents so that you understand our concern and stop your plan to run dirty diesel trains through our community?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The fact is, the process to electrify the air-rail link has been under way for more than a year. An environmental assessment to electrify is currently ongoing. Let's not forget, the NDP are the ones who came up with a scheme to subsidize gasoline consumption, something that would increase gridlock and associated air pollution. Their position on the air-rail link is one of exaggeration and fear-mongering. The member should stop creating facts to confuse his constituents. Tier 4 trains are among the cleanest in the world and will reduce the current level of emissions. They reduce nitrogen oxide emissions by 80% and airborne particulate emissions by 90%. This project is critically important for Toronto and for Ontario, and we're very excited to be bringing it into operation.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Thornhill has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Premier concerning Ontario's economy. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I'm still waiting. The member from Hamilton–Stoney Creek, please come to order. In a moment, I'll have a comment to make about today, but I will finish my business.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Leeds–Grenville has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the government House leader concerning the Premier's appearance before the public accounts committee. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now for my comment: There are a couple of observations I'd like to make and ask this to be given back to you. I've heard some of the heckling becoming personal and vindictive. I don't have a problem with heckling; I have a problem with members making personal comments about people's abilities.

I am going to be stricter from here on in, but I'm asking that the members themselves show their own discipline on the comments they make in this place.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on government notice of motion number 48. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1144.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members take their seats, please.

The Sergeant-at-Arms had you in his bead.

Mr. Milloy has moved government notice of motion number 48. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Gerretsen, John	Moridi, Reza
Arnott, Ted	Gravelle, Michael	Munro, Julia
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Murray, Glen R.
Balkissoon, Bas	Harris, Michael	Naqvi, Yasir
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoskins, Eric	Nicholls, Rick
Bentley, Christopher	Jackson, Rod	O'Toole, John
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	Oraziotti, David
Best, Margaret	Jeffrey, Linda	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bradley, James J.	Jones, Sylvia	Pettapiece, Randy
Broten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Piruzza, Teresa
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chan, Michael	Leone, Rob	Sandals, Liz
Chiarelli, Bob	MacCharles, Tracy	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLaren, Jack	Sergio, Mario
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Colle, Mike	Mangat, Amrit	Smith, Todd
Coteau, Michael	Matthews, Deborah	Sousa, Charles
Crack, Grant	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Damerla, Dipika	McDonell, Jim	Thompson, Lisa M.
Delaney, Bob	McGuinty, Dalton	Walker, Bill
Dhillon, Vic	McKenna, Jane	Wilson, Jim
Dickson, Joe	McMeekin, Ted	Wong, Soo
Duguid, Brad	McNaughton, Monte	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	McNeely, Phil	Yakabuski, John
Dunlop, Garfield	Meilleur, Madeleine	Yurek, Jeff
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Zimmer, David
Fedeli, Victor	Milligan, Rob E.	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milloy, John	

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

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Singh, Jagmeet
Campbell, Sarah	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	Miller, Paul	Vanthof, John
Gélinas, France	Schein, Jonah	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 82; the nays are 11.

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

Motion agreed to.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Premier concerning Ornge and the public accounts committee. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

There are no further deferred votes. This—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I feel that the Premier owes all women an apology because he implied that being pregnant should keep women from working, and that's totally unacceptable—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I did not perceive that issue. If any member wishes to correct their own record, they may do so. I did not find anything unparliamentary.

This House stands adjourned until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1149 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: As I reflect back to almost 11 months ago, the first time I stood up in this House to speak, it was as the newly elected member for Huron–Bruce—I'm very proud to have that responsibility—and I was speaking out in objection to the closure of the Walkerton jail. And here we are today, with the Ontario correctional services in a complete disaster, way worse than it was just one year ago.

My colleagues the MPP for Elgin–Middlesex–London and the MPP for Sarnia–Lambton have had a meeting to discuss the overcrowding at Elgin–Middlesex Detention Centre, where, the Minister of Correctional Services admitted that there was an issue with overcrowding.

Well, Minister, here is a reality check—what was predicted would happen to rural Ontario corrections with the closure of the Walkerton jail has happened: overcrowding, riots, poor standards and a lack of food for inmates have been reported, along with safety risks that jail guards are finding themselves in. Inmates are sleeping on the floor. Cells that are supposed to be geared towards two people are housing four to five people. All the while, two correctional facilities in my riding of Huron–Bruce have been closed down: the Walkerton jail and the Bluewater Youth Centre.

The Bluewater Youth Centre—more correctly, the centre—has not been decommissioned yet, and it would be of great use to the ministry for low-risk offenders, individuals awaiting a court date and those completing intermittent sentences.

I'm calling on the minister today, Speaker, to look at the resources the government has available and come up with real, viable, cost-effective strategies.

RANDOLPH ACADEMY FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

Mr. Rosario Marchese: As a supporter of the performing arts in Toronto, I would like to extend my con-

gratulations to the Randolph Academy for the Performing Arts.

Over the past 20 years, the Randolph Academy has been training Canada's most talented performers, creating triple threats who grace the stage in acting, singing and dance. If you have been to any of Toronto's major theatre events, you have likely watched alumni of this institution.

These performers are the product of two decades of effort by George Randolph, the founder of the Randolph Academy. George realized that Canada needed a training institution that could match the needs of the industry and train multidisciplinary performers for a life in the arts. As a result of their efforts, Randolph Academy graduates have been cast in some of the most celebrated musical theatre productions in Toronto, Stratford, Shaw, Broadway and London's West End.

Notable alumni include Tony Award winner Sergio Trujillo; Tara Young, artistic director of the Michael Jackson Immortal world tour with Cirque du Soleil; and Paul Nolan, star of the Broadway hit *Jesus Christ Superstar*. This year, George Randolph himself was recognized as a pioneer of dance by Dance Immersion and Dance Ontario.

I ask all members to join me in celebrating the Randolph Academy's 20th anniversary and the contribution its students and faculty have made to our cultural industries.

FLIGHT TRAINING CENTRE

Mr. David Oraziotti: I'm pleased to share the details of a significant infrastructure investment that our government has made in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie. Last year, our government announced \$8.5 million in funding for the construction of a state-of-the-art flight training centre that will support Ministry of Natural Resources pilots in managing and responding to forest fires.

Construction of the 6,700-square-foot building began this spring and is now nearly complete. Once fully built, the building will house a cutting-edge flight training device, a new flight simulator, which will be installed for testing later this year.

The flight training simulator is a device that accurately mimics the sights and sounds and motions of a CL-415 heavy water-bombing plane. The flight simulator reduces greenhouse gas emissions and limits the wear and tear on the government's current forest firefighting fleet.

This project is the first of its kind in Ontario. Until now, Ontario's MNR pilots have had to carry out their winter training on flight simulators in Quebec and BC.

The construction of the new facility will further strengthen the province's firefighting program and provide an additional boost to our community. The project has created 14 construction jobs, and in the long term it will create additional employment opportunities and attract pilots and engineers from across Ontario and other jurisdictions seeking to enhance their training and aircraft maintenance skills.

Our government's investment in this unique project will enhance our ability to combat forest fires in the province.

EVENTS IN ONTARIO

Mr. Jim McDonell: I rise today to congratulate the volunteers and organizers who host the many great fairs and festivals in my riding and the rest of Ontario.

Concluding with the Newington fair this past weekend, we have enjoyed an excellent venue of events with great entertainment that engaged the community, helped boost the local economy by adding important tourist attractions, and raised needed funds for many not-for-profit organizations.

Literally thousands of volunteers spent the past year preparing for these events, such as the Williamstown, Avonmore, Chesterville, South Mountain and Newington fairs, the Glengarry Highland Games, Cornwall Lift-Off and Ribfest, Winchester Dairyfest, Williamstown Homecoming Weekend, and the many Canada Day celebrations, just to name a few.

With fall upon us, there are many more of these entertaining events planned as these dedicated volunteers start planning for next year's events. Speaker, I want to take a moment to thank all the unsung heroes who truly care about our communities and who work so hard all year round at our fairs and festivals, in our social clubs and in the many other not-for-profit organizations that enrich our lives and truly make a difference in the community.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's with a heavy heart that I stand today and say that we live in a province that does very little to look after our animals, either domestic or exotic. We've all followed the tragic course of events at Marineland; they're still ongoing. And certainly we followed, back a while, in Newmarket, the possible death of 100 animals simply for a treatable disease, ringworm.

Well, today we read in the *Star* that the agency that has the responsibility to look after these animals doesn't feel it necessary to disclose even the salaries they make. In fact, the CEO makes more than our Premier. The board of directors make more than some of our cabinet members. And they spent \$4.6 million in so-called professional and consulting fees in 2010.

We in the opposition benches have long called for government oversight over OSPCA, and certainly I would suggest that now is the time to do just that. Not only do we need the Auditor General in there—we give them money and they do not perform well—but we also need oversight. We certainly need somebody to look after the animals. That's not happening. I hear about this all the time on my Facebook and Twitter. People are concerned. They're concerned everywhere about the fate of our animals.

It's about time that this government did something about it, and the place to start is by walking in the doors of OSPCA and finding out what is going on.

ASSOCIATION DES COMMUNAUTÉS FRANCOPHONES DE L'ONTARIO

M. Phil McNeely: L'Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario, ACFO, conseil régional d'Ottawa, tenait le 30 novembre dernier leur 42^e assemblée générale annuelle. Cette association a pour mission de promouvoir la francophonie et de valoriser les intérêts collectifs de la communauté francophone dans toute sa diversité. Nous savons que l'Ontario compte la plus importante communauté francophone hors Québec, avec près de 600 000 francophones.

Par respect pour ce rôle de défenseur de l'ensemble des communautés francophones, une résolution pour changer le nom a été proposée et adoptée par le conseil d'administration de l'ACFO. Je suis heureux d'annoncer que le processus légal est enfin terminé. L'ACFO d'Ottawa s'appelle maintenant officiellement l'Association des communautés francophones d'Ottawa. L'acronyme ACFO reste ainsi le même. Ce qui est important de comprendre dans ce geste est le souci de refléter une communauté francophone dont le visage évolue et change énormément.

Je veux donc féliciter le conseil d'administration de l'ACFO pour son initiative.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup. Members' statements? The member for Nepean-Carleton.

1510

JOHN GEORGE LYNCH-STAUNTON

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is my pleasure and my distinct honour and privilege to say thank you to the late John George Lynch-Staunton, also known to many people in this room as Senator Lynch-Staunton.

Senator Lynch-Staunton was first elected to politics in Montreal for three consecutive elections, in 1962, 1966 and 1970. He was so important to the city of Montreal and, of course, later to the Progressive Conservative Party, that he was appointed to the Senate. I first got to know Senator Lynch-Staunton when I was in my early 20s working in the Senate for John Buchanan, who was former Premier of Nova Scotia.

Senator Lynch-Staunton retired from politics but not before becoming the first leader of the Conservative Party of Canada. The party from Macdonald to Diefenbaker to Mulroney to MacKay, became the party of Stephen Harper in 2003.

I was pleased to know that Senator Lynch-Staunton, once he retired from politics, decided to get back in, and in 2009 ran for a seat in Stanstead, in Quebec, under the slogan, "Even an old broom sweeps clean." He was a very good friend to my husband and I, and I know I speak on behalf of many in the Conservative Party but also those people who worked on Parliament Hill in saying that we will miss him.

If I may, Speaker, close with a quote from Prime Minister Harper: "John ... played a crucial role in uniting

the conservative movement, serving as the first interim leader of the Conservative Party of Canada. John's wisdom, guidance and experience during that critical time helped keep our movement together and helped shape the strong party that is thriving across our great country today."

Thank you, Speaker, and thank you, Mr. Lynch-Staunton.

ONTARIO PRODUCE

Mr. Mike Colle: Today, I'm here to talk in praise of our locally grown fruits and vegetables. You know, in Ontario, we have some of the finest grown local products, especially at this time of year. We should stop and think about buying local potatoes, local peppers, local rapini, local zucchini, peaches and corn. We've got some of the finest foods, grown locally, in the world right here in Ontario. At this time of year, we shouldn't be buying foreign-made products or imported products. Buy locally made at your local greengrocer.

Mr. Speaker, I know I've got two great greengrocers that you should shop at in my riding, and they're better than the greengrocers in Brantford. On Marlee Avenue we have Zito's Marketplace. Then, we have Lady York Foods on Dufferin. We've got well-priced, fresh peppers and fresh tomatoes—the tomatoes from Leamington; the best tomatoes in the whole world come from Leamington. You can get them locally here.

Eat local. It's affordable. It's good for your health and you're keeping people working: the farmers, the truckers and the retailers. So please, young people and old people, eat local. Eat healthy. Eat your zucchini, eat your tomatoes, eat your carrots, eat your peppers—eat local.

ASSOCIATION OF HOSPITAL VOLUNTEERS-BOWMANVILLE

Mr. John O'Toole: This year, the Association of Ontario Hospital Volunteers in Bowmanville is celebrating its 100th anniversary. A lot has changed since 1912, when the former Ladies' Auxiliary was sewing hospital gowns and even planted a vegetable garden to help feed the patients and staff. Today, volunteers are equally dedicated and important. I would like to congratulate two young hospital volunteers, Julianne Baarbe and Scott Goodchild, who each received a \$1,200 educational bursary in recognition of this centennial.

Congratulations also to a very well-respected citizen, Anna Strike, a volunteer and leader for over 60 years in the hospital organization. She recently received a Diamond Jubilee Medal in recognition of her dedication as a volunteer.

I'd also like to recognize Diane Harness, the president of the Association of Hospital Volunteers, and Vice-President Marion Saunders. Thanks also to past presidents, Mary Lou Townsley and Norma Lewis.

With 200 adults and youth volunteers helping in almost every corner of the hospital, it's easy to see why

Lakeridge Health Bowmanville is known as the little hospital with a big heart.

I'd ask all members to extend a sincere thank you to all hospital volunteers and staff across Ontario.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, as we work towards a world record.

"Whereas Premier McGuinty has imposed fee schedule cuts to family physicians and proposed wage freezes unilaterally, he has therefore alienated the province's family doctors. These actions threaten the future of health care in Ontario and will compound the existing family physician shortage. As wait times for primary care will inevitably increase, so will the frustration of millions of Ontarians;

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

"We ask that the Premier reconsider his decision and return to the negotiating table with the Ontario Medical Association and the province's doctors, thereby working alongside patients and their primary care providers."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition on behalf of my constituents—and Jim will sign it, probably, as well.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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

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

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

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

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

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

I fully agree, sign my signature and give it to page Roberto.

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—

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

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's Liberal government is forcing Ontario municipalities to build industrial wind and solar power generation facilities without any local say or local approval; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government transferred decision-making power from elected municipal" councils "to unelected and unaccountable bureaucrats, who are accountable to no one; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government has removed any kind of appeal process for municipalities or for people living in close proximity to these projects; and

"Whereas Tim Hudak, Jim Wilson and the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party have committed to restoring local decision-making powers and to building renewable energy projects only in places where they are welcomed, wanted and at prices Ontario families can afford;

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

“That the McGuinty” Liberal “government restore local decision-making powers for renewable energy projects and immediately stop forcing new industrial wind and solar developments on municipalities that have not approved them and whose citizens do not want them in their community.”

I have signed this petition and I certainly agree with them.

1520

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition coming to me from the good people of Scarborough, Barrie and Toronto, and it reads as follows:

“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 this 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 support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Ethan to bring it to the Clerk.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I support this petition and send it forward with Maggie.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the price of gas is reaching historic price levels and is expected to increase another 15% in the near future, yet oil prices are dropping; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government has done nothing to protect consumers from high gas prices; and

“Whereas the high and unstable gas prices across Ontario have caused confusion and unfair hardship to Ontario drivers while also impacting the Ontario economy in key sectors such as tourism and transportation; and

“Whereas the high price of gas has a detrimental impact on all aspects of our already troubled economy and substantially increases the price of delivered commodities, adding further burden to Ontario consumers;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and urge the Premier to take action to protect consumers from the burden of high gas prices in Ontario.”

I affix my signature in full support.

LONG-TERM CARE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nickel Belt.

Mr. France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There was a lack of enthusiasm when you said “Nickel Belt”; I don’t know what’s happening, but I’ll keep on going anyway. Here, I have a petition from all over Ontario—from St. Thomas to Owen Sound to Peterborough—you name it; all over Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of no accountability, complacency, waste, patient neglect and substandard care in our health care system;

“Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and oversight of most health care agencies is done by that agency or sometimes through the ministry;

“Whereas Ontario is one of the few provinces in Canada where our Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of health care services;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to expand the Ombudsman’s mandate to include investigation of our health care services, including health units, hospitals, retirement homes, long-term-care facilities and ambulance services.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Ethan to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

RADIATION SAFETY

Mr. Jeff Leal: I’m pleased today to introduce a petition from Ashley Carr, who lives at 20 Leeson Street in downtown St. Catharines, Ontario.

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 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.”

That’s a long petition, but I will affix my signature to it and give it to Jacqueline because it’s very important—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with this. I will pass this on to the page.

RADIATION SAFETY

Mr. Reza Moridi: I have maybe more than a couple of hundred petitions.

It reads: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

“Whereas neither the legislation nor the regulations established under the act have kept pace with the explosion in imaging examinations, including image-guided procedures used in cardiology, radiation therapy, ultrasound, orthopaedics etc.;

“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 fully agree with these petitions, sign them and pass it on to page Roberto.

WIND TURBINES

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

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

1530

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

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

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

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

I’ll affix my signature and send it to the table with page Maggie.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim McDonell: “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government’s plan to cut more than \$1 billion in medical funding will impact my doctor’s ability to provide care for my family, and is a serious risk to health care in our community and across the province,

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

“Reverse the” current “unilateral cuts to medical funding, and negotiate in good faith with doctors for an agreement that will protect Ontario health care.”

I will be signing this and passing it off to page Ethan.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m very pleased to present a petition that reads as follows:

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

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

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

“Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on” very special occasions, “during four to five months of the year;

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

I’m pleased to sign and support this and encourage the Minister of the Environment to follow my advice.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I’ll let that one slip.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, yes. I was listening.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that a change has been made to the order of precedence for private members’ public business, pursuant to standing order 98(c), such that Ms. Campbell assumes ballot item number 66 and Mr. Tabuns assumes ballot item number 73.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PUTTING STUDENTS FIRST ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 DONNANT LA PRIORITÉ AUX ÉLÈVES

Resuming the debate adjourned on August 30, 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.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have work to do.

Pursuant to the order of the House passed earlier today, I am now required to put the question.

On August 28, Ms. Broten moved second reading of Bill 115, An Act to implement restraint measures in the education sector. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

I believe the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1534 to 1539.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members, take your seats, please.

Ms. Broten has moved second reading of Bill 115, An Act to implement restraint measures in the education sector.

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

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia
Arnott, Ted	Harris, Michael	Murray, Glen R.
Bailey, Robert	Hoskins, Eric	Naqvi, Yasir
Balkissoon, Bas	Jackson, Rod	Nicholls, Rick
Bartolucci, Rick	Jaczek, Helena	O'Toole, John
Bentley, Christopher	Jeffrey, Linda	Oraziotti, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jones, Sylvia	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Best, Margaret	Kwinter, Monte	Pettapiece, Randy
Bradley, James J.	Leal, Jeff	Piruzza, Teresa
Broten, Laurel C.	Leone, Rob	Qaadri, Shafiq
Cansfield, Donna H.	MacCharles, Tracy	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Chiarelli, Bob	MacLeod, Lisa	Sergio, Mario
Clark, Steve	Mangat, Amrit	Shurman, Peter
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Todd
Coteau, Michael	Mauro, Bill	Sousa, Charles
Crack, Grant	McDonnell, Jim	Takhar, Harinder S.
Damerla, Dipika	McGuinty, Dalton	Thompson, Lisa M.
Delaney, Bob	McKenna, Jane	Walker, Bill
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	Wilson, Jim
Dickson, Joe	McNaughton, Monte	Wong, Soo
Flynn, Brad	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Meilleur, Madeleine	Yakabuski, John
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Yurek, Jeff
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milligan, Rob E.	Zimmer, David
Gerretsen, John	Milloy, John	
Gravelle, Michael	Moridi, Reza	

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

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Singh, Jagmeet
Campbell, Sarah	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	Miller, Paul	Vanthof, John
Gélinas, France	Schein, Jonah	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 79; the nays are 11.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House passed earlier today, the bill is ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

FAMILY CAREGIVER LEAVE ACT (EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT), 2012

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 31, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just by way of announcement, we were just finished the member from Leeds–Grenville's speech. We now are into the two-minute rotation, so I will entertain questions and comments on the member's statements.

The member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Can you please remind me what the member said?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll review the entire speech.

Interjection: I heard it was a great speech.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It was a great speech, Mr. Speaker. I was riveted to my seat at the time of the debate.

Let me just grab my glasses so I get this straight. Oh, yes, yes, yes. So, Mr. Speaker, this is one of these—welcome, Mr. Speaker number two. This is one of these bills where the government is essentially trying to do what sounds like the right thing—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, folks, it certainly is loud in here, and the deputy sheriff is in town, so we'll cut down the noise a little, please. You've got 19 sidebars going on. If you want to talk, you know where the outside rooms are. Thank you.

The member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank you, because what I have to say is really important and I want everybody to listen.

As I was saying, this is another one of these bills where the government says it's going to do a good thing. Who am I to argue that the government is going to give citizens of the province an ability to get time off in order to care for a sick or dying member of the family?

We all get it. We know that there's no money attached to this. The person is not going to get EI or anything like that. But in itself, it might help a number of people to be able to care for somebody at home who needs some taking-care-of in those final days. So we're going to vote in favour of this legislation.

I just want to say up front this is again the government filibustering itself. The government has had this bill in the House now for how many days at second reading? The government talks about how it can't get anything done, and all it does is filibuster its own bill.

I look forward to seeing if the government is going to get up on the next round of rotation, or in fact if we're going to get to meaningful legislation, like trying to get Ontarians back to work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I was sorry to hear that the member for Timmins–James Bay did not give this bill a higher rating than he has, because I know the speaker whose remarks we're making reference to now did make

some favourable remarks about the bill and wasn't totally negative, as opposition members tend to be.

I was just looking at the deputy speaker and thinking, "What would the steelworkers think of that white collar I see on my friend the Speaker at this present time?"

Interjections.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Very proud of him, I know.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): On a point of order, the member from Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: As a steelworker, I want to say I'm very proud that you are Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I thought a deputy speaker would have insisted upon a blue collar on this occasion. Anyway, I digress, and I shouldn't.

I am delighted to hear that the New Democratic Party is voting for this legislation. I hope that the Conservative Party is voting for it. We finally saw a sign of that, and I'm delighted, because right after the election, for the first several months in this House, the Conservative Party wouldn't vote for anything that the government had proposed. In fact, they announced before we brought forward the budget that they were not going to vote for the budget. Although there were some bumps along the way, at least the New Democratic Party ended up having some input into the budget, and ultimately not only the budget motion but the budget bills were passed. In a Parliament of this kind, a minority Parliament, that's what has to happen. In fact, even in a majority Parliament, I think it's very useful to listen to all points of view.

I want to thank the member for her contribution to this debate. I know it's an important debate and that we want to thoroughly canvass all aspects of this particular piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was very good. You got the name right off.

I want to give comment to the member from Leeds—Grenville, who spoke about the Family Caregiver Leave Act. Second reading—I think we've had hours and hours of debate. It has been brought up several times, and when I spoke to it a long time ago, that, really, this does nothing else—

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: He is actually here, in the sidebar.

It really does nothing. There's no money attached to it.

Again, the Liberals are very, very good at filibustering and bringing in pieces of legislation with nice titles that actually don't do anything. So why don't we stop wasting time and get some really good pieces of legislation in—I'm trying to give the Liberals advice here—that actually do tackle the real problems that are out there in health care?

You brought us back in early. That's all fine. You want to try to get some credibility in the by-elections—good luck on that filibuster that you're doing here—and

change the channel for a while—your scandals of Ornge, eHealth, the dollars you've actually wasted in health care, power plants. I mean, the list does go on, and I only have a two-minute hit, so what can I say?

You're not addressing or modernizing, reforming, health care the way it needs to be today. You do things like the Family Caregiver Leave Act etc. etc. You bring in bills that actually don't help people stay in their own homes. They actually don't give you more home care—you say you are, but if you talk to people on the ground, you don't. They're taking care away. You've got LHINs and CCACs, highly administrative bodies, that aren't getting the care—which are more people who need care in their homes.

Bring in some really fruitful piece of legislation that actually helps people in health care, and then we'll talk. But this just does nothing, as most Liberal governments do.

1550

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I want to begin with saying that the initiative makes sense. Individuals who are going to work and who want to take some time off to take care of their loved ones should be entitled to do so without fearing losing their job. They should have a measure of protection. I think that makes sense. I think it's fair to give credit where credit is due. That idea makes sense. As my colleague indicated, we'll support the bill.

But I want to take this opportunity to talk about some deeper measures that we could look at. When we look at health care, we should look at some effective means of delivering that care. One of the greatest opportunities I had was to view and to work in a community health care centre. Community health centres are an amazing vehicle to provide care in a community setting, in a cost-effective manner, in a way that really increases not only the addressing of an acute illness but also long term in terms of health prevention. It's an excellent model, and I think that's something we need to move towards if we really want to be serious about keeping people in their homes, keeping people healthy. We need to look at those models that are working, that would save us money and that would actually provide a better product. So I really want this House to really seriously consider expanding community health centres as well as home care.

Home care used to be a very common service provided. We had doctors and nurses who would attend to people in their homes. That's a much more effective way of providing care than having individuals go to emergency rooms and clog up emergency room systems where there is an illness that doesn't require all the equipment and all the infrastructure of a hospital, but you would be better served to be at home. I think we really need to look at these alternative methods of delivering health care to really address this issue of individuals who do get sick and how we can care for them in the best way possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Leeds–Grenville has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much, Speaker. I want to thank the member for Timmins–James Bay, as he goes by, the Minister of the Environment, the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and also the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton for your very kind and insightful responses to my address so many, many days ago.

As we're saying today, we're talking about Bill 30. I know I expressed in my speech a number of concerns about yet another act that would provide a leave of absence. We certainly, from this side of the House, don't want to give the impression that we don't believe very strongly in the work that our front-line workers do and our families do that provides compassionate care.

I want to take this opportunity to recognize my federal counterpart, Gord Brown, the federal member for Leeds–Grenville. I want to congratulate him. On August 8, Prime Minister Harper announced that Mr. Brown's private member's bill, that he has been working on since 2004, to give 35 weeks of compassionate care leave for families with critically ill children—it was passed. It was part of their campaign platform, and I want to congratulate Mr. Brown on his work, fighting for compassionate care, and I want to thank the Harper government for moving forward.

I also want to especially thank Sharon Ruth from Oxford Station, who wrote a book called *The Guinea Kid*. It talked about her struggles and having to take work off and take leave to care for one of her children who was critically ill. I know that Sharon's story prompted Gord Brown to move forward with his private member's bill.

I think I speak for everyone in my riding of Leeds–Grenville to thank Sharon, to thank Gord and to thank Prime Minister Harper on moving forward on that very important bill, which I think was very much needed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to join the debate on Bill 30, the Family Caregiver Leave Act.

I have many concerns about—I don't understand, quite frankly, the motivation of the government. Again, this bill was introduced early in the session. Here we are almost a year later. They talk about priorities, and they haven't moved ahead with the bill. They haven't moved ahead with the bill.

The problem with the bill, Mr. Speaker, is that it has no teeth whatsoever. It is one of these feel-good, nice titles—if I had a copy of the bill right here, I could read the title, exactly what it is, but it's another one of these Liberal feel-good pieces of legislation that is designed to appeal to a certain constituency.

Perhaps I could ask the page to bring me a copy of the bill. Oh, it's coming right there. Thank you very much.

It is An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver leave. But there's

nothing in the bill; not a thing. There's not a nickel attached to it. This is guaranteeing people that they will have eight weeks of unpaid leave—unpaid leave.

I was in business. I employed people, and I'm going to tell you something. If they were a good employee and they needed eight weeks to care for a relative, a mother, a father, immediate family or otherwise, there was not going to be a problem. A good employee: You're going to make sure they're looked after, because you want them back.

All of this is doing what the real world does anyway, but the sad part about it is, they're portraying this as if there's some kind of magical formula here, but they're not attaching a nickel to it. December 8—the Feast of the Immaculate Conception—was the date that this bill received first reading. I guess they expected another miracle. The immaculate conception, of course, was a miracle, and I guess they're expecting another miracle, because somehow they're figuring they're going to pressure the federal government to now come up with some money. Again, a piece of legislation that is designed for no other reason than to make the Liberals look good.

I say to my colleague from Timmins–James Bay, who had a very good speech yesterday talking about how the Liberals are always acting in self-interest: This is another one of those cases. All you have to do is look at what they've brought forward in the House, what they haven't brought forward in the House, and when they brought the House back. The House was brought back on August 27 under the guise of a very serious legislative need to be here to pass an act that would freeze the wages of teachers for two years and—

Hon. John Gerretsen: And you voted in favour of that.

Mr. John Yakabuski: We voted in favour just now on a second reading. But the Premier told the world, or any of those who would listen, that that piece of legislation had to be passed by September 1 in order to prevent salary increases of up to 5.5% from taking effect with respect to teachers in our system. As we know now, on September 5, that clearly was false. There was no need to be here to pass a bill before September 1; no need whatsoever. There was no need whatsoever to be here. Clearly, what we were being told in August was not in keeping with the facts. We did not have to be here. That was the urgent message he was telling people out there.

I say that to the Premier across the way here. He told the people across Ontario, "I'm Dalton McGuinty and I mean business now. For nine years, I've kind of been lost in la-la land, but I really mean business now. I'm going to put a steady hand on the wheel here now. We're going to take control of Ontario's fiscal situation, and we're going to start with a bill to freeze the wages of teachers."

Interestingly enough, our party—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Point of order.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Peterborough on a point of order.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I always keep my standing orders readily available here, and it's section 23(b). I think we may be straying a little bit from the Family Caregiver Leave Act, but I did want to depend upon you to provide guidance in this particular matter.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you to the member for Peterborough. I think that's the fourth time he has read that to me today. It seems to be a good day for people walking the thin line; let's put it that way.

I would remind the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to please try to keep to the bill. Even if it's close, it would be acceptable. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaking of a thin line, it's a pretty thin bill, Speaker. As I said, eight weeks in the calendar year; no money attached to it.

The motivation in this House and the motivation of this Premier seems to be centred on September 6: the Kitchener–Waterloo and Vaughan by-elections. I know that my colleague from Timmins–James Bay spoke extensively about that yesterday while speaking on another bill. So apparently that is fair game, because I think it's in keeping with the plan of the government and why we are here. We were told to get ourselves down to Queen's Park to pass this urgent legislation. Do you realize that there have been over 12 hours of debate on this bill already? We've got no problem. Call this thing for a vote.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'd like to remind the members—especially one—that cross-border talks are not allowed. This is why I'm sitting here. You might want to go through me. And if you have a problem with what he's saying, there's always what the member from Peterborough did: a point of order. Otherwise, if you want to yell at each other, you might want to go outside, but he can't because he's speaking. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much for clarifying that too, Mr. Speaker, because, yes, I'm here. I was going to be here for an extra two minutes and 30 seconds; it's down to almost one minute and 30 seconds because of the interjections from the Attorney General. I remind him if he wants to have cross-border speaking, he's going to have to come up with a Nexus card or something, because other than that, we just have to stick to the—

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It seems to be a day for points of order. The member from Pickering–Scarborough East.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you so much. I'm glad we had the document at the Speaker's chair corrected.

Just further to my colleague, I feel that we're going off-script again. We're wasting valuable time, and that is not in keeping, may I suggest, Speaker, with standing order 23(b). The member is not talking about the bill at hand. I look forward to your further guidance on this. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I will monitor the situation closely, member, and if I feel that the member from Renfrew is wandering, I will certainly inform him. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. If I'm going to do any wandering, it's going to be a short trip now. I'm down to less than half a minute because of all the interjections from the members on the other side of the House. If they would just pay attention and listen, we might get this thing settled.

Anyway, here we have a bill, the Family Caregiver Leave Act, amendments to the Employment Standards Act, 2000, that is, quite frankly, not worth the paper it's written on. It doesn't put money in the pot to help people; it simply says that your employer has to give you eight weeks off. Well, if you're a good employee, your employer will give you eight weeks off—guaranteed. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: While I was listening to my colleague's comments, I wanted to raise a particular issue that came to my mind. My colleague is absolutely right: There is no money attached to this. This is simply allowing an employee to take some time off. What I'm concerned about is: How can we ensure that this is actually followed through? How can we ensure that if an employee does take that time off, the employer doesn't take certain action, doesn't refuse to allow that person to come back to work? When we already have a labour code that's not enforced, when we already have employee standards which aren't enforced, how can we ensure that this bill will be enforced?

I think we have to look a little bit closer, that if we want to protect workers, or if we want to protect someone who wants to take care of their loved ones, there needs to be an accountability mechanism; there needs to be a way to make sure that employers do follow through with legislation like this. We've already seen, time and time again, that their standards at workplaces aren't up to par, and the regulations aren't being enforced. So how then would this type of legislation be enforced? I think we really need to look at, in the mechanism of the legislation, a way to either put some resources into ensuring that employers follow this code, along with the other legislations that are in existence, or take some other means to make it more powerful or more meaningful, because simply passing another bill without the proper resources or infrastructure in place, i.e., those who would enforce legislation, would be a meaningless gesture. So I think we have to look at it one step further to make sure that this is actually implemented in a meaningful way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm always intrigued by the speeches delivered by the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. He has the ability to deliver a speech on a bill that sometimes he hasn't even read. I'm not saying in this case he has or hasn't, but that's a great

talent. I don't criticize him for that; it's an interesting talent. I'm sure he scanned it in his ability to speak here today.

Actually it's a very good bill, and the contradiction for the members of the Conservative Party is the following, and that is that they keep demanding that the government not impose on business any new requirements and they also demand that the government not spend more money. Yet this bill does not, in fact, spend more taxpayers' dollars. Yes, it is an obligation that is placed on business. The suggestion is that any business would be prepared to grant this. I think any good business—and I trust my good friend, the member from Barry's Bay, would be the kind of employer who in fact would do that; knowing him as I do, I'm confident he'd be the kind of employer who would do that. Not all employers will.

So I think many people will see this, again in the context of the times in which we find ourselves, as being an important step in terms of allowing people the opportunity to look after someone in these circumstances.

I guess if there were unlimited money—and there isn't unlimited money anywhere in the world these days—there might be a stipend attached. There are some who have suggested that through the unemployment insurance system, that may be able to work into that particular system. We shall see about that.

But I think this is a positive bill. I think it has received the kind of attention and debate that it should in this House, and whether it comes to a vote this afternoon or not will be up to others. But I do appreciate the contribution my friend has made to this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I've listened to the members from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, from Bramalea–Gore–Malton and the Minister of the Environment, and I tend to agree with our colleague here from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke that there are actually no resources put to this. It reminds me a lot of similar bills we've seen introduced here. While it sounds good on a campaign leaflet, it does very little for workers.

I also agree with my brother here from Bramalea–Gore–Malton that without any enforcement officers, this really does not mean much for workers, which is problematic. In a province where we have 600,000 people who need jobs, we also have employers who know that all employment is precarious and that somebody can come in and take that job at any moment.

What we really need to do here is to make sure that we have proper enforcement, that when people are sick, that they're compensated appropriately and supported to take time off and take care of their family members, but also, we spend a tonne on hospital bills in this province and if we took some of those resources and put it into home care, in supporting families when their family members are sick, we would be saving money and we would make sure that people could stay at work and have the supports they need to be here.

I will support this because, in principle, we need to make sure that we have this at least stated as possible, for people to take leave of absence when a family member is sick. Of course that makes sense, but we do need enforcement measurements in the workplace. We look around here, and in every file that we see here there is not the enforcement; there is not the resource behind any bill that's introduced here.

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I agree with members here who have spoken about this as being very partisan politics at play. We see a government that's more interested in winning a seat tomorrow in Kitchener–Waterloo than they are in making sure that we have good public policy here, and I hope that after tomorrow we can move forward with an order of business that puts people first in this province and doesn't just put good spin on bills. So I'll be supporting this, but in the future I hope that we have a little bit more meat on our bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I appreciate the time to debate here on Bill 30, the Family Caregiver Leave Act. Again, I alluded to earlier, when I was referring to and talking about putting students first, how this government loves to use fluffy titles, feel-good titles in their bills, but as to the actual meat of the bill itself, there's no substance; there are no nutrients there.

So here we have a situation and in theory it sounds wonderful. Obviously, my esteemed colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke alluded to the fact that compassion has to come in to order as well, and as an employer, if an employee has a family member who is terminally ill and needs some time away, whether it's eight weeks, 10 weeks, or several more months, we have to show that kind of compassion to allow that individual the time that is required to look after their loved one until such time as there's no need to do so. The fact is, again, in theory, it's good.

There are families out there that are struggling to make ends meet, though, families who can't afford, even if they are allowed under this bill, Bill 30, to take up to eight weeks off without pay—most of the families in Ontario are struggling now to make ends meet. They can't afford to take eight weeks off without pay, with the skyrocketing prices of hydro, their home heating bills, their property taxes. It's unaffordable, Mr. Speaker. Really, again, it's just a fluffy, feel-good piece of legislation that has no sustenance, no nutrients.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has two minutes to respond.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. I want to thank the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, the Minister of the Environment, the member from Davenport and also my colleague from Northumberland–Quinte West.

No one argues against the principle of having a compassionate view of people who are going through a

difficult time where someone in their family may be terminally ill or requiring a long period of convalescence or whatever. An interesting part of this bill—and I don't know why the government did it that way—is that you must take these in blocks of a minimum of entire weeks. So if you had a person who was going for cancer treatments and only had to go maybe once in a while—I remember when my brother-in-law was dying of cancer, he went for treatments every day, but the same person might not necessarily be taking him every day. So if you had two or three relatives that could share that, they wouldn't be able to do that under this bill, because you've got to take the time off in blocks of entire weeks. There's just another weakness pointed out in the bill, because in their haste to get it out—I guess their timing is pretty bad, because it says the bill comes into effect on July 1, 2012. That's past. We're here, still talking about the bill. Is this government so incompetent that they can't even get their own legislation through in the time frame that they prescribe in the statute itself? It says it comes into effect July 1, 2012. Here we are in September; we haven't gotten through the bill.

That's because they're so busy playing smalltics instead of getting on with the business of the House. Let's get this thing to committee. They want to pass it. We think it's an empty bill. It's just politics as usual, trying to wedge the federal government. That's what they're trying to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Further debate.

M^{me} France G  linas: Well, I almost didn't get up, Mr. Speaker, because I agree with the previous speaker that we've said everything there is to say about this page-long bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Excuse me. I've been notified that you spoke to this bill on March 8, so you're not allowed to speak to it.

Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I was interested in the comments made about my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, that he hadn't even read the bill, that he had just scanned it. If you know this member, he's just like a computer; he just has to scan something, and his understanding of legislation—

Interjection: It's remarkable.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It certainly is remarkable.

I have a brief here that was given to the PC caucus. I'd like to read it over so that we all have an understanding of what's in this bill. The minister's staff provided this briefing on the legislation. The purpose is as follows:

To introduce a proposed family caregiver leave for up to eight unpaid weeks per year. To qualify for the leave, the employee must be caring for an individual whom a physician has deemed to have a critical injury or illness and who cannot care for themselves. The leave will mirror the family medical leave significantly, except it will not include the provision of significant risk of death within a 26-week period.

There are currently only two leaves available to workers in Ontario that are protected under the Employment Standards Act. Family medical leave is unpaid, job-protected leave of up to eight weeks in a 26-week period, and to be eligible, a qualified health practitioner must issue a certificate stating that the individual to be cared for has a serious medical condition with a significant risk of death occurring within a period of 26 weeks. Under the federal Employment Insurance Act, six weeks of employment insurance benefits may be paid to EI-eligible employees under this leave.

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

Now, the concern we have is that the Ministry of Labour staff could not cite any demand for this proposed leave, nor could they cite any instances where employees had asked for leave to care for a family member and were terminated as a result. And at that time—this was given to us on December 8; again, the bill has taken too many months to be presented to the House—the Ministry of Labour also had not yet briefed any stakeholder groups whom this could significantly affect.

Speaker, before I came to this House, I worked with my wife in our decorating business. We employ three to four employees at any one time. There were times when our staff had to take time off in order to care for their parents. We let them go. We just let them do it, and they understood that they wouldn't be paid for that day.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You're an enlightened employer.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you very much.

Interjection: He's a very compassionate man.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Yes. I listen to my wife quite a bit, so it helps me out.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That makes for a compassionate man.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Yes, exactly.

Anyway, this is something we've done ever since we've had the business going, for the past 20 years. But you can understand that in order for our business to succeed, we book ahead quite a bit of the time, because we were in the decorating business, or my wife's in the decorating business now. We have a number of houses that we have to paint every year and other things we have to do, and for an employee to say to us, "I'm going to take eight weeks off," is difficult for our small company to comprehend. You can imagine the work involved in painting a house, with doing the trim, the ceilings, walls and whatever else.

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The way this legislation is written for the employees, if they even take half a day off to take their parents or someone to the doctor, they have to take the whole week off or they're charged for a week. I don't think that's fair for the employees.

I can understand the reasoning for this legislation, except that it seems to me that it wasn't very well prepared; it wasn't very well put together. My brother-in-law currently is suffering from Lou Gehrig's disease. Fortunately, my sister has been able to stay home with him, but he does have personal support workers too, helping them out. However, if my sister was employed by somebody else, eight weeks just wasn't going to cut it. It just wouldn't work for her. He's at the stage right now where he's in a wheelchair and needs a lot of care.

It was interesting, some of the points that came out in this bill by my colleagues, in that this government currently is hoping that the federal government would pick up the tab on this with employment insurance. To me, this is being irresponsible. This government is supposed to run this province, not ask the federal government to run it for us.

This bill was tabled on December 8 of last year. Again, it seems to me that it wasn't brought forward until this government decided that they would like to shift the emphasis off some of their other health care issues, such as Ornge—

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Ornge, eHealth.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: —eHealth and whatever else, to try to get the spotlight off of that.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would ask the members from the NDP caucus if they'd like to go outside. It's a little loud. I'm having trouble hearing the speaker. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you for that correction.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My colleague Mr. Yurek had occasion to speak to this bill before, and he told us of a pharmacist leaving his employ to look after their parents. They worked 18 hours a day, trying to keep up with their business in their pharmacy. That's a hard thing to do, especially when you can't just pick up a pharmacist anywhere you want to, in order to help you out with the business. They had to fill in the hours for this pharmacist who was unable to work for them.

I find it interesting, and I want to get back to the bill, in that there is no money in the bill. Of course, we don't want to spend any more money in this province. We haven't got the money to spend.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: We're broke.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: We're broke, and we have to be careful of what we do with any of the monies we have available to us. But it's interesting that this bill depends on the federal government to make it work.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: That's because we're a have-not province.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: We're a have-not province, and this is just one way of trying to get money from somebody else in order to help pay for your bills.

Also, what a serious illness is, or what a serious health condition is, is not defined in this bill. It's not clearly defined, and there's no clear definition of who is eligible

to take this caregiver leave. So it's interesting to me. Our employees could go to a doctor, and one doctor has a different opinion than the other. These conditions aren't as defined as they should be.

I don't understand the consulting process that should have been done on this bill with businesses—apparently, there was none, because as we've seen, as I've just stated, nobody had asked for this type of legislation in the first place. So it's interesting to me that this government would try to go ahead with a bill that actually nobody wanted; nobody asked for.

It seems to me that we have other problems in this province that need to be fixed before we continue on with a bill that has no substance to it such as this bill that we have before us today. We have issues such as a health care industry that is not doing well right now funding-wise and needs to have a lot of work. We should be pointing our efforts in that direction and not a bill such as this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I sort of agree with what the previous speaker had to say. If you talk to caregivers—and God knows Ontario has some really good caregivers—a lot of them are just ragged trying to keep a job and look after a loved one with home care that doesn't show up half the time or doesn't send the right workers or doesn't show up at all. So when they saw this bill, they were excited. Finally their government was going to help them a little bit. But then, as they took the time to read the bill, one after the other the associations came to see me.

The Parkinson Society read this. A lot of people with Parkinson's need a caregiver at home. They said, "How come we have to take a week at a time?" If you go for cataract surgery, you have to put those little drops in four times a day. With Parkinson's, forget this. It's not happening. You need somebody to help you. It doesn't have to be a nurse; anybody can be taught. But the bill does not allow flexibility. You have to take a week at a time. It would be nice to be allowed to maybe start work a little bit later because you have to look after somebody, or maybe be allowed to have an hour for lunch rather than half an hour so that you can zip home and put the drops in and zip right back. None of that is in the bill. Flexibility wouldn't cost us anything. It would still—but no.

The bill is so tiny, so small, Mr. Speaker, that of all the agencies, of all the chronic disease societies that have come to see me, the Ontario Caregiver Coalition, not one of them could give me one example of one person who will be helped with that bill—not one.

It has been nine months that this bill is out there for everybody to read. I have had dozens and dozens of societies come through my office, and not one will be helped with the bill the way it is. Let's send it to committee. It needs to be amended.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I want to address what the member from Perth–Wellington said.

This bill is intended for all employees—whether full-time, part-time, permanent or contract—covered under provincial employment standards legislation. They would all be eligible regardless of how long they've been employed.

You mentioned 50 employees. That's for the personal emergency leave. It is a doctor who defines a serious illness, so that's who we defer those decisions to.

I would hope that the member would consider all of this when deciding whether to vote for this bill or not.

I also appreciate what the member from Nickel Belt had to bring forward. She speaks about the flexibility, and that can be achieved, certainly, through the committee process. We are open to making the bill more flexible.

I just wanted to also name at least a few of the organizations of all of those that have expressed support for the bill: the MS society, the Parkinson Society, the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, the Canadian Cancer Society, the caregiver coalition.

The bill can certainly be improved through everyone's input. We are open to that.

At the same time, the reason why this was brought forward is because we were asked by many of our constituents to bring this forward. We felt so strongly about this that we made it part of our platform.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to stand up and speak to the comments that my colleague from Perth-Wellington made. As he can well appreciate, we come from a very, very proud community of agricultural industries and farmers and small towns, and common sense has to prevail in everything we do.

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Prior to October 6, 2011, I was general manager of an agricultural processing company. When the best-before date came and went, we pulled that product off the shelf. Mr. Speaker, I think today is a perfect example of an attempt to have window dressing on an issue that has just failed. Its lifetime, its shelf life, if you will, has come and gone, and so I don't know why we're spending time on this when we should be addressing important issues—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Why are you speaking, then?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Because I'm making a strong statement here that we should be addressing important issues like Bill 50.

We have gone on and on in terms of regulations. Our folks are tired of being burdened with red tape and unnecessary regulation. The member from Perth-Wellington pointed out that, in many cases, small business, which is the engine of this economy and this wonderful province of Ontario—small businesses have a lot of common sense. Where needed, as the member pointed out, employers do the right thing and give people time off when needed. When he shared his personal example, it made me think of a company from Goderich, Ontario. They're expanded throughout the region, but Edward Fuels does the very same thing. It really was heartfelt

when I heard of a story of a gentleman suffering from cancer, and the owner did the right thing and said, "Take all the time you need." This bill is not necessary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I've listened to the members from Perth-Wellington, Nickel Belt, York South-Weston and Huron-Bruce speak to this bill.

Hon. James J. Bradley: You must be depressed.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Honestly, I'm not that impressed. Thank you, Minister of the Environment. We've heard an issue that has been—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I think he said "depressed."

Mr. Jonah Schein: Oh, "depressed." I'm not impressed. I am a little depressed about the level of debate in here.

Frankly, Speaker, we've identified an issue within this Legislature, and the issue is that we have an aging population. We have family members who are in need of care, and we need a strategy to deal with this. What we have is—and nobody on this side of the House is fooled about this—a government bill that does nothing to address this issue, for the most part. It's a very, very small bill. Instead of addressing the things that would actually relieve families and support sick family members, we just put something that's good for a piece of campaign literature. We should be supporting our folks.

I have a community member who comes to me who has been caring for an ill family member for years now. He himself is living in poverty, and his mother is living in poverty at this point.

Instead of investing in affordable housing, instead of investing in home care, instead of investing in child care, instead of creating good jobs, all these things are being cut back. We're going after good jobs. We're going after sick days. We're making it harder for families. Families don't have child care.

These are not inspiring times in this Legislature, I'm afraid, Mr. Speaker. We don't have a government that's actually willing to stand up and support families in this province. We're debating a bill instead of coming up with a real job strategy in this province that would put people back to work and create jobs that would actually pay the bills and give people an ounce of security and the ability to take care of a family member when they are ill, and I hope that this turns around soon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Perth-Wellington has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the members from Nickel Belt, York South-Weston, Huron-Bruce and Davenport.

There is a section I should repeat here. It says that a family medical leave is unpaid job-protected leave up to eight weeks in a 26-week period. I would suggest that if someone is sick for eight weeks, that is probably very serious, and it would be important that that person seek medical help through some other system so that person could get back to work and make a living. I think this bill—should take a look at that section, and maybe there

wouldn't be any reason to have this bill before the House right now.

It's interesting that back on December 8, as I said before, MOL staff could not cite any demand for this proposed leave, nor could they cite any instances where employees had asked for leave to care for a family member and were terminated as a result. So why is this legislation before the House? It wasn't asked for. It wasn't needed. So why are we debating a bill such as this today? It was brought forward to take our attention off some other events that are going on in this province. It was also brought forward to take attention off of some other very serious problems going on in the health care system.

I believe that if this government was serious about getting this province back in order financially, we'd be looking after a few other things before we look at a bill like this. We need jobs in this province. We need our health issues straightened up, and in my opinion those aren't being done. This bill was just brought forward in order to mask some of the problems that this current government has.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to have some time in which to discuss Bill 30, the caregiver act. The first thing I'm reminded—

Interjection.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Oh, the clock isn't going?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Sorry, we were singing and obstructing the debate.

Mrs. Julia Munro: No, the clock wasn't going.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, the clock's not going.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Yes. Okay. No? Are we ready?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Continue.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Okay. Thank you very much, to the table, to get us all organized here.

I'm pleased to spend a few minutes to talk about Bill 30, the Family Caregiver Leave Act. But I want to remind viewers and members that when you look at this bill, it reminds me of a term that I've used before in the Legislature to describe government bills, and that is "gesture politics."

Let me explain. "Gesture politics" is a term that's used to demonstrate the fact that that's what it is, a gesture like any other gesture. Does it have any substance? No. It is simply a gesture, and in this case, we're looking at yet another example of Liberal gesture politics. It looks good on the surface. It allows, according to its title and so forth, caregiver leave, and that means that someone is able to go to his or her employer and say that there is a circumstance with an immediate family member that requires them to take time from their job, and that if certain criteria are met, then this person has up to eight weeks of unpaid leave. It sounds good, until you look at the unpaid part, until you look at the part that only allows you to have a full week at a time off, and then you begin to see some of the shortcomings. One of the other shortcomings might be just checking on the demand. I can say

that in my riding I have not had phone calls to introduce something along that line.

I also look at some of the people in other circumstances and their response to this. One of the things is going back to the Drummond report. I know that the current government, after spending over a year and the commensurate cost of having an expert, Mr. Don Drummond, report—he seems to have slipped off the Liberal radar screen and they don't talk about him anymore. But in his report he did talk about and demonstrate that the size, growth and scope of government had reached a perilous point.

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I happen to agree with that, and I happen to agree with a number of things that Mr. Drummond pointed out in his very thorough report. But when I look at this bill, it somehow doesn't measure up to any of the characteristics that Mr. Drummond thought were urgent matters for our consideration. I suppose you could argue that it doesn't cost the government any money; I note that. That's also a part of gesture politics: that you can look good at a distance. That's the purpose of life on that side of the House: to look good at a distance. It's great to get the PR out there about how much they care about people in their homes and how important it is to provide caregivers. I agree with the importance of caregivers, but I also note that it doesn't come with any money. I also note who does it fall on the backs of? Primarily, the people who create the jobs in this province, and that would be small business.

How are you going to be able to effect a departure of someone out of a fairly small pool of people for eight weeks? How is someone going to be able to survive without a paycheque for eight weeks? These are just some of the practical parts of this bill that are omitted.

When you look at the details of this bill, it reminds me a bit of the healthy homes renovation tax credit. In that bill, that's gesture politics too, because while it sounds great that they're going to provide an opportunity for you to make adjustments in your home that would allow you to stay there longer—and that's certainly the wish of most people—buying a grab bar in the hardware store and installing it in your shower is not likely to be the final crux of whether you can stay there or not. The other thing is that—I haven't checked into the cost of them, but let's say it's \$50; 15% of that is not going to make a decision about whether you buy it or not. Once again, the gesture is there that we're helping you stay in your home longer. Of course, it helps if you have \$10,000. The same thing with this: You're going to have an eight-week caregiver leave. Of course, that assumes you can afford to go without a paycheque for eight weeks.

Going back to Mr. Drummond's concerns, which I share, on this side of the House we've been seized with the concerns of people from all across this province. We've understood that the third-largest spending component of this government is actually the interest and the carrying charges on the debt. After hospitals and education comes paying for the debt. So on this side of the

House we've been looking for answers that would in fact engage all Ontarians into a conversation and an understanding of the perilous nature of our economy. Our leader, Tim Hudak, has been very clear that a plan to freeze public sector wages would be fair because it would include everyone. Everyone would understand that it's the same amount and it's for the same length of time. There are no side deals made to special friends of the government.

Along with that pay freeze, we're looking at fixing some of the cost of government. We look at the fact that you have spending that is out of control in certain areas and the kinds of attention that those areas deserve. We also know that we have to reduce the cost of government, that we have to look for methods by which we actually spend less, because every family in this province knows that you can't continue to spend more than you have, year after year after year.

The message here is that we're debating a bill that costs the government nothing. It only serves to make them look as if they're very concerned about the issue.

I think about the businesses in my riding, and the large ones will come to me and say, "Julia, do you know how much it costs to be closed for Family Day? Do you know that our competition has a much higher rate of productivity, partly through the difference in the days that are statutory holidays and time off?" I look at these eight weeks and I think about those businesses that compete internationally today. With the higher cost of the Canadian dollar, they're always looking for efficiencies. They run into a government that hands everyone a day off, and it costs hundreds and thousands of dollars.

So when you look at this piece of legislation, I think you have to look at it in the context of what are the real problems and forget the gesture politics. We don't need government management of people's time. We need government leadership on our debt.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have to say I really respect what the member had to say, because she's saying it on the basis of what she believes, but I really disagree.

The reality is that when you stop and think about it, I would far rather, as a legislator, that a parent or a family member is better able to take care of a loved one than having to pay somebody to go out and do it in the public sector. If that person who is sick doesn't have somebody watching for them who is unpaid, who happens to be a family member, who's going to take care of them? It has to be somebody out of the CCAC, it's got to be somebody at a hospital or it's got to be somebody in a long-term-care facility.

That argument that I heard at the end of your speech—I respect what you're saying, because I understand your convictions are, as a Conservative, that you believe that giving people time off and all that kind of stuff is a bad thing. I get that. But I've got to say, that is like—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: That's not what she said.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Maybe I misunderstood, and please clarify if I got it wrong. But I understood what you were saying was what I just said.

You were also arguing that giving people time off makes our economy less competitive, and I would say completely the opposite. Come on. The reality is that when people have a fair amount of time off—and we're not talking about time off like 12 months a year—it allows people to go away, get refreshed and come back and be more productive.

Take a look at most of the powerful economies of the world, such as Germany and others. They give far more time off in those jurisdictions than we do here in Canada.

I would further argue that Canada is very productive. I look at where I come from, in the resource sector, both mining and forestry. Per person, we produce more than almost every other jurisdiction. Why? Because we have gotten very good at what we do, by the use of technology and training our workers to do a good job.

So I would just argue—and greatest of respect, because I respect Julia a great amount—that is old ideology that is way in the past. I disagree with the entire—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Questions and comments? The Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you. If there was somebody else, I would have yielded, but I can't resist making some comments, at least, on the speech.

I must say that the member for York-Simcoe is one of my favourites in the opposition benches. She's always moderate and so on. Like my friend from Timmins-James Bay, I'm in disagreement with perhaps the premise of some of her remarks.

I'm going to centre in on Family Day. Small-c conservatives across the country have hated Family Day. They don't like holidays. This is a day—I'll tell you, it's really appreciated. I wondered, when our government first brought it in, how it was going to play, and I'll tell you, I got lots of good comments from people. I understand those who are opposed, and I respect those who are opposed, but I'll tell you, as the member for Timmins-James Bay said, it's good to have that break from work, and I think it often makes people even more productive.

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What I see happening with the present version of the Conservative Party—and you'll notice I don't say Progressive Conservative Party; and I'll exempt my friend the member for York-Simcoe—is a move toward almost an admiration for the labour laws of Mississippi and Alabama, and South Carolina and Tennessee.

Interjections.

Hon. James J. Bradley: It is. That's exactly—because they have raced to the bottom. I can remember the government of William Davis. It was very balanced; it was a different kind of Progressive Conservative Party. So I understand these attacks on labour that take place with the government notes that come out. But on this particular piece of legislation, I hope the member votes for it—I don't know whether they have decided to or

not—despite the fact she may have some qualms about it. I think there's enough good in the bill that it should militate in favour of somebody as progressive as Julia voting for it—sorry, the member for York–Simcoe.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Again, to talk here about Bill 30, I think my esteemed colleague has it right. Gesture politics, as she duly notes, is something that is extremely, extremely well honed here by this government. Gesture politics is exactly how I would refer to it, and I hope my colleague will allow me in future to use her coined phrase.

So again, Mr. Speaker, and to the member from St. Catharines, to say that we don't actually care about holidays would be incorrect; holidays obviously are needed. But here is where the member from St. Catharines sort of strayed in his approach to Bill 30, and my esteemed colleague pointed out the fact that this bill once again doesn't actually address the needs and the desires of most Ontarians who find themselves in an unfortunate situation where a loved one has to be looked after.

All legislation, sometimes has parts that are flawed. We can appreciate that, Mr. Speaker. Not all legislation can be or will be perfect, and I think that's the great thing about presenting legislation here in the chamber: that we do get a chance, an opportunity, to point out the different flaws or weaknesses in the legislation. There are a great number of weaknesses in Bill 30. This is why I think that people at home who are finding themselves in this situation, again, can't afford to take up to eight weeks off without pay—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm kind of reluctant to stand up and speak on this bill because it seems as though we've just been talking about this and talking about it and talking about it. My colleagues and I often have a discussion about how slowly government works, and it's certainly something that I was aware of—everybody's aware of it—before even entering public life, but this is ridiculous.

Earlier today we debated the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act, Bill 2, and there was some discussion about how this was the most important bill that was put forward and yet we still haven't moved anywhere. We haven't moved on. It's a bill that's also light in substance, which is, incidentally, just like this bill; it's window dressing, as many have referred to it.

We need to wrap this up, I think. There needs to be a way that we can conduct some kind of a straw poll, because my sense is that we're not swaying anybody's minds on how they're going to vote on this particular legislation. I would bet that most people in this Legislature have already made up their minds, and there has to be a way that we could speed it up.

What I think we should do is send this off to committee. We can work out some of the kinks; for instance, something that was raised just recently about the fact that

employees would have to take full-week periods. There isn't that flexibility where if an employee needs a longer lunch hour or needs to leave early or, if they work shift work, they can only work certain times of the day—there's none of that flexibility. So let's send this to committee. Let's talk to the public, find out how we can make it better, if we can make it better, and let's get on with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from York–Simcoe has two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member for Timmins–James Bay, the Minister of the Environment, the member for Northumberland–Quinte West and the member for Kenora–Rainy River.

Let me just say that with the comment made by the member for Timmins–James Bay that it was an all-or-nothing: Not at all, because over and over again in the conversations that other members included were those examples where there was something worked out with an employer.

Frankly, employers are generally very, very sympathetic. They want to agree with giving their employee the time that they can. Frankly, a good employee is somebody whom the employer doesn't want to lose, and so certainly in those situations where they can cover off and that kind of thing, that's quite frankly been the way in which it has been done for a long time, and then it has no rules like, "You have to take a week at a time," and things like that.

The minister wanted to make some suggestions about the southern states. By the way, I don't hate Family Day, but I can tell you that businesses have told me that there is a cost to Family Day, and it's important to put that on the record.

The issues raised by the member for Kenora–Rainy River—I couldn't agree with her more. There are many more weighty issues to be discussed in this Legislature than either the bill this morning or the bill this afternoon. But I want to thank all of those of you who did respond to my comments, and I appreciate that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Seeing none, Mrs. Jeffrey has moved second reading of Bill 30, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver leave. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Then it's carried.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No. There was a no.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I didn't hear a no. I heard a no-yes out of you. Which is it?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, no, there was a no. Seriously, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's a no.

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay." In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

“Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on the second reading of Bill 30, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver leave, be deferred until Thursday, September 6, 2012.” Agreed? Agreed.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Orders of the day?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Bradley has moved adjournment of the House. All in favour? Is it the pleasure of the House? I hear a no.

All those in favour will say “aye.”

Those opposed will say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Nobody stands up. Carried.

This House is adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1659.

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