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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 6 September 2012

Jeudi 6 septembre 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 6 September 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 6 septembre 2012

The House met at 0900.

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

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 5, 2012, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate? The member for—let me get this right—Bruce—

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Chatham–Kent–Essex.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Chatham–Kent–Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My apologies.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to talk this morning about the issues that are truly affecting seniors. It's the barrage of tax hikes after numerous promises from this government not to hike taxes. Most seniors I know don't like being misled about the hidden costs their government has levied against them, or perhaps it's the loss of opportunity that once existed in Ontario when they were younger.

I myself remember a time when my own riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex was a proud manufacturing hub, home to companies like Navistar that held promise for the future. Now, with the skyrocketing cost of energy and narrow-minded focus on so-called green technology, this government has cast away the promise of a better tomorrow for Ontario in favour of propping up a currently unsustainable series of green energy experiments.

I also hear from seniors about the increasing cost of the hydro that they require to run their air conditioners in hot summer months and for their washing machines once a week. Not every senior has a vast backyard to hang their clothes on a clothesline; some of them need to use

dryers—dryers that are now more expensive to run than ever.

Yet the response this government offers up is Bill 2, a bill that does a vanishingly small amount for a group that is smaller still. Picture it, Speaker, a group of wealthy seniors to whom \$10,000 is the amount spent on regular renovations to their homes. Such a contingent is not likely to require what help Bill 2 has to offer. A group of seniors barely getting by on a small pension while life gets more expensive by the day: a rebate of \$1,500 sounds grand until they realize that the \$10,000 they must spend to get it isn't a realistic expense.

Then there is a group of seniors somewhere in the middle, who may be able to afford \$10,000 in renovations and will likely get \$1,500 back for their troubles. Yet it's not all of them. It's a group who are afflicted by illness or injury. So the eligible contingent becomes even smaller. And considering that a \$10,000 renovation would likely accumulate \$1,300 in taxes, the senior in question would be netting perhaps \$200 in savings by the time they've spent many thousands of dollars. It is my humble opinion that Bill 2, the healthy home renovation tax credit, is nothing more than a feel-good bill that really won't help seniors stay in their homes longer, especially when they need real medical attention.

Seniors in Ontario need help, most certainly. Is this the most effective way to do it? My gut tells me no. I have seniors in my riding approaching me constantly about the health impact of industrial wind turbines in my riding, about the lost jobs their children and grandchildren are now facing, and about the increasing costs of electricity and everyday services that are taking more and more out of their pensions. It's my guess that this bill is nothing more now than it was the day it was introduced: a diversion from the very real challenges this government's incompetence has put in front of Ontario's seniors.

Our province is facing a deficit level it has never faced before: \$16 billion more out the door each year than we take in. Where would this funding come from? Few know the answer to that question. This is \$60 million that would be piled upon the deficit and thrown into the larger pile that represents our mounting provincial debt. All the while, this government remains focused on policies that damage and stall our economy, like rising energy costs, a refusal to implement a broad public sector wage freeze and half measures for students and seniors that do nothing to tackle the elephant in the room of a faltering economy.

May I suggest to the members opposite that there are better ways to help every Ontarian: moms, dads, grandmas and grandpas alike. Take the \$60 million that you claim to have found in a tax credit and focus on better home care, more beds in long-term-care homes. These are just two examples. And oh, by the way, you should have been guarding the henhouse a little closer. What more could be wasted on your eHealth and Ornge scandals? Take a look at what that has done for Ontarians. Now you have to play surgeon and cut the services. Perhaps this ministry can offer a better idea on what the interest is in a program such as this. If estimates have the tax credit costing taxpayers \$135 million a year at full capacity, can we not have a conversation about how such money can be better spent?

Forgive me if I sound a little tongue-in-cheek, but I understand that \$135 million for this tax credit is something of a pipe dream, considering this government long ago looked on benignly as they spent Ontario completely out of money. You cannot help seniors, not at home nor in health centres, if you have so recklessly taken the tax dollars they spent years paying into the system and thrown them out the window at every problem that came along.

Our seniors face real challenges as a result of this government's incompetence. I believe that hoisting a bill such as this as a solution to the problems that plague our senior community is insulting. It's an insult to the very real needs that have long gone unrecognized and uncared for by this government. Why? Because this government cares about one thing and one thing only: staying in power. Whatever is politically convenient for them becomes the latest pet cause, sure to be noticed again by nobody, just as sure to cost the taxpayers of this province hundreds of millions of dollars.

0910

We saw it in the last election, when last-minute promises were made for the sake of political gain. I can recall one in particular that took the shape of an awfully large, expensive gas plant in Mississauga. We of course know now that spending \$190 million on a desperation move, made by the Liberal campaign manager, was so completely acceptable at a time when seniors are struggling. I might add that when questioning the energy minister and the finance minister about who's going to pay that \$190 million, without blinking an eye, they simply said, "the taxpayers."

So think about it: This government claims to be looking out for the best interests of seniors, when, purely for political gain, they threw away the equivalent of the first two years of this tax credit—\$190 million—and for what? So they wouldn't lose a single Mississauga seat? Well, I wonder what the seniors of Mississauga thought when they heard that news. I can't imagine they felt Ontario was a better, healthier place for seniors. In fact, they see a logjam in our long-term-care homes; they see an approaching precipice of fiscal calamity; and they see their home energy bills growing more expensive with each passing year. They see a government that has mort-

gaged the bright future of their children and grandchildren for the sake of political pet projects and complete, utter incompetence. This is no longer the province our seniors worked and fought for; it's a place that the members opposite have made certain our seniors no longer recognize.

I will vote against this bill because I recognize there are serious challenges facing our senior community, and they require real responses.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I would like to comment on the comments from the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex. I agree with him on a lot of the things he said.

This \$10,000 that they're going to give out—as it's been said a hundred times in this House, who can afford the \$10,000? Most of the people in our province, elderly people, would have to borrow the money in the first place. Some of them may not qualify to even borrow the money to do the improvements on their house to stay in their house because they don't have the income to cover it, and of course banks always want collateral. If there's no collateral, there's no loan. How do they pay it back when they can't pay for their hydro bills, when they can't pay for their daily food? How are they going to pay for it? Not only can't they borrow the money, they can't pay for the loan and they can't get access to finances, unless they're fortunate enough to have kids that will take care of their parents, and sometimes that doesn't happen.

We're certainly not going to take money out of anyone's hands who needs it, so we would have to support this in its minuscule presentation. But with all due respect, this is another example of a fluff Liberal bill to gain support from the general public so they can get re-elected, and it's really pathetic. It almost reminds me of that \$50 or \$70 sports deal they're going to give a rebate for. Like I said before, I'd be lucky if I could sharpen my skates seven times in a whole season, and there's that money shot. The registration is \$500 or \$600. If you want to do something for kids, help them with their registration. Help the lots of kids in our province who can't even afford to play hockey because their parents aren't in a position to give them the financial support. We've even got people in my community where the service clubs are helping them. It's pathetic.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to be able to comment on Bill 2 and the comments by the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex. We need to actually think about what I just said. This is Bill 2. The people watching maybe don't know what that means. Bill 1 is always a pro forma bill, which says nothing, after the speech from the throne by the Lieutenant Governor. Bill 2, therefore, is the first substantive bill to be filed in this House after the election. We're here almost a year later, in the fall of 2012, talking about a bill that was the first substantive bill to be tabled following the election in 2011.

And what are we doing here? Why are we still here talking? We're talking because the official opposition, the Progressive Conservatives, are going to vote against the bill, but they don't want to be caught voting against the bill because they know the public likes it. While there are—oh, I can't mention by-elections; I'm sorry, Speaker. While there are certain discussions going on in a couple of ridings, they don't want to be caught voting against the bill, which everybody knows they're going to do. So they're just talking and talking and talking. Quite frankly, the NDP, who everybody knows will vote for the bill, aren't any help in speeding it up, because they like to make speeches about how they're the only defenders of the poor.

Well, do you know what? Middle-class parents like me, who might want to help their parents stay in their home, can get this tax credit too, and I have no problem defending the middle class.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments. The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very surprised that I have the opportunity, but I won't for one moment miss the opportunity to compliment the member from our side, from Chatham–Kent–Essex. He started with what I think is the most important starting point, talking about the seniors in his riding, and how difficult it is. The member from the NDP also tried to relate Ontario today: young children who can't afford to play hockey. What has happened to Ontario? One should stop and look.

Bill 2 is a showpiece. I can't understand why they're not calling more important bills, like Bill 50 to get to the bottom of the Ornge scandal. Why aren't they calling government business? It should be on the record that this bill has been on the order paper for almost a year. It's shameful that the government, which is in charge—at least it's supposed to be, to call the bill, extend the number of hours or terminate the number of hours of debate on the bill.

This bill has three serious problems. It doesn't recognize the dilemma for seniors today. First of all, if you can afford to do the renovations, this bill probably isn't required. The \$60 million committed to the bill in the budget isn't accounted for. Where are you going to get that money? You already have a deficit closing in on \$15 billion. The third-highest expenditure in Ontario's budget is the cost of servicing our accumulated debt. It's almost \$11 billion. We're spending, every hour, about \$1.5 million more than we're taking in—every single hour. In fact, in this hour this morning, another million-plus dollars is being borrowed from somebody, some foreigner, some person from some other country, some other nation.

When I think of my family, I think of how hard it is in Ontario to pay the electricity bill. This bill isn't required.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I'm always interested in what all members have to say in this House, but even more interested in the argument put forward by the

Conservatives. On one hand, they're the tax cuts party. They're the guys who want to give everybody tax cuts in order to drive the economy and build a better Ontario. But here they are voting against tax cuts. I just think the Tory position is rather funny, because on one hand, they argue that tax cuts are good, but when it's not their tax cut, tax cuts are bad. That's kind of interesting.

There was an interesting article in the paper two weeks ago that talked about the Ontario deficit being \$15-billion-plus, and then went back and looked at how much the Tory and Liberal tax cuts implemented in Ontario over the last 15 years cost the Ontario treasury. Guess what the number was? Fifteen billion dollars. It has always been, in my view, a very clever ruse on the part of the right wing: If you offer tax cuts, it's a very popular thing to do for the public. But what it does is it undermines public financing for things like roads, things like transit, things like hospitals, things like schools—those frivolous things that they always attack as being public services that are somehow bad. So I found this particular presentation rather odd.

0920

The other thing I would say is, listen, I believe that every member should always have the opportunity to speak in the House, and I'm not going to argue for a second that Tories should stop speaking to this bill. That is their right, and I will never stand against that. But I just want to say, on our part, we've said what we've had to say on this bill. As the member from Hamilton East said, this is a step forward. It is not a huge step. It is going to help some seniors, and on the basis of helping some seniors, we're going to vote for it. But there's a lot of other things that this government could have done that could have made things easier for seniors, and we at this point will just respond to the comments from the Conservatives and Liberals, but we're done with debate. We're ready for the vote.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Chatham–Kent–Essex, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'd like to thank my colleagues from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Guelph, Durham and, of course, Timmins–James Bay.

I was listening to the comments by my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, and very compassionately he said, "I agree with the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex," as it related to seniors. He's one of them as well, but we both are, and so we both can relate to the empathy that is shown—

Mr. Paul Miller: Not yet.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Well, you collect one of the cheques anyway.

But looking at it, we say that we're very concerned about the health and the welfare of the seniors in our communities, not just in Chatham–Kent–Essex, but even as far north as Timmins–James Bay.

But on a serious note, the member from Guelph commented on how this is a very substantive bill, and I have to question that. I truly do. Let's get real. This bill is a

feel-good bill. It was brought out early, right after the 2011 election, and it was kind of like, “Well, let’s do something nice. Ontarians put us back into government. Let’s do something nice.”

But I want to get serious, and we as a PC caucus want to get serious and tackle the real issues, the real problems, that are facing Ontario today: a \$16-billion deficit—that’s serious; that’s real. Let’s do the job that we were elected to do in this Legislature. Let’s represent the people from our ridings and our communities by dealing with more substantive bills, not something like this.

You look at the fact that we’re facing another \$16-billion deficit, and yet, just before the election, they cancelled a \$190-million gas plant. Now, that’s the “relocation costs”; the Minister of Finance has made that very clear. I don’t suspect that those are the real costs; there’s more to be found out.

But my point is, we’re throwing money away, and what we need to do is to get serious about doing business. That’s why I will not support Bill 2.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Back in February, I believe we spoke about this bill, and it seems to be not that important even to this present government. It’s Bill 2, and it’s been on the books for almost a year now, so I wonder how much importance they have in this bill.

However, I was reading Hansard to prepare for today, and I was interested in a comment by the member from Thornhill, our finance critic. I’d like to read the comment he made back in May. “Seniors—the definition being 65-plus—qualify for this tax credit proposed by the bill. That’s about 13% of Ontario’s population in total, or about 1.8 million people.... But there are some very mitigating circumstances, one of which is that the median senior income in Ontario—meaning that most seniors living in Ontario are in this category—is \$25,000 per individual and \$45,000 per couple.... That translates into approximately \$2,000 to \$3,700 of income—gross income—per month, depending on whether you’re a single senior or part of a senior couple. In order to qualify for the maximum tax credit of \$1,500, which is 15% of the maximum expenditure of \$10,000, a senior actually has to have \$10,000 to spend. That is the problem. That really is the problem, as one of my colleagues has said. So they have to have that. When the senior spends \$10,000, he or she actually winds up out of pocket to the tune of \$8,500.”

Speaker, my wife and I operated a decorating business for 20-some years. I can remember when the HST came into being back in 2009, July 1. A great present for Canada Day was that we got the HST out of that one. We worked for quite a demographic of people: We worked for seniors; we worked for young people. Most people want to know, when we estimate a job, what it’s going to cost them. “What do I have to write the cheque out for?” They’re not interested in all the little other things like how fast you can do a job or whatever else; they want to know what it’s going to cost them. Well, after July 1,

2009, we had to start putting the HST on. You know, we lost business over that. Our business had been going since the early 1990s, and that was the first time that we’d ever had to lay off people, that winter, in our business. It was the first time, because people were backing off this high tax rate they were paying.

You would think this government could come up with a better idea. This bill is only going to affect a small portion of our population. You would think they would come up with some kind of a tax relief system that would affect more people in our system. However, we see this bill as something that they’re hoping seniors will not see through; they’ll jump up and down and say, “Gee, maybe we’d better vote for this government the next time, because look what they’re giving to us.”

Interjection: Aren’t they great?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: They’re just wonderful people.

Anyway, then we come along to this tax bill. That was the first hit we took, was on the HST. The next thing we were faced with in our business was when energy rates started going up. Again, we’d go in and estimate for our work, and they would say, “Gee, we called you two or three weeks ago to come in and give us an estimate, but we just got our hydro bills in from our smart meters. We can’t afford that extra couple of hundred dollars right now that it might take to paint our rooms.” All the time, these people are being hit with more and more and more.

So you come back, and the government decides, “Maybe we’d better do something. We’d better get these people back outside.” So they bring out Bill 2, the second bill, as was pointed out, in the Legislature last fall. They’ve been kind of letting it sit there, and they’re bringing it back now. It does nothing, actually, to help anybody, because seniors especially are backing off spending money because they don’t have the money to spend. And they’re frightened. They are not getting their money from their investments like they used to because of low return rates on investments, but they are certainly afraid that if they have to borrow this money—and I think we all know interest rates are going to go up at some point. I hope they don’t go up soon, because one point in interest rate to this government is about half a billion dollars, and we certainly don’t need that at this point, because of this mismanagement.

Wouldn’t it have been better to have had a plan in place, to not let Ornge get out of hand, not let eHealth get out of hand, and whatever other scandals this government has faced? We probably wouldn’t be in this mess we’re in right now.

0930

So a senior has a choice of looking at this as either if they have the money to put \$10,000 into a project such as this, they probably don’t need the tax credit, or if they have to borrow it—most seniors don’t want to be borrowing money right now. They went through that in their past lifetime. They’ve got to deal with, “Jeez, what if the interest rate goes up? What am I going to be facing then?”

I was also interested in some parts of this bill—you would think home renovations would include most

things, but it doesn't. It doesn't include new windows, which may save them on their hydro bill, energy costs. It doesn't include more insulation. You would think that would be in this bill. No, it's not.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: What is in the bill?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Well, there's not much in the bill at all. It's just sort of a bill that this present government hopes everybody will jump on. But, you know, I haven't had one call in my office about this bill, and I don't know whether any of my caucus colleagues have had any calls about Bill 2. But I do get calls about high energy costs. I do get calls about people who are being put out of work due to the horse racing fiasco going on right now—lots of calls about that. I don't get calls on Bill 2. That makes me think, what's the importance of this bill? There isn't any importance to this bill.

People are more worried about their future than having to go out and spend \$10,000 to get a 15% tax credit, I believe it is, or borrowing it or whatever. They're more concerned about whether they're going to be able to live for the next few years in comfort. So I fail to see the importance of this bill, especially when the constituents I represent—they're the ones who are going to vote me in next time. They're the ones who criticize me if I do something wrong and they're the ones who applaud me if I do something right. Nobody—nobody—has called about this bill. It just doesn't exist for the people in my riding, Perth–Wellington.

We need to put policies in place that get control of government spending. We've already seen this present government resist doing that. They've already spent probably over \$2 billion since the last budget, which Mr. Drummond says we can't afford. They hired Mr. Drummond—I think it was 1,500 bucks a day or something they hired him for—and they don't listen to him. What does that mean to the people of Ontario? It means this government doesn't listen to Mr. Drummond and won't listen to us. We need help, but this bill just doesn't do it.

This government doesn't seem to be able to solve a problem without throwing more money at it. You know something? That's just not how things should work. You've got to get control of your finances. The ordinary person in Ontario knows that. You can't max out your credit card and use another card to pay it off. That just doesn't work. That's what we're seeing here: We're seeing this government borrow money to pay off debt. I think the ordinary person in Ontario wants this government or any government to get spending under control, and then maybe we can have some programs that really do have some meat in them. Thank you, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to comment on the member from Perth–Wellington's presentation. He hit on some good things there, but one in particular. He talked about the HST.

Let's build a picture here. They're going to borrow the \$10,000—they can't borrow because they don't have the equity to borrow the money in the first place, but let's

say they did get the \$10,000. Okay, they've got the 10,000 bucks and now they're going to build something in the house. Then they're going to hire people to come and do the work, so they're going to pay for that too, and HST on top of that. Then they're going to pay for all the supplies—wood, metal, whatever it takes to do the job—and they're going to pay HST on that. The government says, "We're going to give you a rebate on the \$10,000," but they don't talk about all the hidden charges that are going to eat away. If you have to borrow the money, Speaker, you've got to pay the bank back. So this \$10,000 now turns into maybe \$12,000 or \$14,000 that you owe. So really, when you borrow the \$10,000, you're now down another \$4,000 on top of that, for services, for tradesmen, for bank loans, whatever you had to do with the money.

So this pathetic little thing they're doing is another social media charge. That's all this is, like the other bill, when they were going to do this for families across Ontario for sports. Like I said, 50 bucks? Come on. What am I going to do with 50 bucks? Sharpen my skates? Maybe buy one hockey stick? Do you know how many times I sharpened my skates in a season when I played? Once a week. And I was a referee. When I played, because I was a rather hard, tough defenceman, I'd go through a lot of sticks, too. My nickname was Lumber Mill. But anyway, the bottom line was, it would cost me hundreds and hundreds of dollars. If you've got two kids in rec hockey or three kids in rec hockey, that isn't even going to put a small dent in the cost. Sometimes it's \$10,000 a year to have three kids play hockey. Give me a break.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: It was a delight to hear the remarks this morning by my good friend from Perth–Wellington. It's interesting what people get calls about. I've gotten a lot of calls on this particular one. I was just chatting to my good friend the other day, Hank Simmons. Hank Simmons is a home renovator, a carpenter here in Peterborough. Hank is actually doing a little bit of work in our house for Karan and myself. Hank was telling me, "You know, when I was in Rona the other day, and Home Depot and Home Hardware, I saw all these displays of things that would help seniors stay in their homes for a longer period of time."

He saw those grab bars. He saw those new bathtubs that have the swinging door to allow people to have better access because they have mobility challenges. When you talk to a guy like Hank Simmons, he's been in the carpentry business for, I don't know, 30 or 40 years. He lives on Montgomery Street in Peterborough, a great guy—does great work. Anybody who wants home renovations in Peterborough, I'd certainly recommend Hank Simmons.

He was at Rona and he was at Home Depot and he was at Home Hardware, and he said, "I see a real opportunity with this tax credit for seniors coming in, an opportunity to buy those bathtubs, to buy those grab bars, to

do some electrical work and indeed to keep people, those seniors, in their home for a longer period of time.”

I know the member for Perth–Wellington certainly looked at sub-subclause 2(7)(1)(i)(A) of the bill. This bill will “enable a senior (for whom that residence is the principal residence, or who reasonably expects that residence to become his or her principal residence) to gain access to, or to be” more “mobile or functional within” the residency of that home.

Those are important things. Now, we need to carve out a middle position here on this bill, between the Tea Party and the occupiers. I think this is a very good example of Bill 2 being that responsible middle position.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O’Toole: I still want to pay respect to the member for Perth–Wellington, because he put it where it really belongs. This is another flowers-in-the-window Liberal bill. But he has told the members here today on the Liberal side that he has not had one call on it. I can say, from the riding of Durham, I’ve not had one call. I have had calls on energy bills. I have had calls on the high cost of auto insurance. I’ve had high calls on a lot of issues that respect the McGuinty government.

More recently, the doctors in my riding are just apoplectic about the changes to the OHIP fee schedule. I say this: If they want to help the poor and if they want to help the aging, they should have policies that directly and simply assist those people. One easy way would be to allow seniors to reduce the HST on their home heating bill: simply implemented, easily administered; help immediately and help all of them—simple rules like that as opposed to this one here. If you read the implications on this bill itself, it’s going to be hard to get the money, because if you don’t buy the right grab bars, as Mr. Leal said, you probably won’t qualify. And if you’ve spent \$10,000 and you’re to get 10% back, that wouldn’t even cover the HST you paid.

So this bill, in all fairness, is a waste of our time. It really is a waste of our time, and it’s almost like a charade or a false advertisement to the seniors. They’re giving them the idea that they’re going to help them. Now they’re charging seniors who have to move to a retirement home a tax; it’s a seniors’ tax on people living in retirement homes. And they aren’t building one more new long-term-care bed. You don’t care about seniors, and I think you’ve lost control of the whole idea of helping vulnerable people.

0940

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Yesterday, when we talked about this, and actually earlier today, it was raised that seniors have to spend \$10,000 in order to save \$1,500. The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek mentioned a litany of things that go and eat into this \$1,500 that they would get back, whether it’s the tradespeople or the taxes or any number of things—taxes on multiple levels. Still, at the end of the day, seniors would be out of pocket

\$8,500, if they were able to scrounge together the \$10,000, and with hydro bills going up 46%.

I know in my area transportation is a huge issue for seniors because we have many small communities that are separated by hundreds of kilometres, and public transportation is just not available, so seniors often either have to have a vehicle and pay the insurance and pay the high prices of gas, or else they have to pay someone else to transport them back and forth.

Yesterday I did mention that if we divide up the \$60 million by all of the ridings, that comes down to about \$560,000 per riding, which is a lot of money—a lot of money that can do a lot of good if we were to tighten up some of the eligibility requirements. Why don’t we take this money and target it so that we can help seniors who really need it? Why don’t we make changes?

As I said also, when I worked with my predecessor, even though it’s a federal program, we had a steady stream of people who came in to access the CMHC’s RRAP program, the residential rehabilitation assistance program. What we found was that the program was always exasperated. It would reset on April 1 of every year, and we would tell people, “Well, the program is exhausted for this fiscal year. Apply next fiscal year.” They would apply at the beginning of April, and what do you know? The program was exhausted. We did some digging. We found out that they keep the applications for six months, and we had to get people to start applying in October. So we need to make some changes to this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Perth–Wellington, you’ve got two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I want to thank those who spoke to my presentation from Hamilton East, Peterborough, Durham and Kenora–Rainy River.

I too, like the member from Hamilton East, spent part of my time on a hockey rink as a referee, and although I had no famous nicknames like the member from Hamilton East had, I’m sure that we saw a lot of things in the hockey arena and on the ice that gave us pause at times. As you know, in the rules it says the referee may call a penalty. It doesn’t say he has to call a penalty, so we could use discretion on some of the calls that we used to make. We interpreted those rules. A sign of a good referee, actually, is that people don’t know they’re out there. They don’t know the referee is out there because he’s letting the game play and the players play. He lets a few things go once in a while, and interprets the rules as he sees fit. That’s kind of what I’m leading to. What I’m leading to on that is Bill 2—if I had to be a referee and have a bill such as this that has no substance to it, I would have a difficult time enforcing the rules on it.

I see that any contractors who think they’re going to make a bunch of money out of this are going to look at this and say, “Oh.” There’s going to be a lot of head-scratching going on, Speaker, because of the rules that apply to this, or lack of rules that apply to this bill.

I think the government should concentrate on job creation, getting our energy costs down, and measures such

as that to get this province going again. This bill certainly doesn't do that.

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to rise in my place today to speak to this important piece of legislation that just forms a small part of the aging-at-home direction that Ontario seniors are pleased to go in. We as legislators understand that. The aging-at-home programs are extremely important, and this is just another part of that.

Alex Munter and I sat on the social services committee in the city of Ottawa back in the first three years of the city of Ottawa, the new amalgamated city. I was with him just about a year and a half ago, when he was the CEO of the local health integration network. He had 600 seniors together in Ottawa. He was up giving a speech, and he asked the whole crowd for a show of hands of how many of these seniors didn't want to age in their own homes, and of course no hands went up. That's something all seniors want to do.

This is a bill that will enable seniors to start looking ahead and start planning. We just have to look—I don't want to bore people with this, but I think it's important for people to know. You hear from the other side that it's a \$15,000 project, and you have to have your \$15,000. There are so many small things that you can do in your home as you age, to make your home a better place for you as you lose the ability to look after yourself well.

Examples of eligible expenses: certain renovations to permit first-floor occupancy or secondary suites, granny flats or in-law suites; grab bars and related reinforcements around the toilet, bathtub, shower—before accidents happen, seniors can install these things; handrails in corridors, wheelchair ramps, wheelchair lifts and elevators, bath lifts, walk-in bathtubs, wheel-in showers; widening passage doors; lowering existing counters and cupboards or installing adjustable cupboards; and placing light switches and electrical outlets in accessible locations. That's only the start of the list that I have here.

This is to make our homes better. You have to make that decision at some time: Do I make adjustments to my own home to stay there, or do I move? It's a situation that my wife and I are going through, now that we're looking, in our senior years, for: Where do we live? One of the issues with us is a two-storey home, so it's that lift that may be needed sometime, or are you better on one floor? Those are the things seniors think of, and certainly that is part of the thinking that I have. Seniors want to spend the rest of their days in their own home.

This is a small part of our program, as a government, for seniors, but an important one. This bill lets seniors plan ahead and encourages seniors to plan ahead. A lot of those things that I mentioned are not \$10,000 items; they're \$500 items. A non-slip floor in the bathroom: a \$500 item. They will be able to get that work done and get a rebate.

If it's taken up in a similar way that the federal 2009 home renovation tax credit program was—and I got criticized for using that program, but I did certain things

with that federal renovation tax credit to make my home better, to make it more energy-efficient—up to 308,000 people could benefit from this program in the first year. It was a bill that we wanted passed. We've lost a good part of our first year, but 308,000 people are a lot of seniors who could start thinking of living at home and making those decisions that are going to help them do that.

Demographics, of course, is something that we have to be thinking of. I was looking at one of the slides that was presented in the past in estimates, I believe. Our population is changing. Below 65 years of age, over the next 20 years: about a 10% increase. They're the people that are going to be paying all these things. Above the age of 65: That will grow by almost 50% in the next 20 years. We have to make sure that we take aging-at-home very seriously and get seniors participating in that to a greater degree. A lot of seniors do take part in it now, but we could certainly get more seniors doing it.

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The cost of the healthy homes renovations tax credit is offset by cuts in other parts of the budget. In 2011-12, it's \$60 million; in 2012-13, \$125 million; and in 2013-14, \$135 million, so it's a significant assistance to seniors to move forward.

The other part of this is job creation. We always forget about the job creation part, but who will be working on this? Well, carpenters, electricians, plumbers, manufacturers—our neighbours—and this is important. That's 10,500 jobs per year with this program. You can say it's an insignificant program; it is not. First of all, it educates seniors to look ahead. It helps the seniors to look ahead. It helps the seniors to plan. Even the discussion of this tax credit—to say we don't have calls—I've met seniors who are saying, "When is this program coming out? We want to do something. When is the program coming out?" So there is interest. I can't say that I got 100 calls on it, but certainly I've had 10 conversations with seniors asking when it's coming.

It's important. It's going to make large changes in how seniors look at their future, how they look at what they can do to help them stay in their homes, where they want to be, to help with other programs that are out there—aging-at-home. We can do a lot with seniors. Seniors have to become more involved in this, because with the demographics that we see, with the doubling of seniors in the next 20 years, we cannot have people going into long-term-care homes too early. If we work hard with the seniors, if we work hard through seniors' organizations—I've got about 3,000 seniors in Orléans who are organizing four different clubs. They don't like to call them clubs, but they get assistance from the government. We can help the seniors do more with seniors. It's going to be very important. I think that's what this program is about, and I certainly look forward to seeing the uptake of 10,500 jobs, 308,000 seniors participating, if it's on the same basis as the federal program, which was quite successful in 2009.

It's not major expenditures all the time: door locks that are easy to operate; lever handles on doors and taps

instead of knobs; pull-out shelves under counters to enable work from a seated position; a hand-held shower on an adjustable rod or high-low mounting brackets; additional light fixtures throughout the home and exterior entrances; swing-clear hinges on doors to widen doorways; creation of knee space under the basin to enable use from a seated position; insulation on hot water pipes; relocation of taps to the front or side of a sink for easier access; hands-free taps; motion-activated lighting; touch-and-release drawers, and cupboards and drawers that pull out fully; and modular or removable versions of a permanent fixture, such as modular ramps and non-fixed bath lifts.

If the expenditures are \$2,000 or \$3,000, then seniors can keep the bills, or, if someone is sharing a home with a senior, they keep the bills. They make the application at the end of the year, and on a \$3,000 expenditure, there will be \$450 coming back. That's not immaterial; that will encourage more seniors to do what they should do: start planning now and start making their homes more acceptable to them as they age. If we can do that, we certainly can keep people out of hospitals, at over \$1,000 a day, or long-term-care beds, which are extremely expensive.

The senior issue is important. We've taken this one important step in bringing this legislation in. It will encourage seniors to do better planning. It will help them to make the changes to their homes, and we'll find out that seniors can stay in their homes longer. It's only one of the small pieces of legislation that we've brought in over the years to encourage this action. We have to keep seniors in their homes a lot longer.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the speech from the member for Ottawa-Orléans on Bill 2, the healthy homes renovation tax credit, as it's called.

I would simply like to come back to some points he was making. He was talking about a senior spending maybe \$500 on bathroom renovations, and I simply believe that this approach, for the vast majority of seniors out there—first of all, if they do spend that \$500, the benefit is going to be \$75, and they'll pay \$65 in HST on that \$500. But I simply don't believe that the majority of seniors out there, to get that \$75 benefit, are going to know how to go through the motions of doing the paperwork involved to actually benefit from the tax credit. The only way you're going to get reasonable participation is you're going to have to spend an awful lot of money on advertising.

So my question to the government would be, how much money are you going to have to spend to promote this, to make it worthwhile? Maybe that's what your goal is, because as the member from Hamilton East pointed out—I believe he called it a Liberal fluff bill—it's more about getting publicity for looking like you're doing something than actually doing something. Certainly, I think, to get participation, you're going to have to spend all kinds of money on advertising, which is probably

exactly what you want to do because you'll be able to talk about how wonderful you are and the great things you're doing when, in fact, it's a relatively minor benefit for a select few who will actually be able to participate in this tax cut.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm grateful for the opportunity to make some comments on the comments from the member for Ottawa-Orléans. There are a few things that I agree with in his comments, but one thing I really agree with is he said that this is a small piece of legislation, and that's what it is. It's a small piece of legislation with a really long title. That's the problem with these types of legislation. This should just be part of a bigger piece that actually really did something for a bigger portion of seniors, because the biggest part that takes seniors out of their homes is they can't afford to pay for the heat, they can't afford to pay for the lights and they can't get home care. You know what? In most cases, the senior does not move out of their home because the taps are on the wrong side of the tub, and in a lot of cases, if that's what it is, they're not even going to worry about the tax credit. They're going to change it.

If you really want to have comprehensive legislation, then you make the everyday needs of seniors cheaper, like taking the HST off their heat in areas like mine where we can't access gas, so a senior, and a lot did when they were younger—a lot of us heat with wood. But when you're a senior, you have to heat with oil. I don't see anything in the healthy homes renovation tax credit that helps with oil. It's things like that.

If you really want to keep seniors in their homes—I'm not saying this is a bad piece of legislation, but it's a very small, small piece of legislation with a lot of PR potential attached to it. That's the problem. Is this going to help some seniors? Yes. Is this going to help seniors in general as part of our strategy to keep them in their homes? No. Is it going to be used as a lot of PR? Yes, and that's the problem with this type of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: It was a delight to hear the comments this morning from my good friend and colleague from Ottawa-Orléans. I thought it was a very articulate, very profound speech, talking about Bill 2 and our assistance for seniors.

I find it very interesting. If you go out and talk to seniors' groups—someone made a comment about moving a tap. Well, when you go out and talk to people who are involved with seniors, having a tap in the wrong location can lead to a fall, and often when seniors have falls, they break hips, and often when you break a hip, that can start the downward spiral for many seniors, and they find themselves in a very difficult position.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has been doing some analysis in Ontario over the last little while that indicates that up to 37% of the population that is currently in long-term-care homes, if they had other sup-

ports, could in fact remain in their homes for a longer period of time. The member from Ottawa–Orléans, who spends a lot of time with the seniors' groups in his Ottawa riding, understands, when he's having a dialogue and a discussion and listens to those seniors and those groups in Ottawa–Orléans, that they are embracing this bill. It's an opportunity to make major changes or an opportunity to make minor changes in order to retrofit their home, to make sure it's more accessible and usable as we change in life—as our mobility perhaps decreases—but certainly don't want at this particular time to go into a retirement home or a long-term-home setting.

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Bill 2 is a real opportunity. It will be good for the economy. It will be good for tradespeople. It will be good for the people at Rona, Home Hardware and Home Depot. It's an opportunity to increase their traffic within their retail operations, to provide those goods that certainly tradesmen will take advantage of to improve their homes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I appreciate the comments from our colleague from Ottawa–Orléans.

I do understand the motives. I have a soft spot for seniors. I have a lot of them in my riding. Our particular riding has in fact been hit hard through unemployment, which leads me to believe and think that there are a lot of people that are more concerned in my riding about where and how they're going to pay the next food bill, pay their hydro costs, pay their taxes and be able to stay in their homes.

I appreciate the fact that they're talking about wanting to make homes safer. I get that. I do; I get that. But you know what? I think we need to be looking at more substantive measures. What are we doing to really increase the jobs in our areas, to bring in real jobs, not just the home handy-guy that can install a handle in a wall to make it safer for a senior?

Also, the member from Ottawa–Orléans used an example. He said they could perhaps get a non-slip floor in their bathroom and it might cost around \$500. So I did the quick math: 15% on \$500 is about \$75, but they're also going to have to pay 13% tax on that \$500, which is \$65. So if we look at the economics of the situation, here we have a senior spending \$500 to make their bathroom floor safer—I get that, and I think that's a wise move—but in fact, because of the difference between the rebate of \$75 and the tax of \$65 they're going to pay, they're only going to net \$10 out of this thing. Therefore, their \$500 floor only costs them \$490. I'm looking at it and saying we need to be looking at things in much better ways.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Ottawa–Orléans, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'd like to respond to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for his good comments. I give seniors more credit than you do. I'm sure that this program will be picked up without a lot of advertising.

They will see the opportunities here. I've heard the other side trying to bring down those numbers, but the fact is, it's a 15% rebate. It was very, very successful as part of the federal program, and it's going to be successful here.

To the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane: 308,000 seniors are expected to be taking up this program. It's a big program, from that perspective, and it's the education that we'll see, and it's the thinking of seniors that, "Yeah, we're going to stay in our home. We're going to make our homes ready for us." And 10,500 jobs are not to be laughed at. That's a lot of jobs. Those are good jobs for carpenters, plumbers. These aren't inconsequential jobs; they're extremely important. It's part of the big plan. We're keeping moving ahead with the Aging at Home part.

I want to thank the member from Peterborough, the best whip I've ever had. I really enjoyed his comments this morning.

The member for Chatham–Kent–Essex: Again, I want to say that these are important jobs. Whether the job is small or the job is large, whether the improvement is small or the improvement is big, these are very important projects for seniors. If we get 308,000 of them thinking that way and going ahead with these improvements, this is important.

We have to help seniors age at home. This is a good, good start on getting some of those things done so that your home is better for you. I ask all members to support this important legislation. It is going to help people like me.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak to Bill 2, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007, to implement a healthy homes renovation tax credit.

Heckling from behind, the member from Hamilton East, speaking to the last speaker, said we're going to become seniors, waiting for this bill to pass, as it was introduced I believe last November, and it has almost been a year. So it's obviously not a big priority with the government or they would have called it earlier, especially if you look at some of the silly resolutions they've had us spending time in this place debating, including some in the past week that really were fluff resolutions.

This bill, just to go through it a little bit, is about a tax credit, the home renovation tax credit for seniors. It is very specific in that you have to be 65 years or older to qualify, and it applies to very specific improvements to your home.

One interesting feature of it is there is no income test. As has been pointed out, you can spend up to a maximum of \$10,000 to be able to benefit from the 15% tax credit, so the most you could benefit from this tax credit is \$1,500, if you spend the \$10,000.

If you're a wealthy senior and you need to do the renovations so you can stay in your home, so you can make it more accessible—which is another one of the stipulations of this bill—you're going to spend the

money anyways, because you want to stay in your home and because you can afford to. But for those that really need it, which is a lot of people out there—a lot of people, certainly, in Parry Sound–Muskoka—they’re struggling to get by, and they don’t have the money to be able to spend the \$10,000. They’re struggling month to month on a fixed pension and are faced with increased energy bills and other costs. That’s certainly what I hear about in my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka. Particularly electricity bills are one of the big things that I absolutely do hear about.

This bill is really targeted to a very small segment of the population—seniors—but then also a very, very small group. I think for those to actually benefit from it, you’re going to have to have some money to be able to spend on these renovations.

I would also simply say, as I was saying in the comments I made a few minutes ago, that this is really not the right approach, because for a lot of people out there, they’re not going to be aware of this tax credit, or they’re not going to save the paperwork to be able to benefit from it. Really, the only way you get good participation with a very small segmented piece of legislation like this is to spend a lot of money on advertising, so then you’re spending money on advertising, as the government, instead of actually helping people.

I think there are much more efficient ways of actually helping people that need help. One would be to leave the money in the hands of the people that are earning it so they can spend it as they wish. Another might be, as has been suggested, removing the HST on electricity and heating costs, which would benefit everyone, and you wouldn’t have to save your receipts and go through a process—and be aware of it—to actually be able to benefit from it.

I think the approach the government is taking, as the member from Hamilton East pointed out, is really more about publicity. It’s more of a fluff bill to generate some positive response from the people at large. I think if it was a big priority for them, first of all it would have been passed by now. Bill 2 was introduced last November, and it still hasn’t made its way through the Legislature, so it’s obviously not a big priority.

In my riding, what are seniors really concerned about? Well, they’re concerned about access to health care, for sure. That’s something that really comes up. Most recently in Parry Sound–Muskoka, we’re seeing big cutbacks in things like cataract surgery. So all of a sudden there are big wait times for cataract surgery in the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, on the Muskoka side in particular. I’ve learned from the health authorities that last year in Parry Sound–Muskoka, Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare was allocated some 952 cataract surgeries in 2011-12, and that has been cut back for this year, for 2012-13, to 409 cases—a huge, huge reduction in the number of cataract surgeries.

So I’m hearing from seniors who are writing to me saying, “I was scheduled to have a cataract surgery, and now it’s cancelled. How do I get it? This is something

that I have to have done or I’m going to lose my sight.” There are no options about this. It’s not something they want to do. I would say funding those cataract surgeries is more important than this legislation and the advertising and other money that’s going to have to be spent on it to make it work. So fund the cataract surgeries and reduce those waiting lists, because that is something I’ve had several letters, emails and calls to my office about, and it’s something that people are really concerned about, particularly in the Muskoka side of the riding.

Other issues that seniors are concerned about: access and quality of long-term care. Just last week I was at an anniversary—I think it was the 35th anniversary of Fairvern long-term-care home in Huntsville. There, the staff do a wonderful job of looking after their clientele, and they have a terrific group of volunteers who were recognized, some of whom have been there the entire time that Fairvern has been open, amazingly. But it is now becoming an older facility. It was originally the hospital, before it was made into a long-term-care home. So it’s in need of rebuilding.

That’s something that I think might be a priority for the government for the existing budget that they have out there—because one thing we know: the government’s in a deficit position. We’ve heard that lots of times. They have a \$15-billion deficit, so it’s not like there’s money out there that they can spend. They’re actually spending borrowed money, and that’s something that has to be dealt with. It’s something our party has been making suggestions about, to deal with this big deficit.

I think there are lots of better ways, simpler ways, more effective and efficient ways to help seniors, to spend the money, versus this bill, which is quite restrictive and quite complicated, really, for the seniors who would be trying to access it. I just think that it’s probably more about PR than it is anything else. For that reason, our party will not be supporting this bill.

I’m pleased to have had a few moments to comment this morning. Thank you.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It’s a pleasure to introduce two members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees here. We have Chris Watson and we have Terri Preston; and also, from the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation, who has been sitting here all week, Craig Rockwell up in the stands.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, it’s my pleasure to welcome my friends Dr. You-Zhi Tang and Mr. James Jiang visiting the House today. Please join me in welcoming them.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Premier, and I'll put my question to the Premier. Premier, our province is in trouble; that is clear. You've taken Ontario to the edge of a precipice—

Interjection: Where's the Premier?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Where's the front bench?

Mr. Peter Shurman: You've taken Ontario to the edge of a precipice.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Could I have the clock reset, please?

I was about to recognize a point of order, but I also recommend to the member that I was going to see that the Premier was here. Now that he is here, I've reset the clock. It is now time for question period. The member from Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's good rehearsal, though.

Premier, our province is in trouble, and that's clear. You've taken Ontario to the edge of a precipice, and with your so-called budget, you took a giant step forward into the abyss. Now you're looking for a parachute.

The Ontario PC Party bailed you out on your teachers' legislation.

Interjection.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: We have a plan that will do what you can't: get Ontario on the path to recovery. We've been solid, and Ontarians know where we stand. The same cannot be said for you or your budget cohorts, the NDP—the left-leaning education Premier masquerading as a tough guy on labour, walking hand in hand with the far-left NDP masquerading as centrists. What a joke. Together, you have led us that much closer to a \$411-billion debt and a \$35-billion deficit.

How can Ontarians trust you now, and why aren't you getting on board with the PC plan to fix this mess?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague is nothing if not entertaining, Speaker; I will say that. But I do appreciate the enthusiasm and the passion that he brings to his responsibilities. But they are at risk, I would argue, of allowing their rhetoric to distort their understanding of our reality.

I want to bring him back to some of the observations offered by Mr. Drummond in his report. He said in particular, in reference to Ontario and our government, "Spending is neither out of control nor wildly excessive. Ontario runs one of the lowest-cost provincial governments in Canada relative to its GDP.... And we must recognize that some important steps have been taken in the past few years."

If we're going to begin to debate this in earnest, we should do it on the basis of some reality. The fact of the matter is, we're in a fairly strong position. We've taken some positive steps. From there, let's have a debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Speaker, I love when the Premier quotes from the Drummond report. He uses it as he sees fit: He throws the stuff away he doesn't like and picks the stuff that he wants. You can't pick and choose. You've been pandering to unions for over eight years, Premier. With by-elections in mind, you decided to switch your tactics.

Ontarians have seen your chameleon games before: the pre-election no-new-taxes candidate turned new-health-tax Premier; the we-need-a-power-plant-in-Mississauga-and-Oakville Premier, to paying \$190 million to cancel the plants mid-election. Now, after eight years of bending over backwards for your union friends, you decided to pretend to get tough on labour.

The only thing Ontarians can be certain of is that with the NDP's help you will continue to decimate our province's finances.

Since you cannot seem to decide who or what you will be, once today's by-election votes are counted, will you commit to following the PC plan so that Ontario can finally recover?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, understanding the basis of our reality: We have one of the lowest-cost jurisdictions. In fact, we have the lowest spending per capita among all 10 provinces, and I think it's important to keep that in mind.

I think it would be important to pay some attention to a column written recently in the *Ottawa Citizen*, and the title of that column was "Tim Hudak's Simple Answer for Complicated Times." It states, "Hudak, in the pursuit of popularity"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Premier is answering.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: "Hudak, in the pursuit of popularity, not good governance, proposes draconian measures to cut Ontario's debt. That's just the thing that will drive the provincial economy into the toilet so that all the stimulus money spent to save an economy on the brink goes for naught."

That was less than two weeks ago. I think there's a tremendous amount of truth to be had in that, and I would caution my honourable colleague in terms of the kinds of proposals that they would put forward.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: Eight years of photo ops, Premier, political tactics, incomprehensible spending habits, and you've taken Ontario to the brink. Like the song says, "Big wheel keeps on turning, proud Mary keeps on burning."

Instead of taking the opportunity to change your ways, you joined ranks with the NDP and produced a budget that in no way curbed your Liberal spendthrift ways. All the while, you ignored the Ontario PC Party's plan to get Ontario on track to recovery.

You need to put political opportunism aside. You need to listen and get on board with the PC Party plan. You

need to acknowledge that there is a range of options, beginning with an across-the-board wage freeze, arbitration reform, outsourcing, energy and many more on the way. Ontario PCs have been clear on where we stand. Why are you not listening?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate, again, the position taken by my honourable colleague, but obviously that's not something we can agree with.

I think it's important that we acknowledge our reality. We have the lowest-cost jurisdiction in the country. When it comes to spending in relation to GDP, we are the second lowest in the country. The fact of the matter is we've created 350,000 jobs since the recession; that's 90,000 more than we had originally lost. Our GDP, which is the size of our economy, has grown by some 2.6%, I believe, since the recession. We continue to grow.

We have in place now an important conversation. We've just brought our doctors back to the table. We intend to sit down with them and find a way forward by working together. We're working with our teachers as well; 55,000 of those came to the table, and we have plans for an agreement there.

We look forward to making more progress, and we're always open to some credible, workable ideas from my colleagues.

TEACHERS' CONTRACTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Back again to the Premier: You told the public and members of this House weeks ago that we needed to pass your so-called Putting Students First Act immediately or there would be imminent labour disruption.

I have a message for the Premier. It's from my husband. This morning, he actually went to a school—our daughter's school—in Nepean, and he might be surprised to learn what my husband found: The school was open, there were teachers teaching, there were kids in the classroom, parents dropping off their kids. I must say, Speaker, this Premier hit the panic button harder than anybody did in Y2K.

While we're happy to bail out the Premier on a partial wage freeze, because the province cannot afford any more of the handsome salary increases or generous bonuses, it's hard not to question your motive. Will you finally admit that your recent conversion to fiscal conservatism has more to do with winning a seat in Kitchener–Waterloo—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Education.

1040

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased to have before this Legislature a piece of legislation called the Putting Students First Act, because that's what we need to do: We need to put our students first. We need to give confirmation, and we needed to give confirmation, to

Ontario families that our government would do whatever it took to ensure that school would start and that the school year would be uninterrupted.

We're very, very pleased. I too, and the Premier too, have had an opportunity to go to many schools in this province in this past week. We know that schools are open, and we know that our teachers are accepting our students. But what we needed to ensure was that the dollars remained invested in our classrooms. The member opposite forgets about \$473 million that would be pulled from our classrooms if we did not take these steps. I know that's an issue to her, because that's why they're supporting this legislation. It's about putting our kids first, ensuring classes start and continue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I find it interesting that they decided to go to schools when kids were on summer vacation and on the weekend before they started school. But the parents who went to school yesterday, the day before and today know full well that they hit the panic button.

To the Premier: You know the old saying. You can fool some of the people some of the time, but you can't fool all the people all the time. The voters in Kitchener–Waterloo aren't fools. They dropped their kids off to school this week too. Like my husband, they saw no lockouts, they saw no strikes, but they did see a Premier who would say anything and do anything to get elected. Some things never change. You'll go to any length in order to win. Will you apologize to the voters of Kitchener–Waterloo for using them in your ploy for getting that elusive majority you so desperately want tonight?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Perhaps the member opposite did not listen to my first answer. The Premier was at school on Tuesday; I was at schools on Wednesday. We know that parents were dropping their kids off, and we know that they were pleased with the choices that our government is making to keep dollars in the classrooms, to continue to roll out full-day kindergarten, to keep our class sizes small, to build new schools and make those additions so that our kids can have and continue to have the world-class education that our government has built up since 2003, when we came into office following the mess that that member opposite and her party had left to the families of this province.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Simply put, no one believes you anymore. Premier, in what can only be considered a master stroke of alienation, you threw the teachers' unions under the proverbial bus after they secured you three back-to-back-to-back governments.

When it became clear that Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus actually had a plan to freeze wages, balance the books and get our debt and deficit under control, you stole our so-called homework and recalled the House early to make some cheap political points and take credit for our plan.

By tomorrow, win, lose or draw, you'll likely be working with our friends across the way, Bob Rae's successors, in the high-tax, high-spend, high-debt, high-deficit NDP to keep this province on its rocky path. Only the Ontario PCs and Tim Hudak have been consistent in our call for an across-the-board, legislated, broader public sector wage freeze. How can voters trust you now?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: On this side of the House, we know that families across this province find ways to live within their means. That's what they expect of our government, and that's why we're making choices that put our students first and ensure that we continue to roll out full-day kindergarten. I know that the member opposite's daughter is a graduate of full-day kindergarten.

This is an opportunity for all of our kids to get the education that we want for them, but as the adults, we need to make choices that put them first. What we are asking our partners in education is to ensure that we can put our kids first, that we can find ways to ensure that full-day kindergarten continues to roll out, so that my kids who benefitted from that, and the member opposite's kids who benefitted that, and all of our kids in this province can continue to get the education that they want and deserve. As the adults, we need to put them first.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. A few years ago, an MPP stood in this House and asked, "Premier, as your government lurches from crisis to crisis, crises of your own making, it has become clear that you are willing to say absolutely anything in order to hold on to power ... when you are prepared to say anything in order to hold on to power, why should Ontario families trust you?" Premier, who said that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It feels like I'm on a game show here. I look with some suspicion at my colleagues on this side of the House, Speaker, but I'm sure my honourable colleague opposite will enlighten us all with the source of that wonderful quote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, I am sure, Premier, that your memory fades when these matters come forward. In fact it was you, Premier, who asked that question, nearly a decade ago, in opposition.

Today he heads a government that's lurching from crisis to crisis, from the mess at Ornge to seat-saving private power deals that cost the public millions, and he heads a government that will say anything to hold on to power, even if it's unconstitutional legislation he knows will be thrown out by the courts.

My question to the Premier is the same one he asked a decade ago: Why should Ontario families trust you?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: You know, my honourable colleague, together with the official opposition, has been trying to convince Ontario families that there's a crisis in education. We don't see it that way, Speaker. In fact, we see it more as, "Steady as she goes." Schools are open, as predicted; teachers are there, as predicted; students are

there, as predicted; parents continue to have confidence in their schools, as expected. And that has all happened because of the progress that we've made together during the course of the past nine years.

There has been steady progress. Test scores are up, graduation rates are up, and we have every reason in the world to continue to remain optimistic here in Ontario about the future of our education system for our families.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, just so that it's clear, this Premier is not saying "Steady as she goes" in Kitchener-Waterloo, let me tell you. He's telling families that schools are about to be closed.

The fact is, when Ontario families look at this government, they see a Premier who just doesn't know what he believes in anymore, besides holding on to power and avoiding accountability. Voters today will render a verdict on the Premier's desperate quest for majority power. Is he ready to stop the political games and focus on the challenges facing everyday families in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, we're consumed by that very responsibility every day. Understanding our financial circumstances, the state of the economy and our fiscal challenge, we think it's important for all of us to hit the pause button when it comes to public sector pay. So I'm proud to say that the doctors are back at the table with the Minister of Health. I think that's very good news. Anything that we do resolve together is always better than any kind of a unilateral decision.

Unfortunately, we weren't able to arrive at that outcome to the extent that we would have liked when it comes to working with our teachers, but we did land an agreement with 55,000, and using the basis of that agreement, we're expanding it province-wide.

So I think families understand, notwithstanding my honourable colleague's different perspective on this. They understand there's a fiscal challenge. We've got to hit the pause button on pay, and we've got to do it in a way that doesn't compromise the quality of health care and education.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Last October, we had an election, and the result of that was that a minority Parliament was elected to Ontario. The people of Ontario have spoken. They said that they want the parties to sit down and to do what's right when it comes to the people of Ontario.

Instead, for the last almost a year now, you've been contriving in order to get a by-election in Kitchener-Waterloo, to try to be able to organize in your own way, to your own political advantage, trying to get back to your majority. But there are issues that have to be dealt with. We've put forward a practical, simple proposal to stop handing out bonuses to the top earners in the public sector. Can we count on you this afternoon when it comes to that vote?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.
1050

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Premier has asked me to review the pay-for-performance policy that was established by the Conservative government of the day. We're doing that. I'll be bringing forward appropriate legislative and regulatory measures to ensure that everybody shares equally as we move back to balance, as we protect health care and education. I'll look forward to the member's comments on that and, hopefully, his and his party's support for that initiative.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speaker, to the Minister of Finance: We know that the Conservatives were wrong doing it 10 years ago. They should never have implemented that program. But what's even more galling, you've kept it in place for the last nine years, and only now that it's made public you decide that you're going to close the barn once the horse has bolted out of the barn.

I'm going to ask you again: We've put forward a very practical measure that essentially says we're going to stop the practice established by the Conservatives and carried out by the Liberals for nine years. Will you support the bill, yes or no?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Last week, the NDP tabled a bill. I pointed out to them that it only covered 30 people and they quickly moved to change the bill. It was written on the back of an envelope. We appreciate their direction, and we look forward to bringing forward a workable piece of legislation and regulation to ensure that everybody participates fairly.

I'll also remind the member opposite that their bill does not propose to cover those members of AMAPCEO who get pay for performance, or anyone bargain, and there are a substantial number of employees in that situation.

We need to have a fair bill, Mr. Speaker, a bill that covers more than 30 of 9,000 people. We'll bring that forward in a responsible fashion. We'll look forward to the views of the third party on that. I appreciate they're moving this issue forward. Hopefully, they'll be able to see their way to vote for the bill—

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To the Minister of Finance: It seems to me that you're embracing the Tory policy. You're trying to find some way to be able to keep employees—a bad policy, instituted by the Conservatives, that had pay-for-performance bonuses as part of the salary. You have to make a choice: You either agree with the concept or you don't. You can't keep on playing this game of saying one thing to the voters of Kitchener-Waterloo and Vaughan and doing another thing when you come here to the Legislature.

I'm going to ask you again: Will you scrap the Conservative pay-for-bonus scheme that was put in place 10 years ago and vote with New Democrats to get rid of this?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we're going to fix it, and we're going to fix it appropriately, in a fair and responsible way.

We need to push the pause button on all these matters so that we can continue to invest in full-day learning, which the Conservatives would cancel. We need to do it in order to continue to make the important investments in health care that are helping our families. We've got shorter wait lists for various surgical procedures, more people have a family doctor—so yes, we are going to do that.

I hope the member opposite and the third party will support that initiative. We agree it was bad policy set up by a bad government in the bad old days, so with the steps we'll take, we'll ensure fairness across the public and broader public sectors, across bargain and non-bargain employees, in a way that will survive constitutional and court challenges.

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

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Energy. It's no surprise that the \$190-million cancellation of the Mississauga power plant has shocked every taxpayer in Ontario, but yesterday at the public accounts committee, Liberals delayed and then stopped our efforts to get to the truth about the cancelled Oakville power plant. Minister, your friends did everything they could to stop the Auditor General from investigating Oakville, and you were successful. The clock ran out. That leads me to my question, Minister: What do you not want the public to learn about Oakville, and just how big is this bill going to be?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Speaker, we've been clear from the beginning that the relocation of the Mississauga power plant would be spoken to when we had a relocation and we had cost estimates, and it was. We put the documents out there.

We still haven't seen the Conservative cost estimate from their commitment to cancel the Mississauga gas plant. I'm waiting to see that, to see how it compares, because it was their position as well as it was the NDP's. And we've been very clear about Oakville. When the very sensitive negotiations, arbitration process is concluded—when it reaches a conclusion, we'll speak to the conclusion. At that time, everybody will be able to judge the results. There isn't a result at the moment to judge, but there are sensitive negotiations and discussions ongoing.

That's been our position, and the Speaker has an issue before you at the moment. We'll await that ruling.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Minister, we both know there's more to the \$190 million you paid out to cancel Mississauga. In addition, you gave them a sole-sourced, brand new \$300-million gas plant contract in Lambton, and you did this instead of simply converting the coal plant.

Taxpayers now have no way of knowing whether that \$300 million is a fair price, or whether an additional part of the cancellation fee was buried in that \$300 million.

At estimates committee a couple of weeks ago, your finance minister said—and a former energy minister, I may add—that this was done because, and I quote, “You can’t convert a coal plant to gas.” Now, when I toured the Lambton plant, the first thing the executives told me was how easy it was to convert a coal plant to gas. My question: Minister, are you sticking with his story?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I think the member, with respect, has mixed up several things. Our commitment was not to proceed with the Mississauga gas plant, as was theirs, and to relocate it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: What we’ve done is, we’re relocating it. So this other gas plant that the member is speaking about in fact is the gas plant that was to go in Mississauga. But, you know, yesterday was an interesting day—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce–Grey, come to order.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: —the federal government came out with their own coal emissions targets. We take a different position than they do. We’re getting out of coal by the end of 2014, no later. We’re cleaning up the air, absolutely. My friend talks about the Lambton generating station. It’s time it was closed. The health of Ontarians demands that we get out of coal and clean up the air.

HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Sarnia residents and Mayor Bradley have been ringing alarm bells about the \$8-million to \$10-million deficit faced by their local CCAC due to increased demand and costs but no increase to funding.

The CCAC has requested a funding increase from the LHIN, but the LHIN can’t say, as funding hasn’t been finalized by the minister. Mayor Bradley said that seniors understand that they probably are going to lose a service that is very valuable to them. When will the minister finalize LHINs’ funding for the year so that seniors can no longer, and don’t have to, worry?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member opposite. I wonder if she has had a chance to read the London Free Press article just this morning that talks about the extraordinary progress that is being made by investing more in community care. In fact, we’ve seen the ALC rates in the hospitals come down substantially because more people are getting the care they need at home. This is the absolute founding principle of our action plan: get people the care they need in the right place. Very often, the right place is at home. Too many people are still in hospital who could be cared for at

home. Too many people are in long-term care who could be cared for at home. That is why we, in this past budget, made the decision to invest more in home care while we hold the compensation of physicians constant and while we hold hospital base budgets constant.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I did read the article in the London Free Press today, but today we’re here asking a question about the Sarnia, St. Clair location. So back to the minister: This minister can talk a good game about strengthening the community care sector, but when she fails to provide timely and clear information about funding five months into the fiscal year, her commitment to this sector has to be called into question.

I’m going to ask the minister again: Please, when will her office provide finalized funding to the Erie St. Clair LHIN and all the LHINs in Ontario so that more home care in Sarnia—not London, in Sarnia—and all communities are protected?

1100

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, what is happening in London, and the results of that are evident in the article, is happening right across the province. We have put a very clear priority on enhancing home care. It’s what people want. People want to be home whenever possible, and it’s also what’s right for the system. We have made some tough decisions on other parts of our budget so we can free up money for more home care. That is the future of health care in this province, and I am very excited that we’re actually starting to see the results of that on the ground.

EDUCATION

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: My question this morning is for the Minister of Education. As the economy recovers from the global recession, we all know we’ve had to make some tough choices. The government simply can’t afford the kind of salary increases we’ve seen in the past, and I think many people recognize that. But as the economy continues to recover, the government has to take serious steps to bring the budget back into balance. Will the minister please tell this House how the McGuinty government has protected education in Ontario in the face of these choices for the sake of our students’ futures?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank my colleague for the question. Let me be very clear: The commitment of this government to strong publicly funded education, Mr. Speaker—that will never waver. It’s a commitment coupled with the dedication of our partners in education that together has brought us real results—real results for our students, results that we should all be proud of. We’ve brought test scores up. We’ve brought grad rates up. We’ve restored public confidence in publicly funded education after years of neglect under the previous PC government. Our work in education has brought us recognition here in Canada and around the world as a leader in educational excellence. That’s why we’re work-

ing so hard to protect the classroom experience for Ontario students, because we know that the best investment in the future of this province is an investment in our kids, and that's why those are our priority choices.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: My supplementary question is also for the Minister of Education. It's about full-day kindergarten, which is very important to the constituents in my riding of Pickering-Scarborough East, and I would say everyone's riding.

Parents know that kids are getting a world-class education, and they're also saving thousands of dollars with the introduction of full-day kindergarten. We've talked a lot about the Drummond report in the House this week. The Drummond report said we should eliminate full-day kindergarten. The Drummond report also said we should raise class sizes. The opposition parties said that we should do that.

Can the minister please tell this House why the government has made the choices that it has made?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: The member is right. We have sought out advice across this province and we have received advice. We received advice from Mr. Drummond in the Drummond report, and it did recommend, to live within our fiscal reality, to increase class sizes and halt the rollout of full-day kindergarten. But we know how important these initiatives are to our students, to the children of this province, and we have chosen to keep class sizes small, to continue to roll out full-day kindergarten. As a result of those choices, we are keeping teachers in our classrooms and educational workers in our schools. By choosing to protect full-day kindergarten, we are preserving 3,800 teaching positions. By rejecting Mr. Drummond's advice to increase class sizes, we are preserving more than 6,000 teaching positions.

Mr. Drummond recommended cutting 70% of non-teaching staff positions. That would have put 10,000 dedicated educational workers out on the street, and those are not the choices that we want to make.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. John Yakabuski: Now back to question period.

To the Premier: Premier, it seems that day after day, scandal after scandal, and your government is exposed. First we had eHealth, then Ornge, then the Mississauga power plant scandal and countless others.

We now have another scandal that is brewing under your watch. In addition to ballooning salaries, the OSPCA spent \$4.6 million in 2010 in so-called professional and consulting fees. In an internal memo dated August 13, 2012, it appears they want to keep those numbers secret.

Premier, will you not learn from previous scandals and require the OSPCA to release the salaries of their employees, and will you provide the necessary oversight to avert another Ornge?

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

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It gives me great pleasure to speak about the OSPCA here this morning. First of all, let me congratulate the OSPCA for the good work they have done.

To answer the question of the member from Pembroke, the salaries of the OSPCA are on the sunshine list, so you don't need to ask for more information about them. All of those that you are just—your innuendo this morning that they are hiding their salaries—it's on the sunshine list.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Only the salaries of the CAO, the CEO and the CFO are revealed.

First we had the ridiculous \$1.6-million salary of Dr. Mazza that blew up in your face, Premier. Now we have a charitable organization, that receives provincial funds, taking a page from the Ornge book.

In an internal email sent to OSPCA CEO Kate MacDonald from CFO Tom Stephenson, he said, "Please note, the file as it stands has some salary numbers in it that we would not want to get out." It goes on to list some other costs. Premier, what could a charitable agency receiving provincial funding have to hide?

One thing that has remained constant in these files is the lack of oversight from your Liberal government, allowing these kinds of things to take place. Premier, will you finally do the right thing, provide the necessary oversight, protect taxpayers' dollars and release the salaries and the details of consulting contracts at the OSPCA?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, every dollar that is invested in OSPCA by this government—and we're not going to apologize today for investing in OSPCA for the welfare of the animals in Ontario. Every dollar that is being invested by this government into the OSPCA is accounted for. We on this side of the House believe in transparency, so—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Sorry; I asked a question—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes, you did. I'm awfully glad that you recognize that, too. So let's bring it down.

Minister.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Talking about transparency, we have asked the PC Party to release their expenses a year ago, and they have not yet released it. So what are you hiding? I'm going to ask the member from Pembroke.

MINISTRY SPENDING

Ms. Sarah Campbell: My question is to the Premier. Recently, your government made it clear that MNR cuts are coming. Communities across the north, such as Ignace, have serious concerns that these cuts could mean the closure of local MNR offices and, with them, the loss of a significant number of the community's jobs.

Given that recent cuts, such as the downsizing of the Bear Wise program, took Ontarians by surprise, including the local police organizations who were suddenly tasked with these new duties, will the Premier commit today to full public disclosure and consultation before these cuts are made?

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

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: It's a very, very important question. As usual, this government will ensure that we do the necessary consultation, as we have in the past. It is very, very important that, as we move forward, everyone clearly understands the decisions we're making, why we're making them, and fully engages in those types of decision-making initiatives that will ensure, as we all know, that the importance of the MNR remains intact and is very, very respected by this government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: We've seen what consultation means with this government. It's usually after the cuts have happened.

1110

Back to the Premier: We all understand the need to tighten our belts, given our current financial situation, but cuts to offices in Ignace and other communities today will have serious economic impacts tomorrow. For example, community leaders are now worried that these cuts will have a negative impact on the reopening of the Ignace sawmill and the Bending Lake iron ore mine because of the local expertise that it takes away.

So I ask again: Will the Premier commit to holding off on cuts until municipalities, First Nations and members of the public can have meaningful input?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: There's no doubt, as the member knows and as everyone in this House knows, that there are tough decisions we've had to make. There's absolutely no question. We will ensure that the negative impact is minimized as we move forward. One thing we won't do is compromise the principles that MNR has always had.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation. There has been a lot of news recently surrounding the contract negotiations between the Canadian Auto Workers and the three major North American auto companies. I know that the auto sector is really important to my constituents, many of whom work in the sector, and I also know it's important to the overall vitality of Ontario's economy.

It's important that we continue to create and retain jobs across the province, and we need to ensure we're supporting key sectors like auto. These are very competitive times, and the recent economic downturn has hit the auto sector particularly hard. This impacts Ontario's families, and it impacts the province's economic well-being.

Could minister please let the House know what Ontario is doing to ensure the strength of this sector?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for the question. But more importantly, I want to thank him as a passionate advocate for the auto sector. This member has worked tirelessly as chair of our auto caucus on the government side, and he's done some great work.

The auto sector does represent, as the member said, a very important part of our economy and contributes billions of dollars to our GDP. More importantly, it employs over 485,000 Ontarians.

We're very pleased to see the auto sector recovering well, following the restructuring in 2009, with growth in sales every year since 2010. In fact, Ontario has been the number one auto assembly jurisdiction in North America since 2004. That's why this government has made a number of strategic investments in the auto sector, including the restructuring of GM and Chrysler and recent investments in Toyota and Magna.

We will continue to stand by the auto sector. We'll continue to make those investments that are creating jobs in this province, even if the opposition did not support those investments—

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. I know that my constituents, and I think all Ontarians, will be pleased that this government recognizes how important the auto sector is to the overall economic health of this province. Auto workers in Oakville and across the province can see that strong commitments being put forward by this government will ensure that Ontario continues to lead the way in the auto industry.

Over the summer I was talking with constituents, and while the overall feeling is that the auto sector is doing well, they're now reading articles about the Canadian Auto Workers negotiations and they're concerned about where the industry is heading.

We all know that Ontario's auto sector has fared better than many other jurisdictions across North America. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation, could he update us on what has been happening over the summer in the auto industry in this province?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The fact is—there's no two ways about it—this has been a very good summer for the auto sector in Ontario. We just look at the investment General Motors announced recently: \$850 million in research and development in that sector; very important. This investment will bring tangible benefits to automotive suppliers but also to our post-secondary institutions.

I'm also pleased to note that this summer a third production line was introduced at the Ford plant in Essex, Ontario. That's very important to those workers out there. Announcements like these would not have been possible had we taken the opposition's advice and not stood by the auto sector during their most challenging times.

The member talked about the auto negotiations, and that's an important point too. These negotiations are important. We call on all sides to do the very best they can to come up with agreements that are fair to workers but also maintain our competitiveness in the province of Ontario.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Premier. No matter how you spin it, Premier, your record is one of wasted taxpayers' dollars, mismanagement and scandal: Ornge, eHealth, Samsung, your power plants—and the list goes on and on. The result of nine years under the McGuinty government has left Ontarians burdened with record debt, record deficits, record high hydro rates and growing unemployment lines.

Today, voters in Kitchener–Waterloo face an important choice, and I believe they'll choose the path by denying you the majority that would only accelerate Ontario down the road to nowhere. Isn't it time you woke up and realized the message voters gave you last October hasn't changed, and that they won't trust you with a majority?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I'm going to react to all that negativity with some positivity. We have had a wonderful exercise in democracy during the past four weeks. I want to thank all the parties, all the candidates, all the volunteers, all the teams who have been making the efforts that they have put into this exercise.

There are other parts of this world where people are making sacrifices, even sacrificing their lives, so they might have in place a democracy where they can make a choice about their future, and I think we should celebrate that today in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Well, more spin, Premier, more spin. Let's face it: Your record is so bad that you had to base your entire campaign in Kitchener–Waterloo on our plan to freeze public sector wages. Now desperate for a majority and knowing you definitely couldn't run on your own record, you stole our plan and tried to call it your own. But you didn't even get that right, because you won't freeze wages across the board. Instead, you created an unnecessary crisis as the school year was about to start—more bungling and mismanagement.

Premier, do you really think anyone believes the guy who gladly opened the vault for these unions in the first place will actually follow through on his promise to keep it locked if you get a majority?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It takes a lot of work to be that bleak, a lot of work.

Let's celebrate something else. We've been talking a lot about education, and I know that we're all political geeks to some extent or another, and we've been paying some attention to some of the ongoings south of the border and how they lament, in both parties down there, the quality of their schools. I think we can and should celebrate the progress we continue to make inside On-

tario schools. We can be proud of the progress that we've made, proud of the effort made by our teachers, proud of the relationship that we've worked so hard to establish with our teachers.

But any way you look at it, class sizes are down, test scores are up, graduation rates are up, and there's a sense of enthusiasm around the possibility inside Ontario's publicly funded schools. That's all there, and again, that's something we can and should celebrate in Ontario.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, ConCreate USL went bankrupt in the middle of its work renovating overpasses on the Stoney Creek portion of the QEW. I understand the ministry has just chosen a new contractor for the projects, but nevertheless, the ongoing closure of the Millen Road overpass is causing enormous inconvenience for the residents in this area.

The ministry clearly failed in its financial due diligence on ConCreate USL. When can residents finally expect the work to be done and life to return to normal in the surrounding areas? And how much is this going to cost the taxpayers?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for the question. First of all, you should be aware that the procurement process at MTO, and indeed at Infrastructure Ontario, has been recognized internationally as among the best in the world, and we have demonstrated that in all of our significant infrastructure as we move forward.

In terms of the specific project that you're mentioning, I will take it as a request on your part that I look into any inconvenience that might be caused to the people in and around Hamilton as a result of the readjusting of that particular project.

I know that there have been a number of projects as a result of that particular bankruptcy, including one in the city of Ottawa that I'm more familiar with, and we have taken great care to find new subcontractors and to minimize the impact on the community.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Minister. You might want to do a little more investigation into the solvency of these companies that you're hiring to do the work.

The company had a \$17.5-million contract with your ministry—\$17.5 million—to renovate six bridges along the QEW, including Millen Road, Grays Road, Fifty Road, Fruitland Road and Glover Road. Now, in addition to massive inconveniences, there are some genuinely dangerous areas, such as the Fifty Road overpass where sightlines are severely compromised. Severe accidents are possible.

When will the ministry finally complete the long-delayed work on these QEW improvements?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: First of all, I have to reiterate that if the member looks at all of these significant contracts that have been let by MTO across the province

of Ontario, bankruptcies are seldom seen. This is a one-off. It's the first one that I've seen since I've been minister, the first one I've seen since I've been back in this House.

Once again, you've brought to my attention what you perceive and what your constituents feel are some inconveniences as a result of the resetting of that particular contract. I'll take that as a request and look into it, and I will get back to you with a response. Over and above that, I'd be very happy to arrange a meeting with you and senior officials at MTO so we can review it.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Some of the constituents in my riding have turned to Ontario's social assistance system during the recent global recession. As the economy recovered and people worked towards getting back on their feet, the Ontario Works program was there to provide much more than just income support. Ontarians also turned to the Ontario Works program for help finding a job and for employment training supports. I understand that the program is a lot different than it was when we took office in 2003. Can the minister please tell the members of this House and my constituents what improvements our government has made since 2003?

Hon. John Milloy: I appreciate the question from the honourable member. Particularly during these tough—what we've seen in the last few years—economic times, it's very important that we have a social assistance system that's responding to the needs of Ontarians during this worldwide recession.

Since 2003, we have made a number of very comprehensive changes to social assistance. We have raised social assistance rates eight years in a row, by a total of 14.9%. We ended the deduction of the national child benefit supplement and flowed through the federal working income tax benefit to all Ontarians receiving social assistance. We've simplified rules around earnings exemptions, so that the more you work, the more money you keep. We've extended drug, dental and vision care benefits for people leaving social assistance for employment, to help them make the transition.

Mr. Speaker, it's always a work in progress, and I look forward, in the supplementary, to talking about further reforms that we're looking at.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Thank you, Minister. It's good to hear that the system is there for those who need it.

Despite the progress the minister mentioned, I've heard from my constituents that there are ways that the system could work better for our clients. I've also been hearing some concerns about its long-term sustainability.

I understand that the ministry appointed a commission for the review of social assistance in 2010 and that the commission was mandated to provide advice on ways to not only reform the system but also to ensure the long-

term viability of the social assistance system. Can the minister elaborate on this for us?

Hon. John Milloy: We recognize that our social assistance system needs to be more responsive to the needs of those who are receiving social assistance, particularly when it comes to helping them and encouraging them in the transition into employment.

As the member noted in his question, in November 2010 we named two commissioners, the Honourable Frances Lankin, a former MPP and cabinet minister, along with Dr. Munir Sheikh, academic and former chief statistician of Canada, to look at our social assistance system. The commissioners have received almost 700 written submissions, and their website has received over 47,000 visits. They've had a consultation process that has brought them to 11 communities. They've met with numerous stakeholder groups and engaged with over 2,000 individuals. Mr. Speaker, I know I speak on behalf of the government when I say that we are looking forward to receiving their report very soon and the advice that they're going to provide us.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Premier. Premier, just this spring your Liberal House leader stood before the Greater Kitchener–Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, making excuses why your government couldn't invest in upgrading Highway 7. He claimed the Liberals shelved the Highway 7 expansion in 2010 because they simply didn't have the money to invest in this critical infrastructure project. But let's take a look at what the Liberal government decided to spend taxpayers' money on instead. How about \$750 million on the mess at Ornge, \$2 billion on eHealth, \$190 million on buying Liberal seats in Mississauga and possibly now up to \$1 billion on cancelling the Oakville power plant?

Premier, how can anyone in Kitchener–Waterloo seriously believe you'll actually follow through on building Highway 7 two years after you broke your original promise on this project when you continue to waste billions of dollars on Liberal pet projects and seat-saver programs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm really pleased that he raised the question with respect to Highway 7. What we've done so far: We've protected the 18-kilometre route so that it cannot be used for anything other than building Highway 7. We have committed \$50 million to acquire properties for the new corridor. The property acquisition effort is already under way. That funding was allocated before we knew there would be a by-election, and that government voted against it. The Tories voted against \$50 million for Highway 7. Take that back to your by-election right now. We've entered into a number of agreements with local businesses and property owners, and are continuing to work closely with those impacted by the corridor. We've acquired a maintenance facility

and land on Shirley Avenue in Kitchener, where we will begin stockpiling fill for the Highway 7 construction. We have identified the Highway 7 project as a good candidate for Infrastructure Ontario, and we have been working with P3 Canada to provide some assistance with the funding. That's what we have to say about Highway 7.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Harris: Back to the Premier. Premier, you promised to build Highway 7 in 2007, cancelled it in 2010, and now you've said the project is back on. Yes, there's a by-election happening.

Premier, if I promised my wife I'm going to fix the sink and did nothing for five years, I would imagine somewhere around the three-year mark she would start to get awfully suspicious about that sink ever getting fixed. Nobody in Kitchener-Waterloo believes you'll actually follow through on this project. And you just don't have to take my word for it. In fact, the Kitchener-Waterloo Record recently said, "What we think the public will find unacceptable is that \$190 million in public funds that could have been spent in the public interest was used instead to keep this self-serving, power-hungry party in office."

So I have to ask you, Premier, why should anyone in Kitchener-Waterloo believe you'll build Highway 7?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I can only repeat the facts. I can only repeat the facts that I just repeated. I would add one other factor: It's \$300 million which is going to the Waterloo LRT project. But I do have a Conservative record, a PC record, on Highway 7: 1997, no plan; 1998, no plan; 1999, no plan; 2000, no plan; 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007—all the way through from this government, no plan for Highway 7. We're putting money into it. We've got a deadline when we're going to break ground. You take that back and talk to the people in Kitchener-Waterloo.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would actually seek your attention. I would like to remind the member from Peterborough that I've already singled him out in the name of his riding—

Interjection: Kick him out.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —along with the member from Renfrew.

I usually take this opportunity, when somebody asks me to toss somebody, to tell them that they may be the first.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I was your first.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We are so close. Thank you.

New question.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: A question to the Minister of Education: Parents continue to see their local child care

centres shut their doors. Twenty-four centres have closed in Toronto alone in this past year.

In April, the government agreed, under pressure from the NDP, to provide \$90 million to help keep child care centres open. Why are child care centres still waiting for this money, and why is the government threatening to claw back all the money that's not spent by December 31?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very proud of our government's record when it comes to child care. Since 2003, child care funding has increased from \$532 million to more than \$1 billion—a 90% increase. We stepped in with an investment of \$63.5 million to permanently fill the funding gap when the federal government stepped away. We are providing an additional \$51 million in funding to child care centres, phased in over the next few years. We're also providing \$12 million over five years to help non-profit child care centres renovate.

In this year's budget, we invested more than \$90 million in 2012, \$68 million in 2013 and \$84 million in 2014.

We are working right now with the sector in a big conversation to find a pathway to transition, to modernize the child care system in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: All those claims are no comfort to children and parents facing the closure of their centres.

Minister, the government knew a year ago that it would take municipalities some time to get provincial dollars to child care centres, but the government took its time, and now municipalities are being threatened with losing dollars that aren't spent by December 31.

When will the minister stop these threats, stop putting more child care centres at risk of closure, and promise that every dollar of the \$90 million she just talked about, the \$90-million transition funding, will be spent to help child care centres stay open?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Full-day kindergarten is the most significant transformation in our education system in a generation, and we need to find a way for full-day kindergarten to live compatibly with a modern child care setting.

We have seen investments in the city of Toronto go up by 50%. We will continue to work with our partner municipalities. We will continue to support Ontario families to give their kids the best early learning that we can in this province, and we are recognized around the world for doing that.

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I know how important it is to Ontarians that our government do everything it can to make life easier for seniors. Seniors are among the most vulnerable residents of Ontario, and it's particularly important that we provide care to our seniors in a manner that is accessible and as close to home as possible. Can you please explain to the House what this government is

doing to ensure that seniors are getting the care they need where they need it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member for the question. I'm very proud to talk about how we're making care for seniors a priority in our Ontario health care system.

We're developing a seniors' care strategy which will help older Ontarians stay healthy, live at home longer and get the care they need—the right care at the right time at the right place.

Dr. Samir Sinha is our expert lead in our seniors' care strategy. He's travelling the province. He's asking all Ontarians, but particularly older Ontarians and their caregivers and their providers, for their input on the seniors' care strategy. We will all work together to make sure that our seniors get all the care they need and all the independence that they want.

DEFERRED VOTES

FAMILY CAREGIVER LEAVE ACT (EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT), 2012

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

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

The division bells rang from 1135 to 1140.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ms. Jeffrey has moved second reading of Bill 30, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver leave.

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

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milligan, Rob E.
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Milloy, John
Bartolucci, Rick	Hardeman, Ernie	Moridi, Reza
Bentley, Christopher	Harris, Michael	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoskins, Eric	Naqvi, Yasir
Best, Margaret	Jaczek, Helena	Nicholls, Rick
Bisson, Gilles	Jeffrey, Linda	O'Toole, John
Bradley, James J.	Jones, Sylvia	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Broten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Piruzza, Teresa
Campbell, Sarah	Leal, Jeff	Qaadri, Shafiq
Cansfield, Donna H.	MacCharles, Tracy	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Chiarelli, Bob	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Clark, Steve	Mangat, Amrit	Smith, Todd
Coteau, Michael	Marchese, Rosario	Sousa, Charles
Crack, Grant	Matthews, Deborah	Tabuns, Peter

Damerla, Dipika	McDonell, Jim	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	McGuinty, Dalton	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dickson, Joe	McKenna, Jane	Vanhof, John
DiNovo, Cheri	McMeekin, Ted	Walker, Bill
Duguid, Brad	McNeely, Phil	Wong, Soo
Duncan, Dwight	Meilleur, Madeleine	Yakabuski, John
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Yurek, Jeff
Fedeli, Victor	Miller, Paul	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed will stand one at a time and—I guess that's kind of redundant, isn't it? All those opposed, stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 72; the nays are 0.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Speaker, I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So ordered.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Pickering—Scarborough East.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. I would like to make a very minor correction to my record. In my earlier question to the Minister of Education, I made reference to the opposition party. I meant to say the PC Party. Thank you.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we leave, I'd like to make two comments. The first comment is a compliment. I want to thank everyone for remembering what I asked yesterday, and that is to keep all your comments based on thoughts and ideas as opposed to individuals. I appreciate that today.

The second thing I'd like to mention to you is a reminder that we do not mention individual names in the House and that you cannot do that even at the side way by reading something. I'm asking you to make sure that you continue to refer to each other as either your title or your riding. It helps elevate, instead of go down. Thank you very much.

This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1144 to 1300.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that we have unanimous consent to wear the green ribbon for organ and tissue donation, if that's all right.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland—Quinte West has requested unanimous consent to wear the green ribbon. Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Michael Coteau: Today, I'd like to welcome to our Legislature Sharron Richards, who's chair of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder ONE; Gal Koren, who's from Motherisk Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Clinic at the Hospital for Sick Children and runs an initiative in my riding of Don Valley East; and Linda Waybrant, who's a constituent of mine and a strong advocate for FASD.

I'd like to welcome them all to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of guests?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is my understanding that the ribbons will be made available for all members shortly.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NORTH BUXTON HOMECOMING

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my great pleasure to rise today to recognize a courageous chapter in Canadian history. In Chatham-Kent-Essex, there's a small settlement called North Buxton. North Buxton was founded in 1849 as a refuge for escaped slaves from the United States who were making their way through the Underground Railroad.

At a time when one of the worst human tragedies was occurring just south of the border, many brave Canadians risked their lives to bring African slaves to freedom. Existing as the last stop along the Underground Railroad, many of these slaves settled in North Buxton. Today, many of the residents of North Buxton are descendants from those emancipated slaves.

Just this past Labour Day weekend, the people of North Buxton celebrated their 89th annual homecoming. Organized by the Buxton National Historic Site and Museum, this international homecoming draws former and current North Buxton residents together for a weekend to celebrate their shared heritage and to commemorate the sacrifices their descendants made.

Fun for all families, ranging from barbecues; a grand parade, church services; a "family feud," a slo-pitch tournament done without the feuding; midway rides and just good old catching up with family and friends.

I would like to recognize Shannon Prince, the curator of the Buxton National Historic Site and Museum, her husband Bryan and their committee for all their hard work in keeping the memory of this important chapter of Canadian history alive.

Oh, and by the way, Shannon and Bryan Prince were recognized by Conservative MP Dave Van Kesteren through the awarding of the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Award for their continued hard work and dedication to the community they so love.

I'd like to congratulate the people of North Buxton on their 89th annual homecoming and wish them success in continuing the legacy of their descendants for many years to come.

ARGYLE ART IN THE PARK

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I am so pleased to share with the members of this Legislature the wonderful details of an event which took place in the London-Fanshawe riding on August 25.

Rev. Paul Browning, Rodney Perkins, Tosha Densky and Nancy McSloy went to great lengths to coordinate the first annual Argyle Art in the Park for the Argyle community, local businesses, performers and artists.

Local artists and food vendors were able to set up displays at no cost to themselves to showcase their original works of art and tasty food with the community. In total, there were 35 artists, 12 performers and five local food vendors. Artists and performers as young as 13 years old were showing off their amazing talents.

The event started in the morning and went right through the evening where a movie was played in the park and families were able to pull out their blankets, sit on their lawn chairs and share some family time together.

Mr. Speaker, the goal that day was to bring the community together to appreciate talented artists, cooks and performers in London-Fanshawe, and I have to say we certainly were successful. There was a lot of fun, smiles and laughter all day.

FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER

Mr. Michael Coteau: Each year, on September 9 at 9:09 a.m., countries around the world pause to remember the millions who will never be able to achieve their full potential because of prenatal alcohol exposure.

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, FASD, is a term used to describe the physical, intellectual, behavioural and learning impairments that can occur to individuals whose mothers consume alcohol during pregnancy. Health Canada describes FASD as the most common developmental disability, occurring in about one in 100 births.

Each year approximately 3,000 babies in Canada are born with this entirely preventable disorder, and in Ontario, it's estimated that more than 130,000 children and adults currently live with this lifelong disability. Some who struggle with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder don't get the appropriate support, often drop out of school, have learning disabilities and poor problem-solving skills, have difficulty finding jobs and are more prone to infractions with the criminal justice system. FASD cannot be cured, but it's entirely preventable. FASD has long impacts on individuals suffering from the disorder.

Studies have shown that people who have this condition end up costing loved ones and the system over \$1.3 million in costs throughout their lifetime. We must

do more in this province to work with people with FASD and also support those who work with people who suffer from the condition.

ISAAC BOUCKLEY

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: The Paralympic Games are the second-largest international multi-sport event in the world. This summer, 66 countries will compete in the swimming events at the Paralympic Games in London. This fact makes it the most competitive Paralympic Games in history.

It is my pleasure to rise today and tell everyone about an exceptional young man from the great riding of Northumberland–Quinte West. Mr. Isaac Bouckley is an 18-year-old resident of Port Hope who is a member of the Northumberland Aquatic Club and swims at the Jack Burger Sports Complex in Port Hope.

Mr. Bouckley is spending the end of his summer representing Canada in swimming at the 2012 Paralympic Games in London. Mr. Bouckley had an exceptional year in 2011, winning three individual gold medals at the Central Ontario Secondary School Athletics championships. His impressive swimming performances throughout the year earned him the prestigious recognition of Para-Swimmer of the Year by Swim Ontario.

The rigorous selection process for Paralympic Canadian swimmers was based on the performances at the 2012 Paralympic trials held last March in Montreal. During the trials, Bouckley set a personal best in all of his events and won a silver medal in the 200-metre individual medley and bronze medals in the 100-metre breaststroke and 100-metre freestyle with his exceptional performance results.

I want to congratulate Isaac and wish him all the very best in his return home.

FALL FAIRS

Mr. John Vanthof: Fall is an important time of year for many of the residents of Timiskaming–Cochrane. Gardeners are bringing in the last of their produce and farmers are harvesting the crops, but everyone pauses for a day or an evening to go to the fall fair and have some fun. There are several fall fairs in the riding: Cochrane, Charlton, Matheson, Englehart, Porquis and New Liskeard.

Many of our fairs have reached or are about to reach their 100th anniversary. This coincides with the opening up of our region for agriculture and the discovery of its vast mineral deposits and forests. The fall fair played an important part in the culture of those early communities.

A lot has changed in 100 years. Mining booms have come and gone and have come back. The once mighty forestry sector, while still a vital part of the north, is a shadow of its glory days. The influx of pioneers who travelled on a newly built ONR railway to farm in the Clay Belt has come and gone as well.

Some of their descendants have prospered and built large operations, while other early farms have grown back into brush, but the boom is back in the agricultural areas of the north: new varieties of crops, new technologies and people coming from other areas to invest in the Clay Belt.

Despite the changes, one of the constants has been the local fall fair. Yes, there have been lean years, but the fairs have survived and are flourishing.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the agriculture societies and fall fair boards. Ask anyone who has volunteered on such a committee. It's a lot of work, a lot more than meets the eye: organizing the exhibits and finding judges for the livestock classes or an auctioneer for the cake sale. It all takes time and effort. In New Liskeard, they even have to find sponsors for the car draw.

Fall fairs are an important part of our rural culture, so get some candy floss, enjoy the harvest queen pageant, and be proud to be from a farming town in rural Ontario.

1310

ELECTRONIC WASTE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I rise today to extend my congratulations to the city of Peterborough on its recent recognition by the Ontario Electronic Stewardship, or OES, not only as the only municipality to make the top 10 list of municipalities for total metric tonnes of electronic waste collected, but the city also topped the list of municipalities when it comes to kilograms of electronic waste per household that were diverted from landfill.

From April 2009 to December 2011, residents of the city of Peterborough diverted 32.82 kilograms per household, a total of 1,117.38 tonnes of electronics, from our landfill on Bensfort Road.

Peterborough residents have played a major role in helping the OES collect more than 100,000 tonnes of electronics—more than 16 pounds of e-waste per person in Ontario—in just three years. To put this number in context, imagine 12,222 tractor-trailer loads of unwanted electronics parked end to end from downtown Toronto all the way to Kingston, Ontario.

While hitting this milestone is great news, we still have more work to do. This is why OES is asking all Ontarians to be part of the next 100,000-tonne pledge, a movement to encourage everyone to reuse or recycle their unwanted electronics. I encourage all of my colleagues in this House to visit www.recycleyourelectronics.ca and commit to reduce their e-waste. More than 4,200 Ontarians have already made this pledge.

Mr. Speaker, this is very important for our environment. I ask everybody to get on board.

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller: Recently in this House there has been significant discussion about improving conditions for Ontario's seniors.

In my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, I am pleased to say that in the last year, Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare was able to treat a grand total of 952 cataract cases. Sadly, it appears that Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare will not be given the opportunity to improve on these numbers. I say this because Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare has, to date, received approval to perform surgeries for only 409 cataract cases in 2012-13.

Apparently, the McGuinty government made the decision to decrease the provincial allocation of cataract surgeries by 10% across the province. Yet somehow, this has translated into a 50% reduction in Parry Sound–Muskoka.

I should point out that the decrease in allocation is not in response to lower demand for cataract procedures. In fact, I have received a number of letters from my constituents who have had their surgery cancelled or postponed and are concerned that they will not be able to receive cataract treatment in the upcoming year.

Rural seniors are already forced to travel significant distances to receive care. Reductions in the number of procedures available to patients in a given year will only place a further strain on these individuals in need.

I call on the McGuinty government to treat the residents of Parry Sound–Muskoka fairly. Provide the necessary allocation of cataract surgeries so our residents get the treatment they need in a timely manner.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I rise in the House today to address Overdose Awareness Day. August 31 marked Overdose Awareness Day, which commemorates those who have met with death or permanent injury as a result of drug overdose, and also acknowledges the grief felt by their families and friends.

The abuse of prescription narcotics or painkillers has emerged as a public safety issue around the world. These drugs are being over-prescribed; they are being misused.

This is an issue that the Ontario government is taking concrete steps to tackle. We made a commitment, as part of our narcotics strategy, to develop a narcotics database that would capture all prescription information for these drugs dispensed in Ontario, and we are fulfilling that commitment.

We now have a narcotics monitoring system that has started tracking prescription narcotics and other controlled substances dispensed in Ontario. This new system will save lives.

To support our patients and medical professionals, we're providing more education about the appropriate prescribing, dispensation and use of narcotics. This database will help us monitor the use of drugs like Oxy-Contin and now OxyNEO.

The abuse of prescription narcotics is a crisis that we will not accept. Our overall strategy addresses misuse of prescription narcotics and ensures their safe and appropriate use by patients with medical needs and the professionals who prescribe them.

KEES TIEKSTRA

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a privilege today to recognize a man whose 40-year commitment to families struggling with muscular dystrophy has set a standard of active citizenship we should all aspire to achieve.

Over the weekend, Kees Tiekstra, an 84-year-old retired Athens firefighter, completed his 17th year as coordinator of the MD firefighters' boot drive in Leeds–Grenville. Thanks to the help of firefighters from across my riding who once again gave up part of their long weekend to man roadside toll booths, the boot drive raised \$18,532. That impressive figure will grow much larger, as several departments are still counting their coins.

That's only part of why Tiekstra's story is a great example to anyone who wonders if one person can really make a difference. Sadly, MD Labour Day events haven't been the same, with the illness of Jerry Lewis and the loss of his beloved telethon. It's a sign of the changing times that, two years ago, the call centre in Athens operated by Tiekstra, the only one between Toronto and Montreal still accepting pledges, closed. It would have been easy for Tiekstra to quit then, but he was determined not to hang up on the families that needed him, so for the past two years he single-handedly conducted his own telemarketing blitz while also overseeing the boot drive. I'm proud to say that his personal calls raised an additional \$2,000.

On behalf of everyone in Leeds–Grenville, I want to thank him for his wonderful campaign for muscular dystrophy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all the members for their statements.

PETITIONS

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

“Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure

vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks.”

I'm pleased to affix my signature and send it to the table.

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” of Ottawa “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 the petition and will sign it and send it up with Anna.

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HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Liberal government has demonstrated that it simply does not understand the needs of rural Ontario and has unilaterally decided to prematurely cancel the extremely successful slots-at-racetracks program;

“Whereas the slots-at-racetracks program generates more revenue than all Ontario casinos combined and is the largest contributor to the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.;

“Whereas the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry employs 60,000 Ontarians, including more than 31,000 full-time jobs and is the second-largest employer within the agricultural sector of the Ontario economy;

“Whereas the horse racing and breeding industry contributes \$2 billion into Ontario’s economy, with 80% of that spent in rural communities;

“Whereas the slots-at-racetracks program generates over \$1.1 billion in profits annually to the government of Ontario and another \$345 million that is shared between racetracks, host communities and the horse racing industry;

“Whereas local racetracks spend a considerable portion of their revenue on charitable causes in their community;

“Whereas the loss of the slots-at-racetracks program revenue will force host communities to raise local property taxes by as much as 2% to offset the lost funds;

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

“The government of Ontario must immediately recognize the damage that will be done to businesses, individuals and communities caused by its decision to end the slots and racetrack partnership. It must commit to reverse the decision immediately and commit to negotiating a fair, long-term income-sharing agreement between the OLG, racetracks, host communities and the horse racing industry, to take effect at the end of the current partnership agreement.”

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this petition and I will affix my name to it.

RADIATION SAFETY

Mr. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, I have petitions signed by—I guess there are more than 200 signatures here.

“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 recommenda-

tions 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 this petition. I sign it and pass it on to page Tameem.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Laurie Scott: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents of Ontario want a moratorium on all further industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed; and

“Whereas people in Ontario living within close proximity to industrial wind turbines have reported negative health effects; we need to study the physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of wind turbines; and

“Whereas Ontario’s largest farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until the serious shortcomings can be addressed, and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning; and

“Whereas there have been no third party health and environmental studies done on industrial wind turbines, and the Auditor General confirmed there was no real plan for green energy in Ontario and wind farms were constructed in haste;

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

“That the Liberal government support Huron–Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson’s private member’s motion which calls for a moratorium on all industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed.”

It’s signed by many people from my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

RADIATION SAFETY

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

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

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

“Whereas dental hygienists need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection

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

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

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

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

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 name in full support.

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 Ethan.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

I’m pleased to affix my signature and send it to the table.

INFRASTRUCTURE ROUTIÈRE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Merci, monsieur le Président. Je vais envoyer ça avec Jasper. Merci.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Laurie Scott: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario slots-at-racetracks program has, for over a decade, provided mutual benefit to the province of Ontario and the horse racing industry; and

“Whereas the government has announced the cancellation of the slots-at-racetracks program, jeopardizing the future of the horse racing and breeding industry in Ontario at the cost of thousands of jobs and \$2 billion in economic activity;

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

“That the government of Ontario work with the horse racing industry to reinstate and improve the slots-at-racetracks program with its revenue-sharing agreement to sustain and grow the horse racing industry to the benefit of our communities.”

It’s signed by many people associated with Kawartha Downs.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

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

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

Mr. Bisson moved second reading of the following bill:

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

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, a mere 12 minutes—you cannot even build up a bit of a sweat when it comes to giving a speech in this place, but I'll do my best.

Mr. Speaker, the reason that we raise this as New Democrats—yes, this is a private member's bill in my name, but it's also on behalf of our caucus—is that we find it a bit unfair what's happening in the province today. We all understand that the government has a deficit, and we all agree, as the three political parties, that we need to bring that deficit down to balance by 2017-18. It was a position in all of our platforms in the last election. But what we really object to is that the government is really only looking at one side of the equation when it comes to how they're going to balance the budget. They tend to take a Conservative approach, which is to say austerity is the only way to go. As a New Democrat, as a social democrat, I want to say there are other things that you have to do.

It's not about raising taxes, but it's about creating wealth. If, as a government, we took a position to say, what can we do together in order to build more opportunity in our province for people to invest, for people to start up businesses, to continue businesses or help them grow, those economic activities in whatever sector would create more employment. That new employment would create more taxes for provincial and federal governments to pay for very important services such as health care, education, paving our roads or whatever it might be. At the same time, the wealth that's created by the purchases of those businesses when it comes to services and materials and the taxes they all have to pay would lead to the same.

So we agree with the overall objective of the government, which is to say we are going to move to try to balance the budget by 2017-18. As social democrats, as New Democrats, we have a different approach. We think there has to be a balanced approach. For the Liberals to agree with the Conservatives that the only way that you can do that is by way of austerity—we reject that.

Yes, you need to be prudent about how you spend money. If Andrea Horwath was Premier today, you can bet your bottom dollar it would be about making sure that whatever dollars are spent by the province of Ontario are spent wisely and that we don't increase spending at a time of recession on things that are not necessary. There are things at times that you may have to do, and we understand that—but not to go out on a spending spree, such as we've seen with this government over the past number of years, on things that are well-intended but, quite frankly, could have waited a bit until we balanced

the books; and to be reasonable when it comes to expenditure.

The other thing we're wanting to say by way of this bill is: The government is saying that through austerity is the only way to balance the budget, and the way we can achieve part of the austerity targets is to simply say, "We are not going to bargain with collective agreements. We're not going to worry about the messiness of a thing called democracy where people have the right to sit down with their employers and negotiate a fair settlement; we're just going to impose a wage freeze over a two- or three-year period." We think, yes: Should we be having, as a goal, trying to limit how much money we pay out in raises? Absolutely. As a social democrat, as a New Democrat, I can tell you, if I was bargaining on behalf of the government, I wouldn't be trying to give 2% and 3% increases in this time of difficulty financially; I'd be trying to get as close as I can to a fair, reasonable settlement as close to zero as I can get. In some cases, you might be able to achieve that; in other cases, you might be a little bit over that, but such is democracy. People in Syria, people in Egypt and people around the world have picked up guns in order to be able to have the rights that we have in this province and in this country, to be able to negotiate with your employer and to have a democratic process in the way that you deal with these things, rather than having a government dictate, as they do in some places in the world, what it is that we should all be doing.

We agree with the goal of the government to limit expectations and limit outcomes when it comes to negotiation, but where we part company with the government is, we believe it should be done through negotiation and it shouldn't be done by government fiat, as we're seeing under Bill 118, when it comes to what the government is doing with the educational workers and teachers in the province of Ontario.

We're saying that they forgot something. They were really quick off the mark at picking at the teachers and now saying that their next target is the police, and after that it's going to be the firefighters, and they're going to extend it to the broader public sector. We heard Mr. Hudak this morning repeat what Mr. McGuinty said a week before: "They're next on the list, and that's where we're going to go." I just say that that is rather unfortunate, because again, I believe negotiations are always the best way to go. But they forgot to include a whole bunch of people who are managers and others in the public sector who are not part of a union. Why is it that the only way they can save money is to go after unionized workers? Why? There are a whole bunch of people in Ontario who are non-unionized who work for the government—managers and others—who are excluded from collective agreements.

Interjection: They've already had their 2% freeze.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, it's true that the government has said, "We're going to freeze their increases," but there's a back door by way you get increases, and that's these performance bonuses. The Conservatives, when they were in government, argued—wrongfully so, in my

view—that what you needed to do was to have performance bonuses in order to reward managers who do a good job. You know what? People who go to work for us in the civil service are professionals, and I think what we pay them should be transparent and it should be, “You get X amount of dollars to do a job, and these are the requirements we want,” and if we think that’s worth a certain amount of money, then let’s pay it to them. But let’s be transparent. What we now have in the province of Ontario, since the Conservatives put this in some years ago, is a system of performance bonuses that, on average, pays out 3.5% to managers and others in the broader public sector and in the OPS itself.

Am I arguing that people aren’t worth that? No; that’s not my point. I think they’re probably worth every dime of it, if not more. But why is it fair to allow some to get performance bonus increases—how can you freeze the wages in collective agreements and not do the same when it comes to performance bonuses?

What my bill does, in the name of the New Democratic Party, is say that we want to essentially make sure that we don’t change those agreements that have already been signed, because we don’t believe that you should retroactively change what you signed with somebody, but in the future, what you need to do is make sure that you make clear that there’s going to be a freeze for a period of two years, and everybody will be treated the same.

The government is going to get up and say, “Oh, you’ve excluded a bunch of people who have collective agreements.” Absolutely. Absolutely, we excluded them, because as with a manager, if it’s part of a contract, we need to respect those contracts that were signed. I don’t believe, and Andrea Horwath doesn’t believe, that we should be in the business, by government fiat—or a majority of the House, in this case: the two right-wing parties of Ontario, the Liberals and the Conservatives, coming together and voting to essentially freeze public sector wages rather than trying to negotiate, is the way to go; we believe that it is hard work, and what you need to do is sit down with people and work out how you’re going to achieve those particular targets.

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I’ve got to say that I have some experience. I, like most people here, prior to coming to this Legislature, worked in a unionized environment. I was a negotiator on behalf of the local and eventually with the union, and we had to, in very tough economic times in the 1980s in the mining industry, as a union, negotiate freezes and concessions. And I’ve got to say that wasn’t easy. I remember plenty of times, as a negotiator for the Steelworkers for my local, having to sit down with the employer, and it wasn’t about how much money we were going to get; it was how much we weren’t going to lose.

But there was a recognition on the part of workers that—you know what?—if the boss isn’t making money, if the company is losing money, they can’t pay your wages anymore. So workers rolled up their sleeves, they instructed their bargaining committees to go out and do the best job they could, to try not to take too many

concessions, and we did what we had to do in order to save those jobs. I look at what the Steelworkers did in the forest industry in Hearst, Kapuskasing and others, along with the Canadian energy and paperworkers in Kap, at the Kapuskasing Tembec mill. They took some major concessions to keep those places open.

So to argue, as the government and the Conservatives are arguing, that unions are incapable of negotiating in tough economic times and we have to use government fiat to impose freezes, flies in the face of reality. Unions across this province and across this country understand that if there are tough economic times, it’s going to be a tough time at the bargaining table. But it has to happen at the bargaining table. So, as the workers up at Columbia Forest in Hearst or the workers in Tembec in Kapuskasing or in Cochrane or others that have had to do the same over the years, sometimes you end up taking freezes and you agree to those things, as I did as a steelworker back in the 1980s in the mining sector, when we would agree on wage freezes, and we would wait for the economy to turn. We’d agree to a one-year contract and freeze, and go the next year and freeze again, and eventually, when things turned around and the employer was making money, then we were able to negotiate a 1% or 2% increase. Why can’t we do that with the civil service?

All we’re trying to get at with this particular bill is to say that those people who work inside government services, who are non-unionized, who are getting performance pay bonuses that are 3.5% or 4%—based on those bonuses, it is patently unfair for them to get that and expect everybody else to do the same. So we’re saying that’s the genesis of what this bill is about.

I’m going to have a bit of a chance to get back into it a little bit later. I just wanted to lay that out for the first part of the debate and just say to members, I’m hoping that the Liberals and the Conservatives will support us on this in the sense that I think it is the fair thing to do. We’re recognizing there is an economic challenge in Ontario. The government has got to balance its budget. We, as MPPs, didn’t like freezing our wages. We’ve been frozen for how many years now? Three years? We don’t like it, but we did it. It was our part, and we were glad to do it.

It’s the same thing as anybody else. We shouldn’t be giving backdoor increases to managers and others when the workers themselves have to take those freezes. It would be an unfair thing to do. We see the plethora of examples where people have been working for a particular agency or company, and the CEO is getting huge performance pay bonuses, way beyond the wage an employee would get in a year, as a reward for something. Look at what happened with Mr. Mazza up at Ornge, and we look at others who were given huge bonuses as a result of actions they took as managers, and the workers were treated differently. We’re saying, if we’re in this, we have to be in this together, and that means to say that we all do our part. We don’t abrogate agreements, and we’re not abrogating agreements in this legislation. We’re saying for new ones, when there are new agree-

ments that come into place, that we do this freeze. It allows us to be able, together, to do what has to be done to try to get through these very tough, challenging economic times for the province of Ontario on the way to balance.

I just end on the point that you don't do that just by austerity; you have to do that by wealth creation, and we'll talk about that a little bit later in the debate.

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

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to correct the record from this morning's question period. In answer to a question from the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, I listed a series of years. The years should be corrected to read—and listed as 1995 to 2003.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The member is allowed to correct his own record.

Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to participate in the debate on Bill 118 this afternoon. As you've just heard from the member from Timmins-James Bay, it concerns pay for performance. I think it is maybe worthwhile to go back and look at the history of pay for performance in Ontario.

It's a concept that the Harris government brought in initially back in 1996, I presume based on the idea that people will work more if they have some sort of dollar incentive. In 1996, the most senior managers—the most senior officials in the bureaucracy—went on this system, and in 2001 and 2002, it was extended to all managers in the public service.

It's important to understand—and I freely admit I don't have the numbers right, but I do have the concept right. What was done at the time was, let's assume somebody was making \$100,000. Ninety thousand dollars of that became base pay, and \$10,000, plus or minus a bit, became pay for performance or bonus. So if somebody did an amazing job, they might have ended up with \$105,000. If they did an average job, they would get \$100,000, which is what they got in the first place. If they were not totally on the mark, they might get \$95,000, the point being that the program was actually designed, in the first place, so that virtually everybody who was eligible for a bonus got a bonus. That's important to understand as part of the design of the program.

Now, we would agree that there's a problem here. We agree with the problem that the member for Timmins-James Bay has identified. In fact, the Premier has said that if 98% of the people get a performance pay bonus, it's really just pay. We agree with the member for Timmins-James Bay that the public would like to see something that is much more accountable, much more transparent, because it's kind of a weird system where everybody gets a bonus but it's actually not really a bonus in the way you might think when you first hear of it.

It's been really interesting, as this discussion has come about, to hear the outrage from the Progressive Conservatives, who brought in this scheme. You can only con-

clude from that that either they're suffering from mass amnesia, or perhaps this is all just about crass political opportunism. Choose one. But they designed the system; we need to deal with it.

We've actually, in the last few years, cut the amount paid in bonuses by \$34 million. Premier McGuinty has already asked the Minister of Finance to look at this, to review it to find out how we can in fact make the pay for those managers more transparent. He will be tabling legislation. So we agree with much of the intent of Bill 118. I find the content perplexing, however, when I look at the bill and try to figure it out.

As the member has identified, it is actually easy to understand, although the bill enumerates at great length that it applies to non-unionized workers in the broader public sector; it doesn't apply to unionized workers in the broader public sector, and that's fine. I get that; that's the NDP.

What it does is say that if somebody who is currently eligible for a bonus has a new or renewed contract, when that contract is new or renewed, there can be no further pay for performance, no further bonus. What I find really odd about it is that it's temporary. So the effect of this legislation is to end on January 1, 2015, which means that this would appear to only be a two-year pause in bonuses, and one can only presume that we would go back to the original way of doing things, which doesn't seem like the permanent fix that we're looking for.

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Then we run into a problem, which is that it's to apply to people who are getting a new or renewed contract. The thing is that most people who are managers, other than maybe people who are very senior officials, don't have individual contracts. They just have a job, with terms and conditions of employment; they don't have a contract. The bill goes on to try and fix this by saying that if anything changes, you'd lose the bonus. Something changing would be that you work in this position for, I don't know, 10 years, and your holiday entitlement goes from two weeks to three weeks. Something has changed; therefore, you would lose your bonus.

Remember what I said about the way these bonuses for performance pay work? It's actually built into your presumed pay. Effectively, if you went from the point where you had a two-week holiday entitlement to a three-week holiday entitlement, for example, that's a change in the terms and conditions of your employment. You'd actually lose pay at that point. This is why I find the bill perplexing.

The other thing—and perhaps this is to fix the problem I just identified—is that the bill actually overrides the bills which currently have a freeze on manager pay. The base pay part of it overrides that, so presumably the base pay could go up.

As I say, I agree with the concept; I'm very confused by the bill.

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

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Let me start by suggesting to my colleague from Timmins–James Bay that it would appear that our parties are getting much closer on the issue of controlling government spending than we were this past spring.

I can also tell the member that I share his concerns that the decision by this Liberal government to give bonuses of up to 12% of their annual pay to 98% of all the managers in the civil service sent precisely the wrong message to Ontarians and to all of the one million other workers who are directly or indirectly paid by the province.

We have a serious debt and deficit crisis in Ontario today. We are quite literally compromising the ability of future generations to enjoy the full range of public services which our generation has come to know and enjoy. With a debt interest cost that now exceeds \$10 billion and is growing by \$1 billion a year, we are rapidly losing the ability to fund new technologies, adapt to emergency situations or handle the demands of an aging infrastructure. What is worse is that the debt interest is growing at a rate of \$1 billion per year, putting more and more pressure on the spending on health care, education and other essential services.

I support, in principle, any constraints that are placed on government spending. It is regrettable that there wasn't support from my friends in the NDP and Liberal caucuses for the private member's bill presented and introduced by my colleague Jeff Yurek earlier this year, which would have implemented a two-year wage freeze. That bill would have completely stopped the need for the bill we are debating today. It would also have eliminated the need to single out doctors, the horse racing industry, the teachers and other special groups. Those groups would all have been content with a single, simple wage freeze. But in each case, the government went beyond the freeze and demanded extra concessions while at the same time giving those 12% bonuses to other civil servants.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, I was a high school teacher prior to being elected last fall. Teachers are telling me how disappointed they are that the government has chosen to single them out for the extra cuts. They don't want to lose the gains we've made in education over the last 15 years, but even more, they don't like the inherent unfairness of some civil servants being treated worse than others. Surely the government can accept the principle that the best public policy is equitable treatment of all employees—not bonuses for some and cuts for others.

I believe, as someone who supports the concept of free enterprise, that productivity, not just turning another page in the calendar, should be the criteria that is used to determine pay and benefits, not just within the civil service, but everywhere. Therein lies my only real concern with Bill 118 as it is currently written. For most government employees, there are strictly defined terms of employment. There are expectations of output, and individual employees have limited ability to significantly alter that output. On the other hand, in hospitals, for ex-

ample, it's quite reasonable to assume that not all surgeons are created equal. As they gain experience, it is reasonable to assume that doctors gain the confidence to handle more difficult tasks, or an increased number of procedures, or both. Similarly, in our universities, not every professor is a Stephen Hawking, someone with world renown for their accomplishments and writings.

I would be concerned about a blanket approach that prevents our hospitals and universities, as just two examples, from attracting the brightest and the best of our province. The health care of our constituents and the quality of education of our students should not be limited. In many cases, the hiring may come with a probation period, and a pay scale that anticipates increases over time. I have no problem reconciling that set of circumstances with a wage freeze that prevents blanket increases that have nothing to do with productivity, nothing to do with performance standards, nothing to do with anything other than the calendar flipping over to a new year.

We must adopt far more thoughtful employment strategies that embrace productivity, that reward excellence, that make it clear that the only way to get ahead is to constantly work smarter and harder. We cannot allow mediocrity to be the hallmark of government service.

My time as a teacher convinced me that teachers and other school employees have what it takes to reach higher and higher proficiency and performance goals, not just to help the province return to a sound fiscal footing, but so our students emerge with indisputably the best educational experience anywhere in North America.

I would encourage the member to consider amendments to his bill so that it would cover all civil servants, not just the handful who are excluded from collective agreements. If those amendments were made in committee, I would certainly feel much more inclined to support the bill at third reading.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, I'd just like to start off by saying I don't know how these wages got out of whack. I remember, back in the late 1960s, early 1970s, when I started working in the workforce, that the average CEO, or even the manager in the plant—managers in the plant might have had a 10-to-1 ratio on wages, and the CEO of the whole company would be 20-to-1. If you were making \$20,000 a year at the time, the CEO of the entire corporation was making a little over \$200,000, and maybe the plant manager was \$80,000, something like that, and he'd have 13,000 to 15,000 employees under his jurisdiction.

1400

So what's happened since then to now? I wasn't privy to being in the negotiations at the time, but the governments of the day were, and probably all governments. It's gotten to a point now where it's absolutely out of whack. It's completely unfair. Where does it stop, when does it stop and who is going to have the guts to stand up and do something about it?

We've introduced a bill today that's giving an opportunity to the members of this Legislature to do the right thing and put a halt to these obnoxious wages. They tell people to take cuts and they tell the unions to take concessions. They tell people that they shouldn't be making that kind of money and they should give money back in negotiations with all the companies, yet in this sector, people just keep going up and up and up. I think many bureaucrats in the public sector—and correct me if I'm wrong, Speaker—some of them probably make a lot more than the Premier. So where does it end?

Anyway, this bill before us today is about fairness and transparency. It is simply not fair to ask hard-pressed taxpayers to pay for the hidden bonuses of well-paid public sector managers in these times of high unemployment and declining wages.

How do I explain this to people coming into my riding office, with nowhere to go, with two kids in tow, can't pay their hydro bill—21% of the people in my riding are living below the poverty level—and some of these people are making \$300,000, \$400,000? It's absolutely insane. Where's the fairness? Do these people deserve any less as Ontarians? Do they deserve to have such a division of value? I don't understand it.

Here are some facts, Speaker, that might interest you: 8,700 of 8,900 OPS managers received bonuses in 2011; in other words, 98% of all eligible OPS managers received bonuses last year. With all due respect, I think it's around \$17 billion we're in debt and the whole province is suffering. They're asking teachers to take a hit, they're asking doctors to take a hit, they're asking nurses to take a hit and everybody to take a hit, but there are some people they're leaving out.

Performance bonuses for these managers cost the provincial treasury \$35.6 million in 2011—\$35.6 million in bonuses; what a great province to work in. Performance bonuses and other management bonuses are common throughout the Ontario broader public sector, where the vast majority of managers make more than \$100,000 a year. The Premier of our province makes, I think, \$212,000, with over a \$100-billion budget and, I don't know, countless responsibilities. So how does this add up?

The original intent of performance bonuses was to reward exceptional performance. Well, Speaker, can we say that our society and—we're doing an exceptional performance with a \$17-billion deficit? You can't blame everything on the world market. You can't blame everything on the situation in other countries, on oil. You've got to blame it on management, you've got to blame it on accountability. You've got to fix your own backyard before you can fix somebody else's backyard. Maybe they should start taking a look within themselves and what's going on around them.

The original intent of performance bonuses was to reward exceptional performance. This was clearly not what was happening in the OPS in 2011, where bonuses have obviously become automatic. It's like a drive-through window: "I'll get my 60 grand this year. I think I'll buy a condo in Florida."

I want to be perfectly clear: This bill applies to a lot more than just 8,700 OPS workers and senior managers who received well-publicized—well-publicized, Speaker—bonuses, it applies to the much larger Ontario broader public sector. A rough estimate is that it applies to approximately—Speaker, are you ready for this one?—90,000 managers and will result in about \$200 million in annual savings. This bill is not about tinkering with a broken scheme around the edges, it's about taking the deficit seriously and putting a complete pause on management bonuses throughout the broader public sector.

A couple more specifics about the bill: It applies to all BPS managers whether they have a conventional, time-limited employment contract or not. It, in no way, overrides existing public sector compensation restraint provisions found in other acts. This is a well-thought-out, well-crafted piece of legislation that would bring some fairness to very real challenges presented by a difficult fiscal situation in our province. The question is, is this government really serious about bringing fairness to the deficit fight? I'm not sure. If it is, I look forward to seeing government members vote for this bill. You want restraint? You want accountability? We're giving it to you. All you have to do is say yes. If they're not, and the government just wants to play politics, they'll vote against this bill. We'll find out pretty soon, won't we, Speaker?

I'd like to provide some context to this debate over management bonuses. This government says it plans to introduce a bill sometime in the next few weeks that will fix the broken performance bonus system in this province. Well, Speaker, that bonus system has been in place and broken for every day of the long nine years this government has been in power. So why move quickly now? What's another year or two?

I'll tell you why. It's about politics. It's about the Liberal government trying to get their majority back. You don't want to tick off all your friends. You can tick off some of them and hope the public will turn in your favour, but you don't want to tick off all your buddies and contributors.

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: Well, I've been talking to people all over Ontario, Speaker, and they don't think this government deserves a majority. In fact, they know this government doesn't deserve a majority at all. Look what they did with a majority. Wow, I wouldn't want that track record. If I was a baseball player, I'd be batting pretty low. We saw the eHealth scandal under this majority—

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: But you're not.

Mr. Paul Miller: I am a baseball player, sir. You might want to try sports. It's good.

We saw the Ornge scandal under the majority. They cancelled a power plant, costing Ontario taxpayers \$190 million, in their majority government. They had an eHealth scandal. They have an Ornge scandal. And guess what the next one is going to be? The next one is going to be governmental services. It's coming. The next Ornge is coming. We've got lots of ammo on that one.

What's going on right now, Speaker, is very cynical. And then they say the New Democrats are determined to bring little fairness to things. Hmm. That's interesting. This looks like fairness. This looks like it's good. We're saying—

Hon. James J. Bradley: The social contract.

Mr. Paul Miller: Oh, that's old news. The minister should get with the times. That was 17 years ago. Come on, Mr. Bradley.

They're saying that those who can afford it most, the tens of thousands of broader public sector managers who have \$100,000, \$200,000, \$300,000, even a million or more, should maybe give up their bonuses for just a couple of years. A couple of years? Wow, I could do a lot with some of that stuff.

I'll reiterate for you. You know that woman who walked into my office with two kids in tow and can't pay her hydro bill and can't get on the waiting list for housing? She might have something to say about all this money that's floating around. You know what? Most of the people of Ontario think that what's going on is a crime.

What is it about this Liberal government's desire to gain back power in this province at any cost—at any cost?

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: You know what? I listen to them criticizing and laughing, but the record speaks for itself. You cannot change what happened. You've done it, it's there and the underlying message is this: Tonight, as the message is starting, you'll find out what's going to happen in the election results, and this is the trend that's going. People have had enough. People are sick of being led astray. People want the truth. People want accountability, and this party has always been that way. Name me one scandal on this party, federally or provincially. You can't. But I could go down a list this long on both of them.

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: Both of them. I could go this long on scandals.

So when the people realize who their friend is, who really wants to be accountable and who cares about the working people of this province, they'll be headed toward the NDP.

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: Go ahead. I will share the two minutes left with the member from Timmins–James Bay. Thank you.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate. Let me say at the start that as much as I agree with the spirit and the intent, and I think all three parties do, I think it would be a mistake to support the private member's bill we have before us, simply because it won't accomplish what I think the speaker intends to accomplish, or what I think all three parties are saying they would like to accomplish.

1410

Any organization the size of the Ontario public service, whether it be in the private sector or in the public sector, wants to have a competitive method of compensation, wants to attract fine individuals to work for that organization, wants to reward those individuals that perform well, that go the extra mile. It's not unusual to find pay-for-performance or some sort of a compensation package like pay-for-performance or a bonus system in a private sector organization or in other governmental organizations.

I'd say that our public service in Ontario stacks up very well in comparison with other public sector and private sector organizations when you look at the transformation agenda that's been attempted, when you look at the services that are provided and the value that's obtained from those individuals. But what has happened, I think, is what was probably introduced for the best of reasons by the Conservative Party, but they seem to be sort of wanting to wash their hands of it now for some reason—what has happened is that what was supposed to be a means to reward high achievers has become institutionalized within the organization itself, and the reason for that probably is, it's gone on too long without a review. What I think we need to do is to find a way to continue to recognize those top performers that work in the Ontario public service, to continue to treat individuals in a fair way, but to also continue to attract individuals from other jurisdictions, from the private sector or from the public sector, to the Ontario public sector, but do it in a way that truly reflects the best interests of Ontario taxpayers.

I think all three parties have agreed that the current performance pay system needs an overhaul. The Premier stated that he's instructed the Minister of Finance to develop solutions to this issue and to end the current system, to change the current system. My read on this is that this issue deserves more than the private member's bill that's before us. I'm sure it was put forward with the best intentions, but it appears to be put forward in a very hurried manner. It's had to be amended along the way, and I still don't think that it solves the issue that's before us. There are those that would think it was brought forward for very political reasons that have more to do with Kitchener–Waterloo than they have to do with truly adapting the public service here in the province of Ontario.

What I'm suggesting is that we maintain the spirit that we want to do a review of these services, but let's do it in a way that the Premier and the Minister of Finance can bring forward solutions to this House. Let's have a full debate on those, change the system and reform the system to one that truly reflects the best interests of Ontario taxpayers and treats Ontario's employees in a fair manner.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak to this private member's bill, Bill 118, An Act

respecting performance pay and bonuses for management and excluded employees in the public sector. This private member's bill is designed to eliminate all bonus incentive and performance pay in the broader public sector.

It's my feeling that there is a place for performance pay and incentives if they're managed properly. If the result of that performance pay and incentives are that you get improved public services and if you get savings—I would suggest that you do that by having measurable outcomes—then the result is, for the users of the public services you get an improvement in public services, and for the taxpayers you get a saving in the money spent on getting those services.

I know some of the government members have mentioned that the current system was brought in back under a PC government. I would remind them, however, that they have been the government for nine years. Part of the responsibility of government is managing the public sector, so for them to go on with their eyes shut like they aren't the ones that are running things is a bit—they've been the government for nine years, so they do need to assume some of the responsibility. Under the current system, the way it's being run, we've heard through media reports that 98% of the managers are getting bonuses, so obviously this is not a system that is working, that's going to achieve benefits in terms of improved public sector services, including more efficiencies and saving money for the taxpayers.

What has been proposed by Tim Hudak and the PCs is an across-the-board wage freeze for all public sector employees, including those who receive bonuses. So, to be clear, what Tim Hudak is proposing is that there would be no bonuses or pay increases for a minimum of two years. This would save the taxpayers some \$2 billion a year. We all know that the government is currently spending \$1.9 million an hour more than it's bringing in in revenues, so it's certainly not a sustainable situation.

I must admit that I agree with some of the comments made by the member from Timmins–James Bay, perhaps not the way of getting there, but I thought at first he sounded a bit like a Conservative when he was talking about what we need to do to improve the situation in Ontario. He talked about small business and that we need to improve the economy. We need to grow the economy. We need to create a situation where small businesses can create jobs. I agree with all that. I'd say perhaps we have different ways of getting there but I would suggest that if you talk to just about any small business out there, the first thing they're going to tell you is all the time they spend trying to comply with government regulations instead of going about their business and serving customers, and doing that, creating wealth. So one of the ways we can assist to make our small businesses more productive is to reduce the burden of regulations that they live under.

I also believe that government has a role to play in terms of trying to assist business and assist all those small business people out there instead of just coming in with the hammer all the time and sending government

inspectors around to tell people what they've done wrong. I really believe that government needs to help educate our business people in terms of their many rules out there, but then they need the inspectors to show up at the door, to actually show up and say, "By the way, there are new rules. This is how you can comply and this is how our government is going to assist you to comply with these rules." That would be much more productive and I think it would achieve the goals of both having the rules respected, but also you would get businesses that were doing better and succeeding and growing and creating wealth, as the member from Timmins–James Bay suggested they would.

In closing, I do believe there is a place, properly managed, for some performances, although in the current economic environment our party's recommending no bonuses or payouts or incentive pay for a minimum of the next two years, or any increases to the general public sector.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I recognize that the government still had a little bit of time on the clock, so we'll see what they do.

The reason I wanted to get back into the debate before I get to summation is to be really clear here about where we're trying to go. If the government is saying to us, "Listen, we think there are some changes that could be done at committee in order to be able to deal with this bill, to deal with what the public will say or suggest when it comes to committee," we're open to that. We've always believed and I believe, as a long-standing member here, that debate is all about hearing the other side and then committee is all about hearing others out there, about how we can make the bill that we intend to pass a better bill. If the government has better ideas—or the Conservatives or the public—we are certainly open to allowing those types of amendments to go forward.

The second thing I just want to say is that the basic tenet of this thing is that you can't go around freezing people's wages and allowing a certain class of workers to be able to get those raises. It's not fair that managers and others are able to get raises by the back door, through performance bonuses, and everybody else is asked to freeze. So I'm hoping that we have some agreement on that. I know it was a Conservative idea and it was something that they put in place some years ago, and they will have to come to this decision not lightly, because it will be a reversal of their initial proposal and their policy that they put in place. But I'm hoping that they've seen the way because we do know that along the road to Damascus there is some conversion along the way, and we will welcome the conversion of the Conservatives if they decide to support a good NDP idea.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I just want to remind the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek that there were a number of NDP ministers—when you sat on this

side of the House—who resigned in what I think one could safely describe as scandals. So I don't know when the virginity was restored, but apparently it's some sort of transformative process.

1420

The second thing is this idea that sometimes when you get third party status you get disconnected from reality. I remember how the NDP handled collective bargaining in the public sector. It is legendary in this province, when you opened up collective agreements and eviscerated them. The kind of, I would almost call it, condescension that you're giving this party in government for putting, after five months of negotiations, constraints to meet a fiscal plan—just a little humility, especially as my friend the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure pointed out. If you're trying to get our support, you should, having governed—especially when the Nova Scotia NDP is jacking up the HST, which you argue to cut, and is reducing taxes on the highest-net-worth individuals in Nova Scotia, who are getting a tax break, while you're demanding that we increase it. I just find it inconsistent.

On the education file, my file, where you cut the entire student aid budget in half, we doubled it. You faced similar restraint. We did it. The contradictions are—I don't have time to go through a list of 100. But, you know, maybe Liberals and New Democrats have to compromise in the face of restraint and financial economic difficulties. Maybe we could be kinder to each other when we do it.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: This member shouldn't talk about contradictions, because he's one himself, I'll tell you. He comes from Manitoba, where he was a devout New Democrat, and when the New Democrats wouldn't give him what he wanted, he decided to become a Liberal. That's a whole other issue.

I would just say, again, I welcome support on this bill from all sides of the House. I take it we're going to get some of that, although for different reasons.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Say that out in the hallway.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'll say it anywhere; it's what actually happened.

I just say, I look forward to the support of the House on this particular bill. I just want to repeat that we're looking forward to committee hearings, and if there are some better ideas about how we can get there, New Democrats are always open to good ideas. We don't think one party should monopolize that. We should share in the ideas and making things happen.

Again, it's just patently unfair to ask civil servants to take wage freezes and have them imposed on them when managers are able to get a raise by the back door by way of a performance bonus. I will say that the government refused to allow performance bonuses to go forward for members of the Legislature last spring. I, at that time, argued that you've got to treat everybody the same. You can't treat workers differently depending on where they work if essentially they're all doing the same work.

I look forward to this bill going to committee. I know that there will be some interest in making this bill go forward, and I look forward to its quick passage at second reading and referral to committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much. We'll take the vote later on in regular business.

ORGAN OR TISSUE DONATION
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI A TRAIT AU DON
D'ORGANES OU DE TISSU

Mr. Milligan moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 58, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to organ or tissue donation on death / Projet de loi 58, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui a trait au don d'organes ou de tissu au moment du décès.

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

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me say what a privilege and an honour it is for me to champion such an important piece of legislation, a bill that I think all members in this House will agree is in no way partisan. This isn't education policy, eHealth or Ornge that we're debating here today. Instead, we're talking about literally giving people a chance to improve the quality of their lives—in fact, very often giving them a second chance at life.

Let me quickly describe the contents of the bill. If passed, this bill would require anyone applying for a driver's licence or health card, either new or renewal, to complete a statement that they either will or will not consent to the donation of their organs upon death. The bill would amend the Health Insurance Act and the Highway Traffic Act to achieve this goal. By making this simple change, it would guarantee that virtually every adult Ontarian would be made aware of the benefits of organ donation and afforded an easy opportunity to sign up if they wanted to become a potential donor.

I can think of few opportunities to stand in this chamber and debate a bill which can so profoundly and so rapidly benefit hundreds of Ontarians who are suffering from any number of ailments and whose only chance at a productive, comfortable, extended life will be as a result of the transplantation of a new heart, liver, lungs or any of the eight different organs and tissue.

Spanning every riding in the province, over 1,500 Ontarians are currently on the waiting lists for organ transplants. That number in and of itself is sobering when you consider the suffering, anxiety and fear that the potential recipient and their family and friends must confront while waiting for a phone call that may never come.

While over 22% of adult Ontarians have signed up for organ donations, it isn't enough. On average, one person

on the transplant waiting list dies every three days. Just think of it: Since this bill was first debated on May 15, 2003, 1,133 people have died while waiting for the call that a suitable organ was available for them.

What is particularly depressing is that one single MPP, back in 2003, denied unanimous consent for this bill to pass into law that day. I can't imagine how that member can reconcile his decision to play optics and politics against the staggering loss that has been suffered by over 1,000 Ontario families since that day. I would be surprised if there were a single MPP who does not personally know someone who has either received a transplanted organ or who is waiting for a transplant. Just amongst my small staff of five employees, one has a husband who, one day, is going to need a kidney transplant, while another has had a sister who, 12 years ago, received a heart transplant.

I've met Patti Gilchrist and her children, and it is truly remarkable to hear the story of how she went from being a virtual invalid as a result of a serious cardiac problem to someone who is healthier after the operation than she had ever been previously to that. Hearing Patti describe the details of how the dozens of doctors, nurses, technicians and paramedics undertook the breathtakingly complicated task of removing a damaged failing heart and replacing it with a healthy heart should be enough to convince everyone that we are blessed to have the level of medical expertise and the publicly funded health care system that is available to all Ontarians today.

The sequence of events that led up to Patti's operation actually started with a tragic auto fatality in southwestern Ontario. The death of a young man who had had the vision and compassion to sign an organ donor card started a process that involved police, air and land ambulances and a team of doctors and nurses at the hospital to which he had been admitted. It is truly remarkable to know that barely 12 hours lapsed between his death and the start of Patti's operation.

Nothing can really show the grief that that young man's family must have felt upon learning of his death, but it must have come as some small comfort to know that his compassion and his generosity meant that that death was not in vain. And 12 years later a vibrant young woman continues to be able to spend time with her family and friends, and contribute to her community.

There are thousands of success stories like Patti's, and the success rate for even the most difficult cardiac and lung transplants improves every year. Organ donation is a very real pathway to a more productive, longer, healthier life for transplant recipients, and I cannot imagine how anyone would not want to ensure that every adult is aware of the importance of these medical miracles.

1430

In addition to raising awareness, this bill makes one other change to the current protocols. Doctors and organ donation proponents have given me countless examples of donors being willing to offer up their organs so that others can have a better chance at life, only to have family members overrule that decision after the death of

the potential donor. I understand the pain those family members must feel, but surely each person should be the final arbiter of what does or does not happen to their body after death. I think it is profoundly disrespectful to ignore the generosity of a would-be donor, and this bill makes it very clear that the one and only person who decides on the donation of their organs is the donor himself or herself. Having made his very generous decision to be an organ donor, if anyone else in that young man's surviving family had contradicted his decision, Patti Gilchrist would not, in all likelihood, be alive today.

Nothing in this bill prevents someone from changing their mind as many times as they may wish to do. But at the end of the day, I think we must be guided by the final decision of each and every person himself.

Earlier today, the Speaker was kind enough to permit each MPP to wear a green ribbon symbolizing organ donation and highlighting the work done by the Trillium Gift of Life Network, the organization established over a decade ago to raise awareness of organ donation. Trillium works with hospitals all across the province to ensure that resources are in place to take advantage of potential donations. I know that there are still hospitals where it would be difficult to undertake transplants. But I am confident that with the sage counsel of Trillium and the ever-increasing size of the organ donor population, the Ministry of Health will ensure that no potential donation is wasted due to the lack of proper equipment and resources.

I want to pay a compliment to the Ministry of Health. Earlier this year, on the exact date this bill was first scheduled to be debated, the ministry announced a program to slowly roll out a questionnaire, as this bill proposes, to applicants for driver's licences and health cards. Let me compliment the ministry for the extraordinary coincidence of the timing of that announcement. In a more serious vein, I quite frankly don't care how or by whom the decision was made. Anything that increases organ donation awareness is to be applauded.

I guess, if I had one minor criticism, the ministry has announced that their short-term plan is to roll out the program in only a third of ServiceOntario locations. I've met the staff at several ServiceOntario offices, and I have great faith that they don't need a one-year phase-in period to be able to hand out a simple questionnaire to licence applicants and then process the questionnaires when they are returned.

This bill would ensure that all ServiceOntario offices would be expected to participate, without delay, to ensure that the maximum number of new donors could be attracted in a minimum amount of time. All of us have a chance to become lifesavers. All of us can display our humanity and compassion, and it doesn't cost us one cent or compromise our own quality of life in any way.

There are folks who will not, for a variety of reasons, participate as donors, and I respect their decision. That is why I don't believe we should follow the lead of countries such as Spain and go to what is now known as presumed consent. In such a system, everyone is deemed

to be a potential donor, and it is the doctors, not the deceased, whose judgment decides whether organs are transplanted or not. I fundamentally believe that Bill 58 empowers adult Ontarians to make that important decision for themselves.

Let me close by reminding my colleagues and those watching that signing up as an organ donor is as easy as going to the website, www.beadonor.ca. You can learn more about the organ transplant program, and in barely a minute you can add your name to the almost 2.5 million Ontarians who have made this important decision. I mentioned that 22% of all Ontarians have registered, but there are some communities where the sign-up rate exceeds 50%, proof that we can collectively do better.

This bill hopes to inspire greater awareness, higher participation rates, shorter waiting times for transplants, and a reduction in fatalities amongst those on the transplant list. I commend this bill to all my colleagues, and I look forward to your support when the bill is called for a vote later this afternoon.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm happy to stand here today and talk about Bill 58, the Organ or Tissue Donation Statute Law Amendment Act, 2012. Thank you to the member for bringing that forward. It's a very important concept that we, as citizens of Ontario and Canada, should all be aware of and educated on.

As times are changing, so is medicine and so is science. Part of us making society better is also becoming aware of how we can contribute, in a lot of ways, of course, and this issue is to help someone else.

Donating your organs or tissue, to me, is a subject that's very personal, because you have to make that decision or choice of what you'd like to do upon an untimely situation—a fatality, perhaps—that you may encounter. It's a good opportunity for us to take the time, when we go to get a health card or a driver's licence, to actually think about that question. Whether you answer yes or no, that's a personal choice, and no one is judging anyone for that.

I think we've come a long way in society to the point where we are today. Things do have to come to a point where people become aware of the choices they have. In this case, organ donation—the greatest gift that anyone can give to someone else, in my opinion, is life. That's a lot to ask of someone. If you mark yes or no, again, no one is judging anyone for their personal choice. But if you do choose to do that, I can't imagine the gratitude that the recipient of that gift would feel, and their family, their friends. They are going to be able to live a little longer, perhaps, a healthier life.

Today, in Ontario alone, there are 1,526 people that are waiting for life-saving transplants, and thousands more are on a waiting list for a tissue transplant. If more Ontarians, more Canadians, made that decision at the time to participate in this program, we could help a lot of people.

I certainly would never want to be faced with a disease that was fatal, where I was waiting for an organ trans-

plant. It's an awful position to be in. My aunt in Toronto was waiting for a kidney, and for years and years she suffered terribly and was on dialysis. But she was a fighter. She fought so hard and she continued on. She was put on the list for an organ, and by the grace of God she was able to get a kidney transplant, and she's still with us today. So I know the importance of it, that if you choose to be an organ donor, how much of a difference in someone's life you can make. That impact is insurmountable, and no words can really describe, I'm sure, in the person who receives that, their gratitude for having their life saved and having some quality of life going forward.

1440

This bill is a great opportunity, as I said earlier, to have that conversation: have that conversation amongst friends at the Tim Hortons shop, have that conversation with your children, as a parent, and let them know what your intentions are. It certainly has brought this issue to my attention.

Prior to this—I will be honest—I never bothered thinking about filling out that questionnaire. Now, it has actually heightened this issue for me—to discuss it with my husband last night in the car. We were chatting about it, and different points of view. Some people feel there are religious reasons and cultural reasons, and that's very well respected. But those who would like to have that opportunity to think about it now have that choice. It's a matter of choice and it's an option. It's not something you have to do if you're not comfortable with it. If you, for cultural or religious reasons, don't want to do it, you just check "No." But on the off side of that, it's a great way to think about how you'd like to affect someone's life; maybe what kind of footprint you'd like to leave behind if that's something that you're thinking you want to make a difference for.

I think it's so important that we pay attention and educate, because science and medicine are evolving, and this is just part of that piece for us to move forward and think about how we can help our fellow man.

I do have some statistics with regard to the people that are in Ontario. As of September 2012, for a waiting list, just some stats on here, there are 56 people waiting for a heart transplant; a heart and lung transplant, two people; kidney transplant, 1,093; and the list goes on. There's more. I think it just shows that these statistics—there are people who are in a life-and-death situation, and if someone, out of the goodness or kindness of their heart or just wants to make a difference in the world, can think about being an organ donor, one of those people is going to have a life-saving gift given back to them. Ultimately, there is no other gift more valuable than giving someone the gift of life.

I hope that people will pay attention to this bill and take the time to think about that question and ponder it. It's a very serious question for many of us, and so it should be, but I hope that we pay attention to the goodness that's going to come out of this bill and the quality—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Keep on going, Teresa.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'll keep going—and the quality that you can give someone's life after many years of suffering.

We had a celebration announcement recently about the young woman who came to Queen's Park—it was H el ene Campbell. That puts a face to what we're talking about today. Organ donation for H el ene has made her life so different: She actually has a chance at life. H el ene was 20 years old and she was battling a very serious lung disease. She is actually somebody who's very inspiring because she took her situation in her own hands. Through her going to the media with Justin Bieber and Ellen DeGeneres, she brought awareness and attention to such an important issue. She was a fortunate person on the waiting list: She got her lungs, and she's alive today because of it.

When I'm talking about H el ene I'm actually getting goosebumps on my arms, my hair's standing up, because that's how much it would mean to me if myself or one of my children or someone I knew, or a stranger—it doesn't have to be somebody you know. H el ene was a stranger until we met and heard about her. The impact that it has is insurmountable. You cannot even fathom the difference that one organ, in her case, has made. She can continue on and contribute back to society, and she has done a great job by bringing that to us—an awareness.

I just want to say to everyone: When you are looking at filling out your health card and your driver's licence, take the time to really think about it and talk about it. It's something that we need to evolve over time and make part of what we think about when we look at our health and the scientific evolution that we've come to today in helping our fellow man.

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

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It certainly is a pleasure to rise in support of Bill 58, introduced by the member from Northumberland–Quinte West. I feel it's truly a very well-intentioned bill, and I think it reflects his impatience, which I hope we all share in this chamber, to increase the number of organ and tissue donors.

Again, there is an agency responsible for this sphere of activity, the Trillium Gift of Life. Certainly, since they have introduced their online registration for donations in June 2011, there has been an increase, as our colleague from London–Fanshawe has said, sometimes with celebrity endorsements like H el ene Campbell. There has been some increase of some 37,000 donors registered online.

The member did allude to the ServiceOntario actions, where a pilot project has been introduced to ask people whether, when renewing their health card, they would be interested in being registered. I actually experienced that myself. Of course, I was already registered, but certainly the inquiry was made. That has proven to be successful. So we're seeing the numbers go up, and that is being rolled out. Again, I'm impatient to see that rolling out more rapidly.

When people are going to be renewing their health card, they do receive a brochure now talking about organ donation and answering a lot of questions.

I think in terms of the member's bill, hopefully, if we get more discussion at committee, we need to talk about that kind of educational process also going along with the renewal of the driver's licence. At the moment, you probably recall, you get that sort of—you tear off the sides of a piece of paper. I think that needs to be changed because the educational process is very, very important. People renewing their driver's licence should also get the same type of brochure that they're going to be getting with the health card.

The last thing I'd like to see with the bill, as it is proposed, is that for some reason people are just so focused on getting their driver's licence that they sort of give a reflex “No” to this question, whether they should be an organ donor or not. I think this whole educational piece is extremely important and that that needs to be an awareness that every citizen in Ontario has.

We, in York region, have particularly disappointing statistics related to organ and tissue donation, especially in the southern part. I was just delighted to be with the member for Newmarket–Aurora at the kickoff of the York Region Gift of Life Association. I really want to commend the organizers of this association, Alysia Van Veen, Ivy Higgins and Bruce Cuthbert for doing a great job in terms of raising awareness in our community.

We had a prayer breakfast in Whitchurch-Stouffville. Again, the member for Newmarket–Aurora and myself provided all the staff to assist with immediate online registration. The theme of the prayer breakfast, in fact, was the gift of life, the Gift of 8, as it is expressed, in terms of the eight organs that can be donated. It was an extremely successful event.

We are trying to do as much as we can at the grass-roots. At my own community barbecue I held a couple of weeks ago, we had volunteers from Trillium Gift of Life manning the Be a Donor booth. Again, the volunteers were just wonderful. There was an organ recipient, so that Arlene and Jim Lindsay were there. Heather Higgins was also there, encouraging people to go online and to register and continuing this educational process.

I commend the member. I would like to see this at committee because my constituents are also giving me many other ideas of potential incentives. For living donors, as an example, the opportunity—you have to go through many, many tests, usually at a downtown hospital in Toronto if they're coming from my community. The issue of the amount of pay that they receive in terms of parking fees or mileage and this type of thing is absolutely minimal and doesn't reflect the fact that they're doing something wonderful in volunteering to be a living donor.

I think, if we put all these ideas together, we can come up with increased donation rates, which is, hopefully, the goal of us all.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to rise today to add to this important debate, and also to lend my support to Bill 58, as proposed by the member for Northumberland–Quinte West. I have to say that I think I can speak very confidently that we are going to get some support for Mr. Milligan's bill today, because I think we all recognize that what he's trying to accomplish with the bill is to help save lives. So I want to thank him for doing that.

1450

Before we talk about the bill, I think it's important that we take a look at the Trillium Gift of Life registry itself and to actually look at the need. I can appreciate some members have already quoted some statistics, and I apologize, I'll be doing the same to some degree. But when you look at the numbers, I happen to think it's a bit discouraging, because when you look at the waiting list now—to have a waiting list of over 1,500 people, I can't imagine the anguish of those parents and families of the people who are on that list, that they have to go day after day after day waiting for that precious gift of life to help them on their way.

When you look at the statistics, I was quite surprised to see that there are 57 people on the waiting list for a new heart, almost 1,100 awaiting a kidney transplant and over 200 waiting for a new liver. Now, I know that the 10-year trend shows that it has been decreasing and that the waiting list has been coming down, and I know that's good news. I want to make sure that people know that I'm very much proud of the role that the Trillium Gift of Life is playing. By the way, it was created by a Progressive Conservative government. I think that's very important, that we were the ones that created it, but I also think—and I'm sure we all agree—that 1,500 people is just too long a list and that more work has to be done. So I'm glad the member has brought this forward, because the unfortunate reality is that with the list that long, it's inevitable that there will be hundreds of Ontarians who won't make it to get their transplant, and I think that's tragic.

I believe that the bill that's being promoted by the member for Northumberland–Quinte West is really here and it's really going to make a difference, so I'm excited about the debate and about some of the things that have been said by members so far. The bill will accomplish making the difference by allowing the decision to consent to be a donor upon death to be top of mind when someone applies for a new health card or a new driver's licence, and I think that's extremely important.

Really, that's all we're doing today. We're just asking people to say yes or no, to make that decision. I think it's very important, because the choice remains within the individual. It's going to be up to every person who renews their driver's licence or their health card to ultimately make that decision. I think that just by simply requiring them to do that is going to serve as a reminder to that option. Otherwise, I think we'll continue to struggle with the waiting lists that the Trillium Gift of Life is having, because many people in this busy life, although they think about it, ultimately don't make that decision to sign the card, so I think it's very important.

Some of the surveys that I've seen indicate that while 96% of people say they support organ donation, only 40% ever sign the card. We're missing thousands and thousands of potential donors by not asking the question directly to people, so I think this is the right thing. I think making it a standard part of the process at ServiceOntario when we renew our cards is the right direction, the right point, because I know that we need to do everything we can do as legislators to help Trillium Gift of Life.

Now, I appreciate that the member for London–Fanshawe mentioned Hélène Campbell, and I think it's an amazing story about this young lady who was a double lung transplant recipient, and I can remember, like it was yesterday, her and her mother sitting in the members' gallery, and meeting her and just talking to her. I know that my colleague and friend and neighbour Lisa MacLeod, the member for Nepean–Carleton, has had Hélène involved in a number of events in her riding. She's just a tremendous young lady. As we all know, she made headlines around the world, and as the member opposite and also the member for Oak Ridges–Markham said, she has really engaged not just the celebrity but the nation in raising awareness about organ donation. I think there are a number of passionate advocates like her who have been out there raising awareness, and I'm proud that a couple of summers ago I met another very passionate advocate for organ donation. I want to just mention him as well.

Greg Davis, brother of Olympic gold medal swimmer Victor Davis, whose life ended tragically in a hit-and-run, passed through the city of Brockville on a cycling tour. He was on the cycling tour to tell his story and his brother's story about organ donation. It was great that day, as a member of provincial Parliament, a fairly new member elected earlier that year, 2010, to hear the stories of the recipients of the donated organs and to hear them talk about the grandchildren they got to know and the love they were able to share because they received an organ donation from someone who actually signed the card.

I remember one of those people very vividly that day. Denis Richardson wore a sign that read “6,538 days” to represent the 18 years of life he'd been given after receiving a new heart. Dennis pointed out, when he addressed the crowd that day, “Anyone here is more likely to receive an organ than to give one—all the more reason to give one.” It was a really great day, and I know it resulted in many people who attended that event—because it was widely promoted and held at the Brockville General Hospital—who signed their organ donor card right on the spot.

Still, I wonder how many people who saw that media coverage, who read the stories, saw it on television, looked at that event, made the decision that they wanted to sign the organ donor card and then didn't end up doing that. Lives get busy. We all put things off. That's why I think it's tremendous that we have advocates like Greg Davis and Hélène Campbell who want to move this forward and I think are advocates to get MPPs moving

forward. I know many members will have other powerful stories. I think bills like this will help get that waiting list down. That's certainly a very important thing today.

The gift of life is too important to leave to chance. I want to thank the member for Northumberland–Quinte West for using his private member's ballot spot for this bill. I encourage all members to support him and to support this wonderful cause.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to put on the record that I think this is a step in the right direction but just remind the member that former debates at private members' business have had this issue come up before, and it has come from different perspectives. For example, one of my colleagues proposed on a number of occasions that it be an automatic default, that if you don't check off that you don't want to do a donation of tissue or organs, the default would be that you do. For some that was offensive, and I understand that, but it was one approach to this particular issue. This one here I think is a fair compromise because essentially it says, "You've got to pick one or the other." You either say "yea" or you say "nay."

I would ask the member to respond in his two minutes that he has after, what is the penalty if you don't check it off? Because as I read the legislation—maybe I read it too quickly, but I didn't see if there was any penalty. And what's the intent? If somebody doesn't do that, first of all, how does the ministry find out—and that's the whole bureaucratic thing in itself—and what's the penalty if a person doesn't? Does it make the driver's licence null and void? I don't know. What's the penalty?

I think this is at least a fair compromise, a step in the right direction. Who knows? Unfortunately—and let's hope this is not the case—this may save one of our lives one day. It could be anybody in this province who needs, for whatever reason, an organ, as a result of a disease or as a result of injury, that may be donated by somebody involved in an accident. What better gift to give than the gift of life? If you're going to pass away suddenly and your organs could be given for a transplant of heart or liver or whatever it might be, I think that is something that, if people can bring themselves to do it, is a good gift and it's something that may help somebody live on.

1500

I know these issues could be quite traumatic. I'm dealing with a constituent right now who unfortunately lost her son in a car accident, and there were questions in regard to the pathologists keeping some of the organs and not sending them back with the body for burial. I can tell you that's really traumatic. This woman is really depressed over what has happened with her son, who died some years ago in a car accident, and finding out that not all of the body was sent back for burial. I now have to deal with her on that, and I can tell you that people take these types of issues very seriously, because they're painful. It's about a person's life and how we remember them.

Let's hope that this bill passes; I imagine it will. Let's hope we can get this bill into committee in some way that allows us to find a way to do this so that in fact we can get to the point of the bill, and that is, hopefully to allow for more ability to find organs for people who need them in the case of transplant.

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

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to address the bill in front of us today that was introduced by the member from Northumberland–Quinte West. We do support the idea of organ and tissue donation. I think all three parties support that issue.

The bill has come up at various other times, as the member from Timmins–James Bay just mentioned. I was here for previous debates. I think the intent is good. The problem is awareness. A lot of people, when their loved one dies, especially if it's a family member and if it's a sudden death, are more concerned about—they mourn, and they have to decide, when they make funeral arrangements, usually within a few days after the death, whether to have the body cremated, put in a mausoleum or put underground. It's a very emotional issue.

I know people in my riding who have had sudden deaths, whether it be a car accident or another type of sudden death. They come to me and they're very concerned. They're especially concerned about why it happened. In a car accident, for example, "Why did this person only get so much of a sentence for hitting and killing my son or my daughter?" They're not thinking, "You know what? Something positive can come out of this." An organ, or several organs, can come out of the body and save other lives. I think the key is awareness, to let the public know that it is tragic—a death is tragic, especially a sudden death—but something good can come out of it.

It's also very cultural. Many cultures have a certain way of burying a body, and the last thing they want to do is have the body opened up and have organs removed from that body. It's not only an emotional issue; it's also an ethical or cultural issue. Why take the body apart before it's buried? We don't do that. We didn't do that in our generation and in previous generations. But the world has changed a lot.

The government has done something. ServiceOntario launched an online program for donor registration in June 2011 that is easy to use and secure. People go onto this site and register to donate their organs, or an organ. They can go back online, check their status and maybe add some more organs or remove some organs.

I think this has to be brought to the forefront. There are a lot of tragic deaths—I'm not going to read the stats—of people waiting for an organ. We've had private members' bills on this issue come up before. The numbers have risen since our government decided to go online with this ServiceOntario online organ donor registration service in June 2011. It has gone up, but still—and my time is limited—the key is to get the message across that not all deaths need to be a tragedy.

I'll leave it at that, Mr. Speaker. There's another speaker after me. Thank you.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 58, which is An Act to amend various Acts with respect to organ or tissue donation on death.

As I understand it, this bill would require, if you're applying for a driver's licence or a health card, the applicant to make a decision, either yes or no, with regard to the question of tissue or organ donation. I happen to think that's a very good idea, so I certainly will be supporting this bill.

I believe it's a good idea because in Ontario right now we don't have the greatest participation rates. As I recall, in the general metropolitan Toronto area something like 17% of people have actually signed up for organ donation. We all know that it can make such a huge difference. We've heard some of the stats: One donor can have an effect on eight lives, either saving a life or greatly improving a life. I think this is something that we can just do so much better in the province of Ontario, and it really will make a difference. I'm very much in support of this.

We have seen some changes. It used to be a little harder to sign up. You had to actually get a form faxed to you from the Trillium Gift of Life organization. Now you can actually sign up online. I'd certainly encourage everyone who has computer access to go to beadonor.ca or to trilliumgiftoflife.on.ca, where you can sign up right this moment if you would like to make a difference and become an organ and tissue donor.

I'm very pleased that the member for Northumberland–Quinte West has brought this private member's bill forward. We do, in the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, have some people very much involved in trying to increase organ donation. I have met with constituent Sandra Holdsworth in the last year. In fact, she arranged a friendly competition between MPPs John O'Toole and Frank Klees and myself to—really, just all about trying to raise awareness, getting more people thinking about this issue; not only thinking about it, but deciding that they will in fact make the decision to become a donor. We held a little press conference here at Queen's Park and, as I say, had a friendly competition amongst the three ridings to try to increase the percentage of donors. I'm happy to say that in Parry Sound–Muskoka I believe we're at about twice the metropolitan Toronto average of donors. So that's good. But we can still do better. I'd certainly like to see almost everyone or anyone who can sign up to become a donor.

Thank you to the member for Northumberland–Quinte West for bringing this private member's bill forward.

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to be able to try to contribute something to this excellent discussion this afternoon. The member from Northumberland–Quinte West is certainly advancing something that is possible to

do and would help so many people across this province, and it should not be that difficult.

I'd just like to say that a recent pilot project at a handful of ServiceOntario centres involved asking customers if they wanted to sign up for organ and tissue donations. This was referred to by the member. The program will expand to 91 service centres across Ontario in the coming months and will be rolled out to all remaining locations over the next year.

I went over to speak to the Minister of Transportation on that point, and he certainly showed interest in it. The Minister of Transportation, the former mayor of the city of Ottawa, whom I worked with for three years, would certainly be favourable to getting something moving forward that is more effective. It seems that that recent pilot project is going well, but it will be rolled out to all service centres. That's good news, I think. That's the information that I have.

The other thing that I just want to mention is that everyone is a potential organ and tissue donor regardless of his or her age. That's important for me to get that information out. The oldest Canadian organ donor was over 90 years old, while the oldest tissue donor was 102. So I think it's for all Ontarians to participate.

If we look at the figures, in 2003, 1,036,000 were registered as donors; in 2012, it was 2.4 million. But there are still over three million people who are not donors. I think we have to get to the issue that the member brought up with his Bill 58: that we have to almost confront people. It's not that they don't want to be donors, but the process does not add that little bit of weight to get them to become donors. Private members' bills often don't go very far, but I think, on the all-party support basis that I would see in here, this should be taken forward. I think the Minister of Transportation would be the one to address it to and work with to see if that can't be done as quickly as possible because, as you said, it's not a partisan issue at all. It's an important issue. If we could double the availability of organs for the people of Ontario who are waiting for them, this would be tremendous.

1510

I think your initiative is the right way to go. I'll be supporting it, and I hope all-party support is there for it. The initiative should not be part of a private member's bill. We all know that private members' bills generally do not come forward. This one must come forward in some form, and it may be a form that could be worked out with the Minister of Transportation and get done quickly.

So I thank you for bringing it forward. I look to working with you, if you do need help on this side of the House, to make sure that what you're trying to do here—and, you know, I followed the young lady, Hélène Campbell, in Ottawa as well. We didn't learn her dance, but we certainly saw what she accomplished as one young lady. So, working together and maybe getting her involved, I would like to see this happen as quickly as possible, and thank you for bringing it forward.

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

Mr. Todd Smith: I have just a few seconds here to congratulate my colleague and good friend from Northumberland–Quinte West, Rob Milligan, in bringing this bill forward. He is a big, compassionate, lovable farm boy from Campbellford. I know he cares deeply about his fellow man. He told the story about two people in his small office here at Queen’s Park who have been affected directly. I can tell you that yesterday I had a gentleman from Wellington county who was in my office on another matter who had just had a double lung transplant in the last year. It really is a miracle that we can make these things happen, and it takes a little bit of common sense to make this kind of bill happen so we can have more miracles like the ones we’ve been describing here this afternoon.

So I very much look forward to supporting Mr. Milligan on his private member’s bill today. I get the feeling that most of the Legislature will be supporting Mr. Milligan as well.

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

There being none, the member for Northumberland–Quinte West, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me start by thanking my colleagues from all three parties for their thoughtful comments and their generous support of this important initiative: the member from London–Fanshawe for her kind words; the members from Oak Ridges–Markham, Ottawa–Orléans, Scarborough Southwest, thank you very much; the member from Timmins–James Bay; and, of course, my esteemed colleagues here in opposition, the members from Parry Sound–Muskoka, Leeds–Grenville and Prince Edward–Hastings.

We’ve shown a compassion and concern that I continue to believe underlies the more public display of rivalry and disagreement that tend to be the hallmark of our debates in this chamber. It may be appropriate to have such philosophically driven debates on many political topics, but when it comes to improving the quality of life for all Ontarians, and particularly for those who have found themselves on the organ transplant waiting list, surely there can only be one common resolve. Improving organ donation rates, reducing the waiting time for transplants and lowering the fatality rate amongst those waiting for transplants are precisely the sort of goals I’m sure all of us set for ourselves when we consider the positive contributions we could make in our communities by serving in elected office.

I want to commend the folks at the Trillium Gift of Life Network and organ recipients such as George Marcello for their ongoing efforts to raise awareness, and of course the shining star, the young Héléne Campbell, for hers. Simply, please visit beadonor.ca, and in a minute you can show your compassion and generosity. And who knows? Somewhere else in Ontario, someone may be making a similar gesture which would save the lives of many Ontarians.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Ottawa–Orléans on a point of order.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I just want to correct the record. It’s the Minister of Government Services who would be in charge, not the Minister of Transportation. He was very encouraging that he would be willing to work with us. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The point of order is accepted. The member is allowed to change his own record.

We will take the vote on that particular bill at the end of private members’ business.

RURAL ONTARIO

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government should re-evaluate policies that negatively affect residents of rural and small-town Ontario and are a source of growing frustration in rural communities, which are key to a strong healthy province.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: “The Rural Urban Divide Has Never Been So Clear.” This was the headline in the Ontario Farmer published the day after the last provincial election. The article discussed how rural Ontario had just voted. This debate is not about election results. It’s not about partisanship, and it’s not about individual grievances or entitlements. It is not to diminish the importance of our cities or their challenges; they too are coping with higher taxes, higher hydro bills and fewer jobs. This motion is about a sense among many who live in rural areas, in our towns and villages, and even in our small cities, that our concerns and aspirations are not being heard. This motion is a first step to address the rural-urban divide, which is wide and getting wider. It is the chance to discuss just a few of these issues contributing to that divide.

Some of the issues we hear about most often are:

- the Green Energy Act and wind turbines in particular;

- the government’s decision to end the slots-at-race-tracks program;

- the government’s school transportation procurement policies;

- the unaffordable costs facing rural municipalities in implementing provincial regulations across multiple ministries;

- excess red tape facing small businesses and agriculture;

- skyrocketing hydro costs affecting key industries and key employers in rural Ontario; and

- the government’s refusal to share gas tax revenues with small and rural municipalities.

I hope this motion will allow my colleagues on all sides to contribute their ideas on how we can bridge the rural-urban divide, a goal that we should all share.

Here's a sample of what the media has been saying: "County councillors have called for a public meeting that asks all county residents, plus anyone else from rural Ontario, to discuss what they see as a war against them by urban areas and led by the provincial Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty." That's from the Wellington Advertiser, May 4, 2012.

"The need to bridge the rural-urban divide on wind turbines, a key producer in the province's Green Energy Act, emerged as an overriding issue at the meeting attended by about 200 people from a broad sweep of southwestern Ontario." That's from the Stratford Beacon Herald, March 15, 2012.

Municipal leaders also have expressed concerns. This summer, I met with municipal leaders from Perth-Wellington in Mount Forest, along with the leader of the official opposition. Municipal leaders told us that the province too often imposes unfair and unrealistic financial regulatory or environmental pressures on rural municipalities. The costs of maintaining provincial connecting links and the cost of complying with provincial source water protection laws have been expressed repeatedly. I'm sure other members have also heard these concerns from municipalities they represent.

Municipal leaders in Perth-Wellington have taken a strong interest in this motion today. I'd like to share a few of their comments. I am grateful for their support, including the endorsement of the township of Perth South council. Councillor Dave Turton from the town of Minto wrote to me and said, "You are right on the money when you say our municipalities are challenged with the rural economies and trying to keep the industries we currently have with the high cost of hydro, water and roads."

Councillor Neil Driscoll from the township of Mapleton said, "We in rural Ontario are tired of being the low-cost solution to big-city problems."

People who live in our cities, small and large, are also concerned. Councillor Kerry McManus of the city of Stratford cited "lack of support for rail service and an agenda that will see prime farmland paved."

I also want to share what Councillor John Nater from the municipality of West Perth had to say: "As rural councillors, we are not looking for charity from the provincial government; we are looking for a partner. The current Liberal government seems perfectly content to sit back and watch Ontario's breadbasket struggle in vain."

1520

I can tell you that Councillor Nater is not alone in this view. It is the result, I believe, of many policy decisions that this government has taken over many years.

I want to return to some of the issues I mentioned earlier. Many times we've told this government about the divisions that its Green Energy Act has created in rural Ontario, and so it's just not a matter of rural versus urban. The Green Energy Act also has pitted neighbour against neighbour. Wind turbine proposals are tearing communities apart as never before. Anyone who has attended public meetings on these proposals will know all about that.

Councillor Andy Knetsch from the township of Mapleton had this to say about the Green Energy Act: "Basically, I have difficulty with the province telling us, the local citizens, what is good for us via the creation of legislation and, thus, tying our collective hands."

By forcing municipalities to accept industrial wind farms, even when there is an overwhelming local opposition, the province is telling rural Ontario that its views don't matter. But then the Premier adds insult to injury. He dismisses concerns of rural Ontario as NIMBYism. He says he won't tolerate NIMBYism. But of course he does tolerate it, but he wastes \$190 million, so far, to cancel a power plant during an election, a plant that his own government put in Mississauga, and he cancels another plant in Oakville, wasting hundreds of millions more dollars. That isn't just another example of unconscionable waste. There have been many, many of those. It's an example of a government with one standard for urban Ontario and quite another for rural Ontario.

But rural Ontario is taking notice. It's not just the big examples of waste and mismanagement that rankle us; it's about the little things. It's about a government official in Toronto who, no matter what the issue, always seems to know better than municipal staff. It's about agencies like MPAC, for example, which seems quick to produce glowing reports on improved service but slow to respond to municipal concerns about delayed assessments, lost revenue and homeowners facing massive catch-up tax bills.

It's also about the permit denied for reasons no one can understand. It's about the general lack of understanding about the importance of agriculture, not just to our rural economies but also to the entire provincial economy. It's about a government that doesn't understand and doesn't appear to care about the importance of the equine industry to our rural economies. If it did, it would not have cancelled the slots-at-racetracks program, and it would not have done so with no consultation whatsoever from rural communities or the industry, and without so much as a credible economic analysis.

Councillor Mike Tam from the municipality of West Perth tells us how important this industry really is: "I am passionate about horse racing. Dalton and Dwight should go to Clinton on a Sunday and watch the hundreds of trucks and trailers roll into town in need of food and fuel."

In May, I attended a public meeting organized by the county of Wellington to discuss the future of the industry. About 200 people attended. They shared personal stories about how the loss of the industry would affect them. With frustration and bitter disappointment, they called out this government for its lack of understanding of rural Ontario. They were outraged that the government would kill the horse racing industry, seemingly to support its intention to build large casinos in urban centres. Many see their own province waging a war against them. It's no wonder that we have a divide.

It's about overregulation. The Endangered Species Act, for example, is set up to protect animals, a worthy

goal no doubt, but in the process it can be a hardship for farmers by requiring them to set aside land that the government is taking away from their income. Farmers tell me simply, “If you want to use my farm as parkland, you’d better pay admission.”

In fact, farmers have made huge strides to become more efficient and even more environmentally responsible. They’re using more and more better technologies like GPS systems to avoid overspraying their crops. Many farmers are experimenting with biogas and other forms of clean energy, and in most cases, they are doing these things on their own, without government mandates.

Our municipalities are also taking leadership. The county of Wellington’s Green Legacy tree planting program is a perfect example. Trees for Mapleton, a partnership among local governments and community organizations to help farmers adapt to climate change, is another, and there are many more examples from Perth county as well, all of which is to say that there is hope.

While there are still many challenges and many threats to our rural economies, there is reason for hope. Our communities are still strong. I believe they will withstand the challenges of today. Ultimately, they will survive and thrive, but that takes work. It requires all of us to listen, acknowledge areas where the government must do better, and do what we can to put rural Ontario on a sustainable footing.

I’m grateful for the advice of Rob Hannam and Rob Black from the Rural Ontario Institute. They wrote to ask policy-makers, politicians and government staff to apply a rural lens on policy options being considered. They credit the government for, on occasion, recognizing the need for a different approach in rural areas on programming across many ministries, but they say we need to discuss the adequacy and scope of their implementation.

Different parties may not always agree on all issues, but we don’t have to agree in order to support my motion today. By supporting this motion, we are simply affirming the words posted on the website of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs that strong rural communities are key to a strong, healthy province, and we acknowledge that the government should re-evaluate policies that may be causing angst and frustration in rural communities. Make no mistake, there’s plenty of that.

One of my constituents said it best: Rural Ontario desperately needs your help now. We are being broadsided by freight trains at every turn. Surely we can agree that the growing divide between urban and rural Ontario is not healthy. Surely we can agree that to bridge that divide, to move forward as one province, we need our entire province—rural, urban, north and south—to be successful. I ask all members for their support of this motion.

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

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I’m pleased to join the debate on this motion put forward by the member from Perth-Wellington.

This is a very important discussion, because it’s one of the biggest challenges that face rural and northern

Ontario. The greatest problem in policy is that it’s made, by and large, by people who live in Toronto or in the GTA who really have no concept of how large Ontario is or really how diverse it is. They don’t even realize, for instance, that there are two time zones. My riding is entirely in the central time zone.

For those of us living outside the GTA, we know that a one-size-fits-all approach doesn’t work. There seems to be a belief that if a system works in Toronto or Mississauga, it should work across the rest of the province. There is a lack of realization that some of these policies just aren’t feasible in rural areas. I’m going to give you a couple of examples. I’m going to try to be quick, because I want to share my time with my colleague and seatmate from Temiskaming-Cochrane.

For instance, health care delivery is different because of the vast geography, and the rules that are in place simply don’t translate in the north. Rural health centres can’t compete, because the fee structure is very different, yet patients need access, because the closest large hospital is sometimes hours away. Municipalities are cash-strapped and are paying for land ambulance costs, because their coverage area is thousands of kilometres with limited resources. It just doesn’t work in the north. I know that in some areas of the province private companies are able to step in. It’s just not profitable in northern Ontario, at least in northwestern Ontario.

Access to essential government services is blocked because the government doesn’t realize the problems it creates when every town does not have access to essentials like ID cards, health cards or other ID. I’ve had a steady stream of people come into my office who aren’t able to get jobs because they aren’t able to access these ID services.

Programs like the mandatory vehicle branding program have no way of adapting to northern realities. The entire riding of Kenora-Rainy River, which is the largest riding in the province, has a total of zero service centres offering this service because it’s too costly and there’s too much liability, meaning that if people are coming from out west and they want to set up in northwestern Ontario, they have to find a way to illegally get their vehicle to Thunder Bay, some 400 kilometres away. That’s a huge gap.

1530

Even programs like Ontario Works and ODSP: Their intake is limited because they require in-person interviews, requiring someone who lives in my riding, in Ignace, to travel all the way to Thunder Bay to do an in-person intake. Again, it’s not feasible for people who just don’t have the resources to make that trek—and with bus service being limited. Injured workers, for example, are expected to travel to Toronto to be reassessed by WSIB. Even recent legislation like the anti-bullying bill does look good on paper, but in practice it’s very problematic. What happens to a person who lives in Ignace, a child who is guilty of bullying? Do we condemn them to a life of no education because the nearest school is over 100 kilometres away?

School boards are being told to amalgamate to save money, despite geographic regions that are big enough that 10 or even 20 different southern school boards could fit in some of these large, rural, northern school boards. There's just no realization of these challenges.

I wanted to close by talking about Nova Scotia. They've been trying to experiment with a novel idea: moving departments and ministries outside of main urban centres to ensure that they have a fuller view of the needs of the province. This isn't a bad idea, and one that we should maybe consider in Ontario. Why not expand some of the ministries that are provided out of Thunder Bay, for instance?

This motion is very important, but it's also important that we create permanent structures to review legislation for some of the shortcomings I have raised. This motion doesn't go far enough. It identifies that we need to re-evaluate, but how?

I respectfully suggest that we enact the motion that my seatmate here, the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, brought forward to create a northern committee. Maybe we should take that model and we should create a rural committee, or something to that effect, where we as legislators can have greater control over the legislation that comes forward—existing legislation. I think things should work a little better and how the people of this province expect them to work.

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

Mr. Grant Crack: It's also a pleasure for me to be able to speak to this, as a rural member in the Liberal Party as well.

The way I see it, this is just another wedge issue by the Conservatives that they've put forward to create this image that the Liberal Party does not understand rural Ontario. On the contrary: We create policies for all of Ontario, whether it has to do with health care, infrastructure or education. We create these policies, and we know that at the end of the day, they're in the best interests of Ontarians in the long run.

I was very fortunate because I was able to serve as a mayor for 11 years. So I completely understand the relationship between rural Ontario and the provincial government. I was elected at 31 years old, unlike my colleague from Leeds–Grenville, who was much younger. I had the opportunity to serve during the Harris years as well as through the McGuinty years, and I can tell you that the most friendly government of the two was the Liberal government that I'm currently a proud member of.

It's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, because they're talking about this divide between rural Ontario and urban Ontario, yet all the members of the PC caucus stood up and voted against Bill 11, the Attracting Investment and Creating Jobs Act. That is sad, because every mayor in eastern Ontario and every mayor in southwestern Ontario wanted this—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We've been going along pretty good. I think all of you are en-

titled to your diverse opinions, but I'd like to have some peace in the chamber.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speaker, I think the member has a point, though.

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: And he's going to repeat it.

Mr. Grant Crack: What was the point?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Southwestern Ontario and eastern Ontario.

Mr. Grant Crack: We put forward a bill that builds on the eastern Ontario development fund to help southwestern Ontario. In Kitchener–Waterloo, for example, the whole area was wanting this bill. In eastern Ontario, the mayors and the wardens are upset with the members of the opposition for voting against this. They don't want to create jobs. They claim they want to create jobs in the province of Ontario, but they don't have the policies to do it.

Let me tell you about some of the good work that the Liberal government did in my riding while I was a mayor. We saw numerous school upgrades, and new schools in Rockland, Navan, Casselman and Vankleek Hill. We've seen expansions at Glengarry Memorial Hospital. There's a new \$100-million expansion at Hawkesbury General Hospital coming forward. We've seen community health centres in Bourget. These are all rural areas. We've partnered with our mayors and we've partnered with our councils to help them improve their local infrastructure, whether it's water, sewer systems, waste water. We work with them on their roads and their bridges. We've invested billions of dollars as a government. They're in very, very difficult economic times.

I can stand here very, very proud and say that we continually evaluate our policies and our programs and we're always trying to find, in the best interests of Ontarians, what is going to work and what is not going to work. I would hope that the members opposite would realize that tomorrow.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to speak in support of this excellent motion by the member for Perth–Wellington. I really hope that the members of the government pay attention to this motion because I think it really speaks to the heart of why the Liberals were almost shut out of rural Ontario during the last election. As we all know, the McGuinty government lost seven incumbents in those rural seats, but I'm not sure that they've learned their lesson yet. It's not so much that the government isn't working with rural and small-town Ontario to create jobs and grow the economy; policies like the Green Energy Act, the school bus RFP process and the attack on the horse racing industry show that the government is actively working against rural Ontarians.

Speaker, I want to use my time to provide just a couple of examples in my riding of Leeds–Grenville. For years, the government has talked about improving a deadly stretch of Highway 15 just east of Seeleys Bay.

This summer, we were shocked when plans to create a pair of passing lanes along the highway were scaled back. Instead, MTO announced that they were just going to do some paving. Do you know the reason? MTO claimed that the Endangered Species Act made the work impossible because it might impact on grey rat snake habitat. MTO is actually determined to put public safety on the back seat in regard to the protection of snakes. From what I've seen of the plan, the only endangered species are going to be motorists along Highway 15. So that's one example.

The second example: Over in the village of Toledo, the great people who operate Legion Branch 475 are burdened with the high cost of monthly water testing imposed by the Safe Drinking Water Act. Somehow they've been labeled a high-risk location even though every water test ever done at that Legion's location and, for that matter, any other well in the village in the past decade has come back spotless—every single one over 10 years. When they ask the local officials if there was some flexibility in the legislation because of their perfect test record, they're met with a shrug and told, "Sorry; there's no flexibility in the legislation."

Finally, we have the source water protection regulations threatening to make the village of Mallorytown a no-go zone for future development. Real estate agents are actually refusing to list homes in the village. Restrictions are being forced on homes and businesses because Miller Manor, a social housing unit in the village, is municipally owned. If you or I owned it, Speaker, the rules wouldn't apply. Same building, same residence, same well, but no regulations, because private ownership is different.

The bureaucrats trying to force this craziness on village residents wonder why they're met with howls of outrage. They actually think that if they can just manage the message better, all will be well. What the McGuinty government doesn't understand is, the problem is what they're saying, not how they're saying it. When your message makes no sense and undermines rural Ontarians—whose hard work, I might add, built this province—it doesn't matter how you try to sell it because nobody is buying it.

I hope that everyone will support this member's motion. It makes sense. Let's stand up for rural Ontario.

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

1540

Mr. John Vanthof: It's a pleasure for me to stand and speak to this motion. I agree with almost everything Mr. Pettapiece said. There is a rural-urban divide. One thing I've learned since I've come to this House—I thought it was just the northern-urban divide. The issues are different, but the underlying case is the same.

There have been some good examples given, but I'll give another one. There are a lot of schools closing in my area, and the mayors are trying to save the schools. Because when you have a town that's an hour away from any other town, the school is very important. The school board is doing what it can, but there's no budget line for

helping the community. So in ridings like mine you're soon going to have little kids—you know, kindergarten—who have to be bussed an hour or an hour and a half. It's things like that that everyone knows are problems. When you talk to the people involved, everyone knows it's a problem, but there seems to be no way of solving the problem.

I think if there's one thing this motion is missing—I'm hearing lots of, "Yes, there are huge problems," but I'm not hearing any way of solving them. In our area, some of the ones that are real killers are the Far North Act and the Endangered Species Act. But you know what? Just ripping and tearing and scrapping them isn't going to solve the problem. We don't want to go back. In northern Ontario, we don't want to go back to no planning process. We want to have a planning process, but we want to be involved in the planning process. That's the problem.

It's the same with ONTC. You know what? Everyone realizes that hard decisions have to be made. But it shouldn't have been up to a few bureaucrats somewhere else to make those hard decisions. Northerners should have had a seat at the table before the decisions were made. It's the same with rural Ontario. We need a seat at the table. What's not working here?

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: I hear someone from across the room and people from this side heckling.

There are so few rural members compared to urban, because it's representation by population, that we need a way for rural members to talk and make amendments together. When I talk to members across the way and when I talk to members on this side, do you know what? We disagree on some things, but a lot of our basic thought processes are the same.

One thing I find that this government is doing is not taking into account the skill set of rural Ontarians. Look at the OLG horse racing thing. People say, "Well, there are so many." But there are 30,000 people for sure who have a unique skill set. It's not being used. It's just being discarded. People on every side of the House have ideas on how that skill set could be used, and those people don't deserve to hear heckles across the way. Those people, and not just these people, deserve to hear opposing views, but they need to hear a serious debate on their issues.

My colleague from Kenora—Rainy River mentioned the northern committee. I truly believe that something like a rural committee with people from all parties who could put amendments toward legislation proposed by the government and that those amendments would have to be debated—they might not win, but at least you would have to debate rural issues. Right now they're not truly being debated because, quite frankly, it's representation by population. And something the PCs are going to have to do, if they want to form a government, is get more city votes.

Mr. Paul Miller: You better be nice to us.

Mr. John Vanthof: But it's true. To win an election, you need representation by population. Somewhere we need to find a different vehicle to solve problems that affect people who aren't in populated areas, and that's a big issue. It's because of representation by population. That issue isn't going away, folks. Northerners have felt it for a long, long time.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: City slickers don't get it.

Mr. John Vanthof: I don't believe that the urban people in Toronto—this is the first time I've ever lived in Toronto. I don't believe that the average person on the street is out to get the country guy. They just don't understand, and there's no vehicle. And quite frankly, we're not helping by yelling across the aisles. We have to find a better way to do it.

Our party supports this motion, but quite frankly, I don't think it goes far enough because it doesn't propose a solution. The people in northern Ontario who are up to here with what they feel is a blasé government that really doesn't care, and I think the people—from what I understand from my colleagues to the right here—in rural southern Ontario are about at the same level.

We've got to get together. And you know what? No one buys it. No one buys that everything's fine out in the country. I agree with that. But we have to find a solution. If someone has got a better solution than doing a committee but, for northern Ontario, we strongly believe—that's why we proposed it—that a northern committee, made up of all parties, including cabinet ministers who could make amendments to legislation, which would then be debated in the House with no veto power but at least with legislative debating power, that would make a big difference for northern Ontario, and we truly believe that it would make a huge difference for southern Ontario, for rural Ontario.

We'll give you a warning. You're going to get into a big argument about where southern Ontario is, where rural Ontario is, because we're having that now. Everybody wants to be in northern Ontario right now.

In closing, this is the first step; it's identifying part of the problem, but it's not identifying a solution. Long-term, in this House, we're going to have to find a solution because there are people in my riding who have given up on government totally, and we're not helping with this. So, something like this, along with a rural committee would be a big step.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: I was somewhat reluctant to speak on this motion this afternoon, but I think it's important that we get some words on the record.

First of all, I represent the wonderful riding of Peterborough, a community where I was born and raised. Some 40% of the riding of Peterborough is rural. Five municipalities in Peterborough county are in my riding, and I'm so pleased to have wonderful relationships with those five rural municipalities.

It's interesting, as we debate this—I want to roll back the clock to 1998. It was the AMO convention of 1998.

The then Premier of the province of Ontario, the Honourable Michael D. Harris, spoke at AMO. On that particular day, he went into the big ballroom to talk about the exchange of municipalities in terms of responsibilities in the province of Ontario, and he said—because I was at the back of the room, a city councillor at that time from the city of Peterborough—“Ladies and gentlemen, I'm announcing a rearrangement of responsibilities of the province of Ontario, and I can assure you that this is going to be revenue-neutral through the Who Does What committee.”

Let me tell you, that exercise was the “who got done in” committee, and who got done in were the rural municipalities in the province of Ontario, Mr. Speaker, and that is a fact. Rural municipalities got done in.

Let me tell you, 43% of the roads in the province of Ontario got downloaded in eastern Ontario and saddled those rural municipalities with expenses that they never had a chance to do that. That's a fact.

The other thing that would happen: Mr. Harris reduced the number of seats in the province of Ontario from 130 seats to 107. Who paid the price with that seat reduction? Rural Ontario. Rural Ontario lost seats through that particular exercise. I think it's time that we set the record straight.

But let me look at what we've been doing. When it comes to the risk management program in the province of Ontario—

Mr. Paul Miller: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to do a point of order on the fact that the member from Peterborough was wandering a little bit from the motion that we're talking about, and I would ask that he keep it within the confines of the motion and not go on a verbal attack of the opposition parties.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'm listening carefully to the member and—

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, with respect, the clock was at six minutes and 30 seconds when—

Interjection: Sit down, Ted.

1550

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I've obviously touched a nerve with my friends opposite over here.

Interjection: Is he defending Mike Harris?

Mr. Jeff Leal: They're defending—well, let me tell you what we've done.

In the riding of Perth–Wellington, we've made some strategic investments. I want to talk about the Happy Valley Health Team: hired eight doctors, hired six health care professionals, provided care for 9,778 patients and 2,227 unattached patients.

Let's keep going. Stratford Family Health Team: hired 14 doctors, hired 12 health care professionals, provided care for 24,000 patients—

Mr. Bill Walker: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order.

Mr. Bill Walker: Speaker, with all due respect, I'd like to stick to the motion on the floor, the bill that we're talking about. It's the urban-rural divide. We're not talking about health care clinics; we're not talking about their spending. We're talking about the bill that's on the table.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I hear you and I'm listening to the member.

The member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, these folks don't want to hear about good news in rural Ontario. I'm going to keep delivering good news.

Let's go to the Mapleton-Minto Wellington Family Health Team: hired eight doctors, hired 11 health care professionals, provided care for 12,120 people, added 3,394 unattached patients to provide better health care for rural Ontario.

The Mount Forest Family Health Team: hired eight doctors, hired nine health care professionals, provided care for 8,632 patients and another 577 unattached patients.

If we're going to have a balanced debate in this House, let's talk about all the positive things we're doing in rural Ontario.

Let me tell you about the risk management program for cattle. The risk management program for cattle was invented right in the county of Peterborough. It was cattle farmers from Peterborough that put the model on the table that was approved by this government because we were listening to rural Ontario when it came to the risk management program.

I could go on and on and on—not to say that from time to time we shouldn't look at policies. We should look at policies to see if they are meeting their key benchmarks and their key targets. I think that's very important. In this motion that the member has referred to, I think there's a nugget of positive initiative there. The fact is, from time to time you take a look at policies.

Look, the Canada pension plan was brought in in 1965. I think now there's a consensus throughout Canada that it's time to look at the CPP again. That's the kind of thing, the positive element, that's in this member's motion. But let me tell you, he missed out all the positive things we're doing in rural Ontario. I just wanted to set the record straight this afternoon.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I will strive to lower the temperature in this room since my colleague from Peterborough had an overdose, I think, of ice cream.

It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of this motion tabled by my colleague from Perth-Wellington. I'm proud to say that I'm from one of Ontario's leading rural communities. My riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex is home to some of the most fertile agricultural land in the province, yet for nine long years—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Mr. Rick Nicholls:—this government has taken rural regions of Ontario for granted, especially regions from my area such as Chatham-Kent, Leamington, Blenheim, Ridgeway, Wheatley and Tilbury—one massive dis-appointment and oversight after another at the expense of any voter that doesn't reside in the 905 or 416 area code.

The worst of these slights against Ontario's rural municipalities, in my mind, was the Green Energy Act and the stripping away of local decision-making powers over new local energy projects. Simply put, the McGuinty government legislated themselves the power to plant an industrial wind turbine wherever they pleased in rural Ontario.

And I know something about industrial wind turbines because I happen to come from the one municipality in the province that boasts the highest density of industrial wind turbines. Look at any spot on the horizon and you'll see them. The vision is especially eerie at nighttime when the red glow is across the fields.

Chatham-Kent currently hosts around 300 wind turbines across the region, and another 124 are slated to go up by 2014. That would mean nearly 500 wind turbines were planted within my riding while local authorities were powerless to share the thoughts and concerns of families in these communities. Instead, they turned to their local elected officials to have their voices heard. I know my colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has heard just as powerful a response as I.

The simple truth of the matter is this: Many moms and dads in rural Ontario feel that the McGuinty wind turbine experience needs another look. First of all, they are expensive. As our energy critic has rightly pointed out numerous times, Ontario hydro bills are set to skyrocket in upcoming years thanks to these expensive energy experiments.

Next, a number of families have approached me with concerns about the effects that these wind turbines may have on human health, a concern so under-recognized by the McGuinty government that the federal health minister has now had to step in and conduct a health survey as a way of getting the conversation started.

It seems that when the Premier sought to eliminate local decision-making with the Green Energy Act, he was also quietly seeking to shut out the voices of regular citizens as well. Only in rural Ontario was this happening, mind you. When the member from Scarborough Centre was threatened with the loss of his seat thanks to an offshore wind farm, why, you've never seen a government do such an abrupt about-face on one of their key issues. I was reminded of the member from Scarborough Southwest, who put forward a private member's bill concerning the welfare of elephants in city zoos. Yet that member stands with a Liberal government that has essentially legislated the deaths of 13,000 horses in rural Ontario with the closing of the slots partnership.

What are Ontarians supposed to take from this? Simply this: The needs and concerns of urban Ontarians are simply more immediate and pressing to this government, and policies affecting rural communities don't often warrant a critical look.

I remember I was asking a small child that lived in the city, "Where do milk, eggs and prime rib come from?" His answer was, "The grocery store." Could it be that this Liberal government is getting further and further out of touch with rural Ontarians? Wake up, my friends, before it's too late. Oh, by the way, the answer to my question is actually, "Holsteins, chickens, and Hereford cattle."

I'm proud to stand with this member from Perth-Wellington in calling for more care and attention when it comes to legislating rural Ontario. Ontario's agricultural communities in particular, like the one I hail from, are the backbone of our province's natural bounty. They deserve better than the treatment they have received from this Premier.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to applaud and support my colleague from Perth-Wellington, Randy Pettapiece, for bringing up something that really is a true thing that we should be talking about in this House.

I have concern, though, that the Liberal government is purposely creating a divide and is governing with a one-size-fits-all, all based on the populace of the GTA. It's no wonder that my predecessor, Bill Murdoch, continually went to the paper and the media and said, "You know what? The GTA should become its own province, and the rest of us will govern on our own, because we get it."

It's very similar to a lot of the things we talk about in this House, where they try to divide and conquer. They talk about, "We want to be partners and we want to collaborate," but every time they turn around, they take divisive policies.

Take the Aggregate Resources Act. Where do they think the gravel comes from for the concrete skyscrapers that they want to build in the great city of Toronto?

They talk about the Green Energy Act. What about local democracy, taking that ability from our local communities to have a say in where those wind turbines go? I'll guarantee you that, if we came down here from northern and rural Ontario and said that we want to plunk 2,000 of them in the downtown core of the GTA, that would be scrapped tomorrow, with no discussion, but they don't give us that same right.

The horse racing industry: I would love to know where the member from Peterborough is today. Are you for the horses or against the horses? We can't divide; we need to ensure that we're talking amongst ourselves for the way we're going to move forward as a great province.

The member from Peterborough talked way back into the 1980s. He can't get into the 2000s yet, but I'll drag him in. He talked about all the changes of Mike Harris. What about that gas tax for rural Ontario? Our member from Renfrew-Pickering—where is he from?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. Bill Walker: —Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke has asked seven times in this House for the gas tax to be extended to rural Ontario. Who spends more money on gas than rural Ontarians? They vote it down every time, and John wins every time because of it.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's shameful.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's shameful; you're absolutely right. You know what?

Interjection.

1600

Mr. Bill Walker: Don't you talk "bankrupt" to us, Mr. Peterborough. A \$15.3-billion deficit and a \$411-billion debt you're running up. You're dividing our province and running us into the ground.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. How long would you guys like to shout at each other?

Mr. Bill Walker: I reiterate. We need to ensure that we have policies that are going to ensure that rural and northern and our urban centres are working in collaboration. Farmers feed cities. Where do they think the food is coming from if we don't have a prosperous and vibrant rural and northern Ontario? We need our natural resources from the north and we need to ensure we're doing it in unison. We want to not just talk about collaboration and partnership; we're here to do the job.

My pal Mr. Pettapiece from Perth-Wellington is here putting a bill in front of us that we really need due diligence on. We need to speak with calm, civil voices and ensure we're working collaboratively. We need to ensure that we're working with each other, not dividing this great province of ours.

We have a great opportunity ahead of us. If that party would just start reaching out a little wee bit to rural Ontario, we'd have our—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. I've been very lenient all afternoon. The Speaker earlier today reminded members not to refer to people's names. It has already occurred four times this afternoon. I would remind all of you again: We're not supposed to use names; we're supposed to use riding names.

Further debate? The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

Interjections.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Relax, relax. Let me just say that there's no redemption without confession. I want to offer that up right at the start. You have a history—we have a history, sadly; the other party opposite does. The single worst thing that ever happened to rural Ontario was when then-Premier Mike Harris reduced the number of seats in Ontario from 130 to 103.

Hon. James J. Bradley: And rural Ontario lost.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: We lost all kinds of influence. Ever since we've come to government, you've tried to promulgate and perpetuate the convenient myth that this government doesn't care about rural Ontario. Well, I've got to tell you, you've left a lot of stuff out.

You haven't talked about our Open for Business initiative and the 28% reduction in rural and agricultural regulations. You haven't talked about the FIT review, which restored a lot of the power which AMO asked us not to leave with municipalities, by the way. You haven't talked about the rural economic development initiatives: some \$167 million for 418 projects generating over \$1.2 billion in new economic activity. You haven't talked about the 478 public infrastructure projects all across small towns in rural Ontario, or the \$550 million to build stronger and safer communities. We committed \$127 million to broadband services expanded in rural and urban communities, and created numerous jobs through all of those investments, I need to tell you.

Coming a little bit closer to home, let's go to Perth-Wellington. I just want to remind the member opposite of some of the ways our government has supported his little piece of rural Ontario. These are communities that have seen investments in health care, including hospital redevelopments—

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: You're killing 13,000 horses.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I didn't interrupt you; please—including hospital redevelopments in Listowel and Stratford, a dialysis unit at the hospital in Palmerston, a new MRI scanner in Stratford, and plans to develop the hospital in Mount Forest.

You've also seen elementary schools in St. Marys, Harriston and Listowel, to say nothing about investments in junior kindergarten all through there.

You didn't talk about the five family health teams in Perth-Wellington or the Stratford General Hospital.

You didn't talk about a lot of the schools or community projects our government invested in: the Alma Community Hall, the Mount Forest Curling Club, the Mapleton playground, the Palmerston Lions park, the new Perth East Library, the Mitchell splash pad, the Mitchell Curling Club, the St. Marys accessible playground. You didn't talk about the Golden Valley Farms investment through AMIS or Erie Meats in Listowel. In fact, you left out a whole lot of stuff that was really important in your effort to denigrate the government and perpetuate the convenient myth you want to create there.

I want to say you'll be proud when you go back to your riding and talk to your local press about what you did, but take the Hansard with you so your people can read about what's really going on in rural Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Perth-Wellington, you have two minutes for reply.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Hasn't this been an interesting debate? It's just been incredible. I would like to first stand here and thank all the members who spoke to my motion. There were quite a few of them. I didn't realize we'd have this much participation, but it's been great.

What I want to say to the members opposite is, the next time we have a wind farm meeting, come on up. Come on up to those meetings. I'll let you know when it is. I've already invited some members of the governing party to come up and take part in these meetings and

justify what they're doing to rural Ontario. So please come on up to one of these meetings—

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Or horse racing.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: —or the horse racing meetings. We're going to have one of them pretty soon. Come on up and justify that too.

Interjection.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: The key to solving a problem is to recognize it. You have to recognize that there's a problem in rural Ontario, and you know this, Minister of Agriculture, you know this. I think we should thank Ernie Hardeman, the member from Oxford, for getting risk management going in the first place.

This debate is actually doing what I wanted it to do. It's getting people to think about what's going on in rural Ontario, which includes the north and the south. All communities in Ontario have to work together; urban and rural have to work together for a better province. But the policies put in place for the last eight years by this government are splitting us. They're splitting us up, so now we have this. I hear from people all the time saying, "What is going on in the GTA? There's got to be a wall there." The policies, the things that have happened in the last eight or nine years are not doing rural Ontario or urban Ontario any good so that we can have a joint and productive province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

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

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

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item 52, standing in the name of Mr. Bisson.

Mr. Bisson has moved second reading of Bill 118. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. The motion is carried.

Second reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I would refer the bill to the Standing Committee on Estimates.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Estimates. Agreed? Agreed.

ORGAN OR TISSUE DONATION
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI A TRAIT AU DON
D'ORGANES OU DE TISSU

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milligan has moved second reading of Bill 58. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

In my opinion, the motion carries.

Second reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Mr. Speaker, I would like to refer Bill 58 to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy. Agreed? Agreed.

RURAL ONTARIO

Mr. Pettapiece has moved private member's notice of motion number 24. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

In my opinion, the motion carries.

Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day.

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

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of the Environment has moved adjournment of the House. Agreed? Agreed.

The House is adjourned until Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1610.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

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

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Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
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Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
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Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
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Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
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Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
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Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
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Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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Bill Walker
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Cheri DiNovo, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Ernie Hardeman, Tracy MacCharles
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