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des débats
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Thursday 28 February 2013

Jeudi 28 février 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 28 February 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 28 février 2013

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker?

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: Yes, Speaker, I seek unanimous consent that, in order to expedite the check-in process and make our Legislative security services job easier, members of the public gallery be allowed to wear work-related apparel in the galleries of the Legislative Assembly today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member has asked for unanimous consent. Do I hear unanimous consent? I heard a no.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AMBULANCE AMENDMENT ACT
(AIR AMBULANCES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES AMBULANCES
(SERVICES D'AMBULANCE AÉRIENS)

Ms. Matthews moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services / Projet de loi 11, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ambulances en ce qui concerne les services d'ambulance aériens.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member from Oak Ridges–Markham.

I'm pleased to address the Legislature today at this second reading of our proposed amendments to the Ambulance Act. I rise to speak to legislative amendments that will entrench greater oversight for Ontario's air ambulance service, ensure best value for taxpayer dollars and, above all, provide the highest possible quality patient care.

I want to start today by extending my most heartfelt thanks to the paramedics, the pilots and the front-line staff at Ornge. These are the people who work tirelessly every day to provide life-saving care to Ontarians across the province, and it is vitally important that we recognize them. I've had the opportunity to visit a number of Ornge bases in Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Toronto and London,

and I can tell you that the paramedics, pilots and front-line staff are as committed as ever to providing safe and high-quality care for the people of this province.

I'd like to acknowledge that this has been a very difficult time for front-line staff at Ornge, and yet their life-saving around-the-clock work never stopped. They never lost sight of their responsibility to patients. I want them to know that I am tremendously proud of their work, their passion and their dedication to the people of Ontario, and so I'd like to thank each and every one of them.

There are also a few others I would like to recognize. Ontario owes a great debt of gratitude to board chair Ian Delaney and board members Barry McLellan, Maneesh Mehta, Patricia Lang, Patrice Merrin, Charles Harnick and Trish Volker for their work. I'd like to emphasize that, unlike in the past, this is a voluntary board of directors. Their expenses are posted online.

I'd like to thank Ron McKerlie, former interim president and CEO. Mr. McKerlie was tasked with driving transformational change at Ornge, and I thank him for his dedicated efforts in doing so.

I'd like to thank Dr. Andrew McCallum, Ornge's new president and CEO. Dr. McCallum comes to Ornge with experience as a medical officer and flight surgeon in the Canadian Forces, chief of emergency medicine and chief of staff at Hamilton Health Sciences, and chief coroner of Ontario, amongst many other positions. Dr. McCallum is exceptionally qualified to serve in his new role.

I'd like to thank Rob Giguere, who was appointed COO—chief operating officer—in December 2012. Mr. Giguere is overseeing aviation operations in the operations control centre to ensure that all teams are working together. I know that the experience he brings to his position will serve him very well.

I would also like to thank Bruce Farr, the acting vice-president of operations, who comes to us from Toronto EMS.

There is a very strong leadership team in place now at Ornge, and I know that the 600-plus members of the Ornge team remain committed to Ornge's core mission of providing life-saving care to Ontario patients at a very critical time.

Their commitment is showing results. Nowhere is this more evident than in the many improvements that have taken place at Ornge over the past year. To begin, we now have a fully amended performance agreement with Ornge in place. We know now that the original performance agreement simply did not provide the accountability, oversight and transparency needed by govern-

ment. This amended performance agreement safeguards patient care and ensures better value for taxpayer dollars.

Under the terms of this agreement, ministry approval is required for any changes to Ornge's corporate structure, including the sale of assets. It requires detailed financial planning, monitoring, control and reporting obligations to increase accountability. It ensures compliance with the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act and the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act. It increases audit and inspection powers by my ministry and introduces debt control provisions to prevent debt increases without ministry approval. Finally, it introduces quality improvement provisions based on the Excellent Care for All Act. This includes linking executive compensation to performance improvement targets in an annual quality improvement plan.

Ornge is well into a new chapter and is on the right path forward. Ontario now has a culture that puts patients first, that respects taxpayers and that values transparency. Further, over the past months, Ornge has continued to take significant steps to renew its organization.

As part of its patient-centred focus, Ornge has introduced a new patient relations process, making it easier for a patient or family member to express complaints or concerns or to ask a question or to give feedback. This new process also includes a more accessible patient relations section on the Ornge website.

Ornge now has a new patient advocate, Denise Polgar, who acts as liaison with patients and families, works to resolve their concerns about patient care and who can also suggest operational improvements based on what is learned from the patient relations process.

These changes demonstrate that Ornge takes concerns about patient transportation very seriously and is committed to working with families and patients to address complaints and resolve issues.

As part of its commitment to promote integrity and trust at all levels of the organization, Ornge has also introduced a new conflict-of-interest policy to further improve transparency and accountability. The new policy includes rules about real or potential conflicts in hiring, outside business interests and the disclosure of confidential information. The policy was approved by Ornge's volunteer board of directors, and it requires that all current and new employees declare potential or actual conflicts of interest.

In December 2012, Ornge introduced a new whistleblower policy. The policy encourages employees at all levels of the organization to act with integrity. It also protects those same employees to come forward without fear of reprisal. It will help to ensure the highest standard of ethics and professionalism. Ornge is also making significant strides to improve its operations.

0910

As part of its commitment to patients in northern Ontario, Ornge has taken important steps to increase staffing levels at the Thunder Bay base. Ornge is adding a third team of paramedics dedicated to performing transports on helicopters, which will complement the two fully staffed

and medically equipped airplanes that operate out of the Thunder Bay base. This change means that each of the three Ornge aircraft in Thunder Bay will have its own dedicated crew of paramedics to support 24/7 operations in Thunder Bay.

In September, Ornge also announced a new dedicated patient flight service for the Sault Ste. Marie-to-Sudbury corridor. This service provides airplane flights for patients with scheduled appointments for hospital treatment. To meet the needs of patients requiring this service, an advanced level of medical care will be offered on these flights. The program will allow Ornge to free up its dedicated airplanes and helicopters for urgent and emergency cases.

The new leadership at Ornge has also addressed concerns brought forward by front-line paramedics with a new interim interior for its fleet of AW139 helicopters. The new interim interiors will allow paramedics to perform CPR at any time during flight. They were approved by Transport Canada in January and are similar to the medical interiors used in other AW139 emergency helicopters around the world. The new interim interiors have been installed in 100% of the AW139 helicopters.

Finally, Ornge recently submitted its first quality improvement plan to my ministry. It highlights recent successes at Ornge and outlines areas for continued improvement. I'd like to highlight a few of those recent successes. From October to December 2012, Ornge confirmed its ability to respond to a call for on-scene service within 10 minutes of the start of a call 90% of the time. In 96% of the time, Ornge was able to meet their target of verifying their ability to service a call for an inter-facility transfer within 20 minutes. Success in recruiting new helicopter and airplane pilots means that from October to December 2012, Ornge was able to staff their aircraft at the Ontario air ambulance standard of two pilots at all times 97% of the time. During the same period, there was a 97.3% base aircraft availability. Finally, in September 2012, Ornge scored 90% on the quality-of-care metric, an indicator that reviews care against industry standards in eight key critical care areas. These many accomplishments mean that Ontario patients and Ontario families can count on the highest possible quality of patient care.

As I mentioned, the quality improvement plan also includes a road map for Ornge's future, with specific and measurable targets for improvement. Speaker, these accomplishments outlined above represent just some of the important changes Ornge has made as it works to restore public trust in Ornge's air ambulance system.

I'm now very pleased to speak to amendments to the Ambulance Act being proposed today. I want to be very clear that these amendments are the most important step we can all take to further entrench stronger oversight and restore public confidence in Ontario's air ambulance service. It is absolutely critical that employees do not feel intimidated when raising concerns. Ornge understands how important this is, and I'm pleased that the organization has introduced its own whistle-blower policy.

Our proposed legislation would entrench protection for whistle-blowers at Ornge who disclose information to

an inspector, to an investigator or to the government. These amendments would allow the government to take control of Ornge in extraordinary circumstances through the appointment of a supervisor, just like we can with our hospitals. It would allow us to appoint special investigators where it is in the public interest to do so. The new legislation, if passed, would also give the government the power to appoint members to Ornge's board of directors and it would allow the government to make changes to the performance agreement. While improvements have already been made, these proposed amendments are important because they will further entrench this progress.

Speaker, I'm also taking another step to enhance transparency at Ornge. I know how important transparency is to ensuring accountability and restoring public trust in Ontario's air ambulance system, and I know this is a commitment that the new leadership at Ornge shares.

In addition to this legislation, our government is proposing to make Ornge subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, through regulation. This regulation has now been posted for public commentary. It would allow for freedom-of-information requests to be made of Ornge retroactive to the organization's foundation. The step is consistent with our government's commitment to increasing transparency across the broader public sector, including the health care sector.

For example, we've expanded freedom-of-information provisions to cover Ontario Power Generation, Hydro One, universities and Cancer Care Ontario. Local public utilities were brought back under freedom of information in 2004, and we have made hospitals subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, effective January 1, 2012.

The amendments we're proposing today are also part of our broad government commitment to raise the bar on accountability and transparency in Ontario. Since 2003, our government has taken a series of steps to improve oversight of Ontario's tax dollars. When we were first elected, we were told by the previous government that there was no deficit in the province of Ontario. As it turned out, there was a significant deficit. That will never happen again because we've given the Auditor General the responsibility of signing off on our books prior to an election.

We introduced the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, which prohibits the practice of hiring external lobbyists with taxpayer dollars in hospitals, other large public sector organizations and publicly funded organizations that receive more than \$10 million in government funds.

We brought in stronger expense and procurement rules for broader public sector organizations. We require all hospitals and LHINs to report on their use of consultants and to post online the expense claim information for their senior leadership. We also require all hospitals and LHINs to sign attestations that they're in compliance with the new procurement requirements.

The amendments to the Ambulance Act that we're proposing today are very much in keeping with our gov-

ernment's commitment to refocus our health care system on the patient. By centering care around patients, we're improving Ontarians' experience with the health care system and achieving better value for money.

For example, through our Excellent Care for All Act, we've ensured that the quality of the patient experience is measured in a standardized way and reported publicly. We also now hold executives accountable for the quality of care they deliver. We listen to patients and ensure that quality committees in each health care organization use the results of patient surveys to create benchmarks for improving the standard of care. Further, patients have a formal mechanism to have their questions and concerns addressed through a patient advocate process.

We focused health care leadership on the task of changing the culture so that quality care for patients is the most important job that every single person in the organization has. Hospitals now have quality improvement plans, which are publicly posted, and executive compensation is linked to the achievement of outcomes identified in these plans.

I'm very proud of these improvements, and I'm proud they were achieved in an atmosphere of transparency and accountability. This action is all about respecting the hard-earned money of Ontario taxpayers. I'm determined to deliver the best value for our health care dollars. It's why we're driving quality and value into every corner of the health care system, and it's why we're bringing in these legislative amendments today.

From patients to doctors, front-line paramedics to hospital administrators, personal support workers to those in LHINs and the front-line staff and new leadership at Ornge, we all have a role to play in improving our health care system. I stand in the House today with full confidence that we're leaving no stone unturned to improve Ontario's air ambulance service.

Almost a year ago, the Auditor General of Ontario brought forward his value-for-money report. He had a number of specific recommendations to improve oversight, accountability and, above all, patient safety at Ornge. I'm pleased to say that we have acted on virtually every one of those recommendations. Because of this, I know that Ornge is now well into a new chapter and is on the right path forward. I'm confident that Ornge's new team, led by Dr. Andrew McCallum and board chair Ian Delaney, will continue the remarkable progress which has already been made. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The member for Oak Ridges–Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to address our government's proposed amendments to the Ambulance Act. I want to make it clear that our government is absolutely dedicated to ensuring that Ontario's air and critical care land ambulance service is focused on its core mission of providing life-saving care to Ontarians.

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The amendments that our government is proposing are very important because they would, first of all, entrench

accountability and transparency in Ontario's air ambulance service; ensure that Ontario patients and families are getting the highest possible quality patient care; and ensure that Ontario's taxpayers receive the best value for their taxpayer dollars—Ontario taxpayers have every right to know how health care dollars are spent—and restore public confidence in an organization that provides life-saving emergency medicine. Our government's commitment to these proposed amendments demonstrates our unwavering commitment to implement the Auditor General's recommendations.

Before I speak to today's proposed amendments, I want to commend Ornge on the significant progress they have made over the past year. There are too many achievements to cover fully, but I'd like to speak about a few.

First of all, in regards to leadership, Ornge has a new leadership team in place. Dr. Andrew McCallum is now the president and CEO. Dr. McCallum was trained as a military flight surgeon and is the former chief coroner of Ontario. He has also held senior posts at hospitals in Toronto and Hamilton, and will certainly help us in our efforts to improve oversight and accountability at Ornge. Former Skyservice president Rob Giguere is now the chief operating officer. There is a newly appointed board of directors led by Ian W. Delaney, chairman of Sherritt International. I'd also like to point out that members now serve on the board as volunteers. Ornge has also appointed a quality of care committee under the direction of Dr. Barry McLellan, president and CEO of Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, and executive expenses and salary ranges are now posted online.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear, and I know that members on both sides of the House will agree: We have very high expectations of our health care leaders. We trust them not only to provide excellent patient care, but to manage public money in a way that Ontarians expect and deserve. We expect them to stay true to their responsibility to others and to ensure that their service to patients and taxpayers is at the core of their operations. I'm so pleased that the leadership team led by Dr. McCallum is demonstrating this commitment to Ornge's core mission day in and day out.

Turning to transparency and accountability: Led by the new leadership team, Ornge has taken some very significant steps to improve transparency and accountability. First, we have a new performance agreement in place, which will provide greater accountability and oversight over Ornge. Second, in February of this year, Ornge submitted its first quality improvement plan to build on achievements of the past year. Third, Ornge has introduced several new policies and procedures, such as: a conflict-of-interest policy; a whistle-blower policy, which includes the appointments of an independent ethics officer to receive, investigate and track employee disclosures as part of this new protection plan. They've hired a patient advocate, who works with patients and their families to address concerns and also to advocate for operational improvements, and they've developed an

online patient relations portal and have guaranteed feedback to patient complaints.

Turning now to operational achievements: The Auditor General's report highlighted some significant concerns related to operations at Ornge, and I would like to speak to some of the very substantial improvements that have been undertaken through Ornge's operations over the past several months. New and improved interim medical interiors have been installed in the fleet of AW139 helicopters after extensive consultation with front-line staff. Transport Canada approval for the interior of the AW139 aircraft has also been acquired.

Steps have been taken to introduce a third line of paramedics at the Thunder Bay base to help ensure seamless 24-hour, seven-day-a-week service for northern Ontario, and dedicated flight service for the Sault Ste. Marie-to-Sudbury corridor has been created, increasing patient access to out-of-town treatment.

A pilot project in Ottawa on the use of critical care land vehicles has been launched in place of a helicopter for certain calls when deemed appropriate for patient care, and three operations divisions have been consolidated under one chief operating officer. All operational scheduling functions have now been combined into one team for improved coverage and service effectiveness. Certification material for the operations control centre has been developed and implemented.

Speaker, none of these improvements could have been possible without the complete dedication of paramedics, pilots and front-line staff. We thank them for their unwavering commitment to providing the best possible care to our families, our friends, our loved ones and our patients. I know that the minister was pleased to have heard first-hand about the impact of these improvements during her visits with the front-line staff at Ornge bases.

And now, what are these legislative changes that we're making? Mr. Speaker, these amendments are the most important thing we can do to help Ornge focus on their core mission, which is providing life-saving care to patients, now and in the future. That's why Minister Matthews has introduced proposed legislative amendments to the Ambulance Act to further entrench oversight and prevent future abuses of power at Ontario's air ambulance service.

The proposed amendments, if passed, would:

—give cabinet the power, upon the recommendation of the minister, to appoint one or more provincial representatives to the board of an air ambulance service provider;

—give the minister the power to issue directives to an air ambulance service provider;

—give the government the ability to include provisions in an agreement between Ontario and an air ambulance service provider;

—provide cabinet with the power to appoint a special investigator to investigate and report on certain activities of an air ambulance service provider;

—prohibit individuals from obstructing a special investigator or from withholding any information required by the special investigator;

—require a special investigator to provide a report to the minister upon completion of their investigation;

—provide cabinet with the power, upon the recommendation of the minister, to appoint a supervisor to exercise the powers of the board, officers and members, and other corporate powers of an air ambulance service provider;

—provide a supervisor with the same rights as the board of an air ambulance service provider. The supervisor would report to the minister;

—prohibit retaliation against a person who has disclosed information that relates to an air ambulance service provider to an inspector, investigator or special investigator. Air ambulance service providers and other persons would also be prohibited from doing anything to discourage the making of such disclosures; and

—allow the continuance of a provider of air ambulance services that is incorporated under the laws of any jurisdiction, other than Ontario, as a corporation under the Corporations Act.

Speaker, we know that it is extremely important that employees do not feel intimidated when raising any concerns. That's why our proposed amendments to the legislation would protect whistle-blowers at Ornge. In the past, we did not have the authority to make the necessary changes at Ornge when problems came to our attention. To remedy this, our proposed legislation, if passed, would allow the government to take control of Ornge in extraordinary circumstances through the appointment of a supervisor, just like we can do at the province's hospitals when trouble arises.

0930

In the past, if we needed to make changes to the government's performance agreement with Ornge, we could do so only with Ornge's consent. This was simply not feasible when changes needed to be made to protect public interest. That's why the proposed legislation would allow the government to change the performance agreement with Ornge at any time.

Now, to look back a little bit at the history of this rather troubled organization—we need to understand where we're going in the future. I think it's important for the members in this House to understand where we were and where Ornge started.

Ontario's air ambulance program was established in 1977 by the then Ministry of Health with a single aircraft based in Toronto. In essence, the service had three main elements: funding, dispatch and oversight provided by the ministry, and a base hospital system at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre. They oversaw the practice of paramedicine and air ambulance services—both helicopter and fixed wing—that were contracted out.

In June 2005, the government transferred and consolidated the air ambulance program to the Ontario Air Ambulances Services Co., known as OAA, a federally incorporated non-profit corporation.

In November 2005, our government finalized a long-term performance agreement with the OAA. It had an indefinite term and governed all aspects of air ambulance

services. The performance agreement with Ornge was then established. This agreement outlined responsibilities and expectations in the services to be delivered by Ornge; for example, base hospital, air contracting, organ recovery services and other aeromedical services and so on. It also covered compliance with: grant funding and government accounting requirements; data tracking, retention and reporting; quality assurance and education and training of flight paramedics and flight dispatch staff; a complaints and incident reporting process; documentation standards; and ministry evaluation and monitoring.

By January 2006, the OAA became responsible for all operational functions of the province's air ambulance program. In September 2006, as the newly renamed Ornge, the corporation took over the management of the air ambulance dispatch. In 2007, Ornge signed an agreement for expanded critical care fixed-wing air ambulance services, and in 2008 Ornge took over responsibility to provide critical care land ambulance services. In summary, Ornge had full control of the province's air ambulance program.

Both land and air ambulance services are governed by the Ambulance Act and regulations and standards made under the act. The act sets out the responsibilities and expectations of the minister and other parties related to the delivery of land and air ambulance and related services.

The government provides Ornge with funding, through a contractual agreement, to deliver air ambulance services as part of the minister's obligation under the Ambulance Act to fund and ensure the provision of air ambulance service. The province also provides Ornge with funding to operate the critical care land ambulance service.

Now, looking at the Auditor General's report, our government certainly thanks the Auditor General for his thorough and insightful review of Ornge. His advice has guided many of the actions that are now being undertaken to improve operations and restore confidence at Ornge.

I'm pleased that the Auditor General acknowledged that our government has—and I'm quoting from the Auditor General—"taken substantive action to address many of the issues raised in this report." We are certainly striving to move even further.

I am confident that the concerns raised by the Auditor General are being addressed through the actions that our government and Ornge have already taken and through these proposed legislative amendments. I'm very proud of our government's decisive action to address the Auditor General's recommendations to establish a new standard of accountability at Ornge and to restore Ontarians' faith in the important service it provides.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak a little bit more to the amended performance agreement with Ornge. Hindsight imparts perfect vision, and in hindsight it's clear that the original performance agreement with Ornge was insufficient and did not go far enough. The original performance agreement simply did not give us the power

to regularly access information from Ornge, or to verify it. The amended performance agreement raises the level of oversight far above that which is normally required of organizations receiving public funds. Under the former agreement, the past leadership was able to avoid accountability. We simply did not have the power to regularly access financial information and monitor operations at Ornge. It also became apparent that the limited operational and financial information that was provided to the ministry was insufficient and often inaccurate. The old performance agreement did not require ministry approval to create for-profit entities. In the past, Ornge also had no restrictions on assuming debt, and the old performance agreement gave us no say in major acquisitions.

Under the amended performance agreement, all of those shortcomings have been fixed. The enhanced provisions of the amended performance agreement can be grouped under two general headings: greater accountability and transparency, and the safeguarding of patient safety and care.

On accountability and transparency, the amended performance agreement raises the level of oversight with the following measures and obligations: tougher funding conditions based on key performance indicators; increased audit and inspection powers by the ministry; more detailed financial planning, monitoring, control and reporting obligations; a committee to advise the board on quality improvement initiatives; a new patient advocate and complaints process to ensure patient safety, like the one used in Ontario hospitals; mandatory public reporting of expenses, and restrictions on meals, travel and hospitality; quality improvement provisions that link executive compensation to performance improvement targets in an annual quality plan; and mandatory approval by the minister for any changes to Ornge's corporate structure or the sale of assets by Ornge.

On safeguarding patient care and safety, the auditor also highlighted some concerns around dispatch and response times for air and critical care land ambulances, which our government took very seriously. The amended performance agreement places a much greater emphasis on performance standards and requires increased reporting of dispatch information, including cancelled and declined air and land ambulance calls. The performance agreement is closely aligned with the Excellent Care for All Act, which guides the province's hospitals. Quality improvement and key performance indicators are now linked to both Ornge's funding and executive compensation. To ensure patient safety remains paramount, Ornge has created a new patient advocate and a new formalized complaints process which is publicly posted and which ensures patient safety similar to what we have in our hospitals.

The amended performance agreement also deals with enhancing the quality of Ornge's services based on objective, evidence-based performance indicators. Under the terms of this agreement, the minister's approval is required for any changes to Ornge's corporate structure, including the sale of assets. It also requires detailed fi-

nancial planning, monitoring and control, and reporting obligations to increase accountability.

0940

The new agreement also ensures compliance with the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act and the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act. It increases audit and inspection powers by the ministry and introduces debt control provisions to prevent debt increases that do not have ministry approval.

In addition, the performance agreement also provides for tougher funding conditions based on key performance indicators, and a committee to advise the board on quality improvement initiatives.

We are pleased that an amended performance agreement is in place. It represents a critical step towards an improved air ambulance system.

To conclude, I'd like to take a moment to address each and every member of this House. The amendments that our government is proposing today, coupled with the improvements at Ornge that have already been made, will entrench accountability and transparency at Ornge, as well as restore the public's confidence in our air ambulance services.

I am completely confident that every member of this Legislature, regardless of political stripe, can support these amendments. I know that each and every one of us wants to ensure that public dollars are spent appropriately and responsibly and are subject to the strictest scrutiny possible. I also know that every one of us wants to ensure the highest possible standard for patient care across our great province. These proposed amendments will not only ensure that we meet these goals; they will ensure a culture of continual improvement for years to come.

I'd like to say to each and every one of my colleagues that supporting these amendments is the single most important thing we can do. I know that these proposed amendments represent a significant common ground between our parties and our communities.

There is no question that the new leadership and the front-line staff continue to do their utmost to deliver safe, reliable air ambulance services. They are putting their full efforts towards their core mission of providing life-saving care to Ontario patients. I'd like to echo the minister's sentiments and thank the dedicated paramedics, pilots and front-line staff at Ornge, who work so hard every day to save lives.

I am confident that the auditor's advice, combined with the actions that we are taking, as well as the amendments we are proposing today, will contribute to a better air ambulance service and the highest standard of care for all Ontarians.

I sincerely hope that every member of this House will agree that our proposed legislative changes are necessary and that they will support these proposed amendments. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I was listening to the minister in her remarks earlier, as well as the member from Oak

Ridges–Markham. I want to put on the record that I'm very pleased with the member from Oak Ridges–Markham, and I'll tell you why. She's a medical doctor. Minister Matthews is a PhD doctor, and quite a bright lady, I guess. But I'm surprised that the member from Oak Ridges–Markham isn't in cabinet. With the talent that she brings to that file—

Hon. James J. Bradley: You're just being mischievous.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, I'm trying to stay as neutral as possible. The remarks on this bill—

Hon. James J. Bradley: You have to be sincere in your remarks in here.

Mr. John O'Toole: They are sincere remarks, for sure, because I did speak with her and I've watched her over the years. I'll leave that alone there.

I want to also, out of respect for our member—Christine Elliott, our critic, spoke in response to the minister introducing Bill 11 the other day and, I think, summed up quite categorically our position on this bill. The bill was introduced, as people would know, in the last session, before Premier McGuinty resigned and prorogued the House.

But I can only say as well that our members on this side—Frank Klees being the lead on this when it was in committee—have the highest respect for the front-line people in the Ornge organization, some of whom were so disheartened and displeased with the shenanigans that were going on.

But even if I look at the paper today, there's another article about Chris Mazza. How disheartening is that? He was given a payoff whereas another doctor's career has now been decimated. I don't say that to characterize these people. They were probably encouraged by the government to be involved in those sorts of things of money. He apparently made about \$1.6 million, if you can imagine.

So there's a lot to be said on this bill, which I'll reserve for my remarks in the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments? The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, wanted to thank the minister for being there in the first hour of this bill, and I appreciated that she started her talk with thank yous to the front-line staff. They've had it tough; they've had it really tough. If you think of the number of paramedics, the number of pilots, the number of staff at Ornge that knew things were wrong—they tried their best within the confines of Ornge to ring the alarm bells, but nobody was listening. Then they started to blow the whistle and go to the Ministry of Health and tell them—for weeks, for months, for years they were telling the ministry, "Things are not good at Ornge. People are using money in ways they shouldn't be using money. Services are not improving in quality; they are going down, going down quickly."

There were corporations being formed for the reason of hiding monies and nothing else, but it didn't matter how many times they went to the ministry, how many

times they went to the minister's staff, how many times they rang the alarm bells, it always ended the same way: Those employees lost their jobs. Employees got punished; employees were put through the wringer, and the ministry never, never moved. They never used any of the accountability methods that they had, they did not use any of the oversight mechanisms that were open to them; they never looked into transparency. So, yes, for all of you that have lost your jobs, that have had a tough time, thank you.

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm happy to speak to An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services, the minister's address and also the member for Oak Ridges–Markham, who presented the case for Bill 11 and how it should be taken forward so quickly.

The air ambulance issue started—I think Dr. Mazza was with it in 1997 or 1998-99, in that time. He came in and it was established in 2003, and it continued as an air ambulance service that was not satisfactory. The Auditor General got in there; when his report came out, we had the minister taking action. And we've seen since 2011, around Christmas when the OPP went in and the minister before that, a big change in the air ambulance. We see that the report on how it is operating—they are dealing, and the new management team is dealing with all the issues that were raised during the public accounts hearings, hearing from the Auditor General and hearing from countless people who worked within Ornge and worked outside of Ornge as consultants.

The minister has taken the steps necessary. This bill is extremely important to reinforce the air ambulance, to put in the same provisions as the Excellent Care for All Act in health care and to make this operate like a hospital, with the same oversight and transparency. All those issues have been very quickly brought forward. We have a management team in place. We need this Bill 11, and I just ask all members here to support it.

0950

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today to address what we heard with regard to this bill. Unfortunately, just in the headlines today proof has shown that the story continues.

When we look back to last year, when this piece of legislation was introduced for debate, it was cobbled together in haste. It was to provide cover for the lack of capacity that the Ministry of Health and the minister had with regard to this horrible, horrible event whereby we had an executive totally misusing Ontario taxpayer dollars. It's a travesty. There was absolutely no oversight, as my friend from Burlington mentioned.

We need to take a look at how to do things better, and that's why our caucus feels very, very strongly that we need to continue to examine what went wrong, because enough is enough. Ontario taxpayers deserve so much better. When you hear that there's an executive spending

literally double digits on a bottle of water, taking trips across the world on the taxpayers' back, it goes to show that this oversight—this ministry has been totally benign and turned a blind eye to the issues at hand.

You know what? In rural Ontario, when we're seeing hospitals crumble, when we see election promises broken—the list goes on and on and on—you just have to shake your head, because this whole Ornge fiasco has been a totally mismanaged affair. Those dollars could have gone so far in terms of addressing health care across this province. We need to do better.

Another esteemed colleague of mine mentioned: Where does the buck stop? Well, ladies and gentlemen of the House, it has to stop now. We can't let minimal legislation provide a cover-up.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Oak Ridges–Markham, you have two minutes to respond.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to those who have responded to the minister's and my remarks. First of all, to my neighbour from Durham, I always appreciate your compliments and I accept them at face value.

To the member from Nickel Belt, I too share with you the concern for paramedics. In my position as commissioner of health services for York region, I was charged with the responsibility for, in fact, amalgamating the six land ambulance services we had in York region into one publicly funded and publicly delivered service in York region, when the former government downloaded land ambulance to upper-tier municipalities. I'm extremely proud of York region EMS.

To my colleague from Ottawa–Orléans, who clearly has been very involved with the public accounts committee previously and now, I think what we're talking about here is definitely moving forward on proposed legislative amendments. We on this side of the House are as distressed as the rest of the members as to what occurred at Ornge and we are determined that we put in place mechanisms so that agencies or arm's-length bodies—this was, of course, a federal corporation—do have the type of oversight so that they are charged with their fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayer in a way that we can ensure that it is maintained.

To the member from Huron–Bruce: The stories continue but the actions have stopped. As soon as the minister was aware of the findings of the Auditor General, it is absolutely clear that she took immediate steps to look into the situation at Ornge and to take remedial steps.

This proposed legislation is needed. I urge everyone to support it.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to have the opportunity, on behalf of Tim Hudak and the opposition, to address Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services. I'm very pleased to have this opportunity and hopefully will have enough time to make all the remarks that I want to make.

This bill was introduced and debated to a very limited extent in the last session of the Legislature under Premier McGuinty. Now, in context—I don't want to be offensive to anyone—we start by saying that people working in Ornge ambulance and those trying to make the system work are to be respected. What was missing was the governance model set up by Premier McGuinty. That's really what was missing.

I'm quite surprised—I look back at the history of Dr. Chris Mazza. He was a highly regarded medical person—absolutely no experience at all in the helicopter and that side of the business. There were other people that should have been appointed. At least, that's my understanding. I'm surprised now that we're introducing a bill again when public accounts—the Auditor General hasn't really put together the final report. I think it would have been important to finish off those hearings and then come up with a report that was a consensus.

I'm sure our leader, Tim Hudak, was trying to do the right thing, as our critic Christine Elliott said as well. I believe that the NDP—and I have great respect for the member from Nickel Belt, I believe it is; I believe that she's a highly regarded member here. Their input at these committees would have served well to build the consensus that Premier Kathleen Wynne is trying to portray, shall I say, portraying it now with the teachers by promising them some payoff at the end of the day.

When I look at this Ornge ambulance thing, I have correspondence in my possession that was brought to my attention. Now, I'll relate this as a story, one of the pieces of how poorly the system of setting up Ornge worked. There was a company in Peterborough that had been in contact with Chris Mazza and Ornge, and this company was expert in the interior dimensions and in building and designing the interiors of helicopters and ambulances. The company was more or less given the brush-off, and I have the correspondence. I'm going to share it with Frank Klees in committee.

The company wrote to Mr. Leal, now Minister Leal, from Peterborough. In fairness to Mr. Leal, Mr. Leal did write to the minister. I think it was David Caplan at the time, who has since resigned.

Hon. James J. Bradley:—some pictures.

Mr. John O'Toole: In fact, there are a couple of pictures. The Minister of the Environment is chirping in there.

But the point I'm saying is that the minister responded back to Mr. Leal, and said that there was a process. It was put up on the purchasing website for bidding on projects. The person went through all the application and all this kind of stuff and still was not even responded to. So, out of frustration, they wrote a rather technical letter. When I read it, I thought, "Gosh. This is a small business in Ontario being brushed aside." No political connections at all: That was the problem. No connections, the inside. He should have gone to a couple of the fundraisers.

Here's the deal: Eventually, the business went to Italy. None of the helicopters were properly suited for the delivery of the service. In fact, they bought extra heli-

copters thinking they could make money on them. Those two helicopters are still in storage, and paying rent, maintenance and the rest, because air equipment can't just sit around in some warehouse.

Honest to God, in this whole fiasco I believe in fact it's important for the viewers to know that the minister already had the authority to intervene on the independent health facilities legislation. This excuse of—I can't use the word “cover-up,” so I won't, but the issue was that this was a way of getting around the responsibilities of the cabinet itself. Once again, in its own case, one could overlook or accept the apology of the minister, which I don't think she ever did. It's the same minister, by the way. But when you look at the context of what was going on in eHealth, the same ministry is fraught with unaccountability and lack of transparency and the waste of taxpayers' money, money that's denying children treatment for autism. It's denying people that have cancer the proper drugs. That waste of money is really, at the end of the day, what's most disconcerting.

1000

Whether or not the lawyer language, both in this bill or the debates that will go on—what about the patients? What about the young person who had an accident at the side of the road where the ambulance couldn't accommodate the patient on transfer? The patient was transferred by land ambulance. There were several cases cited during the hearings in public accounts and others. Mr. Klees did a marvellous job, along with, I believe, the Toronto Star, in bringing this to light. At the end of the day, the real casualties here are the families and the individuals whose lives were put at risk, with no sense of compassion or caring from the government of the day. They were busy trying to put out the fires around the air ambulance and the fires around the gas plants that they were moving or not moving, and all of the other inquiries that were ongoing.

To me, this bill here—I put to the minister, because the minister's here, that really, I think starting off with a humble apology is not an admission of guilt, but it would be a good way to start to build bridges. I honestly think that she probably would like to do that.

But I want to refer back to my colleague from Huron-Bruce, who said that the story's not over. In fact, in the Toronto Star—the viewer today, I want you to read the Toronto Star. It's on A1, so it's a lead story. Here's just a little bit of the disintegration or—I don't want to say “corruption,” because that's not a very nice word either. Here's what it said: Founder Chris Mazza was paid, “\$256,000 in public money—with no proof Mazza did some of the work” he was paid to do. Not only that, it goes on to say that, “Over a similar period of time, Mount Sinai paid Mazza \$256,000.” This other person he was working with was Mount Sinai's Dr. Stewart, who was paid “roughly \$75,000 annually over seven years (a total of \$436,000) to advise Mazza and Ornge on medical issues—work that the air ambulance firm's new managers said they could not confirm was done because the relationship was primarily between Mazza and Stewart.”

There's a transfer of a quarter of a million annually between two people with no work being done. Now, I'm not an investigator, but there's a case of \$265,000 for nothing. It's sinful. It's more than just criminal; it's sinful.

If you go on in this article—and I commend the Star. It's been quite a good lead on this article. Usually I don't read the paper, but sometimes I have to. “Between 2009 and 2011, Mount Sinai paid Mazza \$148,000 ‘for a variety of advisory services to the critical care response team and the department of medicine.’”

Now, there's no doubt that Dr. Chris Mazza once was a very compelling doctor. I think what happened is the leadership group, i.e., the Ministry of Health and the minister herself, made it very clear: “Just get it done. Here's a box full of money.” And they did. They took the box full of money and they went to Italy and spent a lot of it.

Here's the deal: I know first-hand that in one of the quiet private lakes in my riding there's a very expensive Ornge boat that was part of the organization.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Really?

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, it was one of those high racing boats. Two motorcycles, one of which I believe was auctioned off—this kind of evidence, and I can't believe for a moment that somehow we're all hushed up here; it's something we shouldn't be talking about or be critical about. There's the evidence, and if it was an ordinary person, not connected, they'd be in jail. I go back to first principles here.

On top of that, there was another case—and the member from Nickel Belt probably will tell the story. In northern Ontario there was an accident that occurred. There was an air rescue called for. At the end of the day, they had to take the individual by land ambulance, and I think they may have perished on the way. I think all of this glitz and glamour with the helicopters and the fancy headquarters and the \$1.9 million, all this kind of stuff is a distraction. They didn't get the job done. We still talk about health care as if—and there are still problems in health care. Every hospital, almost, is in an operating deficit. They're cutting off nurses, and they're—honest to God, the whole file is in a mess, and it's the number one part of the budget; 50% of the entire budget is health care.

I want to say at this point in time that I want to share my time, because I'm not the lead on this. I want to share my time with Christine Elliott, probably.

Hon. James J. Bradley: She was in the photograph.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, Christine Elliott was—we actually were quite co-operative as members. We were working with—the city of Oshawa wanted Ornge to be one of the bases. Had we known all this corruption was underneath it all, we would have been taking pictures and sending them to the Premier.

I myself did attend, and tried to—with Christine Elliott, who's a highly regarded figure in Durham region—out of respect for making this work. We weren't there for political reasons. We were there to actually endorse the city

of Oshawa's bid to host the air ambulance station. In fact, when they closed the station for air ambulance, I believe it was—what was the other one in west Toronto? The other airport that closed.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Buttonville.

Mr. John O'Toole: Buttonville. Oshawa was the logical recipient of the business. So on that basis alone—and Mr. Bradley says that we—we were there to endorse our community, as you would in St. Catharines. You'd be there as well.

In fact, Christine Elliott is a beautiful, talented person and a beautiful, talented representative from the riding of Whitby, and a great critic. To me, she said rather respectfully—I was looking through her remarks, and she said here, "What's even more troubling is, the legislation was put together before the public accounts committee heard from all the relevant witnesses and before we understood what the conditions were that led up to this air ambulance mess at Ornge.... How can you possibly expect to develop a piece of legislation when you don't really even know what the problem is yet? And this is, despite the amendments—that's what this amendment bill is purporting to do."

Now, the clearest thing—we support certain aspects of the bill. Certainly, our leader has been talking about the whistle-blower protection from the very beginning. That's part of transparency and accountability. So there's a section. But there are issues in here which exempts the member—the minister, in fact—from any accountability.

I think, quite honestly, to me—it's getting very close to quitting time here, and I don't want to use up all the time on Christine or Jim Flaherty.

It has been less than a year since Christine stood in the House and pointed out that nothing really has changed. The same thing exists today. The story goes on. In the Toronto Star this morning, I see "Top Doctor Quits Amid Ornge Scandal." The scandal continues, despite all of the protestations and the remarks.

At the end of the day, I put on the table this: I believe that patients are still at risk, and that's until we apologize and have almost a full inquiry. Now, I don't think that's going to happen. Do you know why? Because right now we have so much evidence on the two gas plants that there's been a call for a select committee. Every question has been asked to the minister and to the Premier, and it—

Hon. James J. Bradley: It was offered. You turned it down.

Mr. John O'Toole: Minister Bradley, from St. Catharines, is saying that it was turned down, because there were conditions—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to stick to the topic that is being debated, rather than drifting off.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you. The issue there was that the contempt motion was supposed to be withdrawn as a condition to having the select committee.

But we still are going ahead with the committee, and the hearings aren't finished. If you tie the pieces together

here—why, in this bill, why on earth would they not have listened to the comments and public input and explanations by the staff, some of the staff, having the protection of whistle-blower and coming forward and—remember, Mr. Speaker, the point of all of this is, and our leader, Tim Hudak, has said this many times: Let's put the patient first. Pretty much what he was saying yesterday in the opposition day motion on education is put the student first, not the union leaders.

And so they've got it wrong. The Working Families paid money for Ms. Wynne to meet with them. Now, this morning in the paper, the front headlines here: \$5,000.

1010

Hon. James J. Bradley: Well, Tim Hudak had one of those.

Mr. John O'Toole: That doesn't make it right.

Here's the deal. Here's what it says: "Dinner with Wynne Worth \$5,000." What's the price of getting this right? What's the price, for the people of Ontario, of making sure we get the gas plant right? What's the price of accountability?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member one more time to debate the bill that's in front of us.

Mr. John O'Toole: What's the price of admission here? What's the price of admission? Why would we be paying—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I've provided you with one warning. I would like you to debate the bill that's in front of us rather than stray.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will try. I get so emotionally entangled in this. There are so many scandals going on that you almost have to have a scorecard. But I will stick to it.

What's the price for getting this right? That's what I'm trying to leave with the members today. Let's put down the swords and the accusations and try to focus on the patient. Let's put the inquiry back on track, led by Frank Klees and others, and let's have the public talk to us about this and teach us a little bit about putting patients first. My intent this morning is not to delve into certain aspects of the bill that sort of encourage more transparency and accountability and more protection. Assigning the minister the ability to put in a supervisor—that should be an ongoing relationship. Health care is half the budget. It's half of the \$120-some billion, and this province is borrowing most of that money. Right now our operating deficit—even Don Drummond said quite honestly that we have a structural deficit, and I don't see any bright lights on the horizon. Health care is very dependent on having a strong economy.

Now, if you look at the paper today, Mr. Speaker—this does relate to the inability to fix this problem without the money—there's a bunch of high school teachers being laid off in Toronto. Why? It's the same issue with the health care problems: not enough money. I hear in health care there's broader—exemptions for access to certain medications. Now there's wait-lists for certain treatments. All of this relates back to the minister who,

quite frankly—I don't say this in any personal way; I want this very clear now. All the time, there's the member from Oak Ridges–Markham, who was the medical officer of health for York region, sitting on the back-bench, reading some prepared speech when she could be taking the lead in the Ministry of Health. I put that one of the ways here to show some contriteness is to ask Minister Matthews to take another portfolio and have the member from Oak Ridges–Markham sort of take over, clean slate. I'm sure that the opposition would be more than accommodating in trying to work with the new minister. The minister has to at least say she's sorry or apologize or say, "Look, I didn't know what I was doing. It happened when I wasn't paying attention. I was looking at the issues going on in eHealth, trying to get that to work." The diabetes registry is not even working. They've spent billions of dollars on trying to get the electronic health records, and in fact, it's shameful.

Honest to God, I think it's shameful, but at the end of the day, I really believe—

Mr. Jim Wilson: Didn't you split your time with Klees?

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, I have, yes. I've split my time with Frank Klees and I knew for sure that he would prefer to be making—he will be making the technical remarks; I've been making the generalized remarks—

Hon. James J. Bradley: The partisan attacks.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, the generalized remarks—about trying to tie wasteful, scandalous spending in Ornge, in eHealth, in gas plants to this one issue. Let's try and solve this issue.

I do suggest that they should proceed with haste in the public accounts committee on the Ornge hearings. I believe that Ms. Wynne, the Premier of Ontario, said that she'll appear before the gas plant hearing. I think she was in the very same cabinet that dealt with some of these scandalous outcomes of Ornge, and she should probably appear before that committee too. Not only that, she's not—Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that the Premier, with her responsibilities in agriculture, is going to have enough—

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

Second 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 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Steve Clark: It gives me great pleasure to introduce a guest in the west members' gallery: Robert Koci, who is editor of Canadian Contractor magazine. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm here to stand to welcome all of those—and there are many in the galleries—who came

to witness the release of Campaign 2000's report on child poverty.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'm joined today by, in the east members' gallery, two people from Oakville. They've joined us to see how the Legislature works. Please welcome Carie Reed and Alaina Tennison.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Please join me in welcoming Cathy Jonker. She is the mother of a page, A.J., and I'm happy that she's able to join us at Queen's Park today.

Miss Monique Taylor: It's my pleasure today to welcome my aunt-in-law, Ms. Cathy Bozzo, to the House, and to also welcome Tom Cooper, who is here on behalf of Campaign 2000 and is from the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction—and the other members.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to welcome the family of page Jenna Hirji of Richmond Hill, sitting in the gallery: Tazim Hirji, Habiba Hirji, Gulzar Hirji and Adam Hirji. Please welcome them.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I'd like to welcome some contractors visiting from Northumberland–Quinte West this morning: Michael and Esther Schuilenberg, Joe Dibbits and Frank Bremen. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It is my great pleasure and honour to welcome, in the west members' gallery, for the first time to view live question period, my best friend, the love of my life, the mother of my children: my wife, Jenny.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That'll get you points.

The member for Scarborough–Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: I want to welcome two students from my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, Terah Bakeerathan and Fiza Malik, and their teacher, Denise Colby, from the Girls' Leadership Academy. They are going to be the junior MPP for the day. Welcome.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Please join me in welcoming a couple of my friends from the Windsor–Essex area: Mr. Garry Fortune and Kim Lewis. Mr. Lewis is the chair and CEO of Liquiforce. Good morning and welcome.

Mr. Frank Klees: I have the privilege of welcoming students from Sacred Heart Catholic School in Newmarket this morning. They're making their way up to the gallery and will be observing question period today. With them is Mr. Vic Digiovanni; he is a grade 12 politics teacher. Ms. Jocelyn Roberts's grade 10 civics class will be joining them, and Ms. Alice Boyle's ESL class will be joining us. They're looking forward to seeing how business is done here in the Legislature, and they're looking forward to ministers answering the questions that members of the opposition will be putting to them.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's my pleasure today to welcome hundreds of contractors from across Ontario to the "Fix the WSIB" rally. I'd like to make special mention of a few people that are here joining us in both the west members' gallery and in the public galleries who have been instrumental in helping to fix the WSIB: Juliette Forgues, Marc Brisson, Walter Pamic, Justin Dokter, Roger Tickner; Steve Hamilton and Joe Vaccaro from the Ontario Home Builders' Association; Doug Leitch and

Steve Sell from the Ontario Electrical League; Plamen Petkov from the CFIB; and all those hundreds of others who are here to help us out in democracy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the Minister of Finance, the member for Mississauga South, regarding page Jessica Seifried: mother Kathryn, father Edward, sister Julia and godmother Cynthia Seebach are here visiting as well. Welcome.

I would also like to introduce the former member for Brantford, in the 32nd and 33rd House, Mr. Phil Gillies. Welcome.

Interjection: He was a progressive.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will reserve comment to a later date.

Another introduction?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Point of order.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, today I seek unanimous consent that in order to expedite the process for the hundreds of contractors who are here today, they be allowed to wear their work-related apparel in the Legislature today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member has asked for unanimous consent to wear their material. Is it agreed? I heard a “no.”

It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Today in your scrum and in the justice committee, you and your Liberal colleagues admitted that there are more gas plant documents. The mere premise that you are asking for more proves that you have been withholding documents you’ve been ordered to release.

Contrary to your gracious offer to look for more documents, Premier, we actually don’t need your permission. You were ordered to turn over all the documents, and by “all documents,” we mean all documents. You don’t need a new directive, Premier; you just need to comply with the Speaker.

Premier, will you just release all the documents now?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just to be clear—and I know the House leader is eager to jump in on this—the member opposite needs to understand the scope of previous requests. The May 2012 motion only requested documents from the Minister of Energy, the Ministry of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority. What I did this morning was, I said that I thought it was appropriate that the justice committee would have the opportunity to ask for documents from across government.

So actually, Mr. Speaker, what I did this morning was to suggest that the justice committee, as the mechanism that was chosen by the opposition, should be able to do

what, in effect, a select committee would have been able to do and ask all those questions and get all the documents that I thought the member opposite was interested in seeing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, you now form the four corners of this scandal. You were in the cabinet when these decisions were rendered. You were the campaign co-chair when Liberal operatives cancelled the Mississauga plant. You are now the leader of the Liberal Party and the Premier of Ontario. You can’t run, you can’t hide from this, and you can’t spin your way out of this mess.

You have admitted to us that this was a political decision, yet you’ve offered all the documents from your ministries. But will you order your Liberal Party to release all the campaign documents of this terrible scandal?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think we’ve agreed in this Legislature that this was a political decision. It was a political decision that was made by a government after a campaign. It was a political decision that both other parties said they were going to make if they formed government, Mr. Speaker. The Liberal Party won, and we acted on that political promise that we had made during a campaign.

1040

I have said consistently that I am open to making sure that all the documentation is available. That’s what my announcement this morning was about; that’s what the unanimous consent motion will be about.

I think that if the committee wants to ask for other documents from parties—they can ask from the Liberal Party, if they want to ask for information from the Conservative Party and from the NDP—they can ask for all of that information. They actually did need the motion in order to be able to do that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It’s really not helpful when the question is being asked and somebody is still saying from the same side—yelling out, and, when somebody is answering, somebody from the same side yelling out, because it becomes a little more difficult for me to do my job when I want to tell somebody to be quiet over here when somebody’s heckling on this side when the answer or the question is being put. So, please refrain.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, I realize you’d rather be talking about anything other than this gas plant scandal. We can see why; you’re in pretty deep in this one, Premier. Look what happened last time you spoke. You said, “All of the documents that have been released are the documents that were available.” Even when you knew we did not have the Oakville Project Vapour documents at that time, you said that.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment, come to order.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Now you've admitted, after three document dumps, that you still haven't released all the documents. Ontarians need a Premier who will tell them the facts, unprovoked. Today proves you're not that Premier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I didn't hear a question in that, but I'm just going to answer anyway.

Mr. Speaker, I really hope that the Progressive Conservatives will support the motion that we put forward today; I really hope that they will. Just to be clear on what I have asked today: I have asked my House leader to work with the opposition to broaden the mandate of the justice committee to look at the tendering, planning, commissioning, cancellation and relocation of the Mississauga and Oakville gas plants. The reason I've done that is that, as you know, last year's request for gas plant documents pertained only to the Ministry of Energy, the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority.

So, Mr. Speaker, quite the opposite to what the member opposite is saying, I am working as hard as I can to make sure that all of the information is available and that the justice committee has the mandate to access all of that information.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Peter Shurman: Premier, you appointed a finance minister who, like me, has a significant background in private sector business. In private business, he knows and I know that there are controls on spending or it is goodbye. We also know that salaries, the largest cost to the province, are key, and that unions talk about leveling the playing field, about doing well for their union members. So what happens when that playing field tilts the other way, when it favours unions on the public's back? My experience and Mr. Sousa's experience in former actions are, you exercise control or you're out. I'd expect you to agree with that, Premier.

So we have a new hiring elite in our public sector, and it's your finance minister's job to control that. I know you'd agree.

Your government has frozen non-union wages so you're on board with the principle of freezing wages to control costs. Will you support collaboratively our conclusion that we need a two-year breather? Will you support my legislation, Bill 5, for a two-year mandatory wage freeze?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I won't. We've always been clear that there is no room for a wage increase. We've been working with our public sector partners to implement that; we've negotiated agreements with AMAPCEO, with the OMA and with OPSEU. We have had good results in working in partnership with our public sector partners, and I think that that is the course for us going forward. We've been very clear: There is no

room for a wage increase. We're having success in negotiating those agreements, and we're going to continue on that path.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: With respect, that is not an answer to Ontarians, Premier. Most people know what has to be done when the money just isn't there, and the StatsCan figures used by the Fraser Institute and CFIB don't lie. Government workers have five times the job security, 76% of them have pension plans versus only 25% in the private sector, and salaries are about 14% better in government. So if unions are correct and we need to actually level the playing field and if we're desperate to balance a budget, why won't you admit that a two-year wage freeze is fair and just and completely in order?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What the member opposite is arguing for is an outcome. He's arguing that there should be wage constraint. We are making the same argument. We have different methodologies to get there, but the outcome has to be the same.

I agree that we need wage constraint. That's why we've been on the path that we've been on for the last year. That's why we have negotiated the zero-zero agreements that we have negotiated. We are working to the same goal, but we are not going to use the same mechanism as the member opposite is suggesting, because we really believe that working in partnership, working with the public sector employees, we can get there, and we're demonstrating that that's possible.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: This is somewhat frustrating. The Premier has seen first-hand what happens when you continue on a path of reckless spending. I ran a small business for 10 years; a larger business longer than that. I thought you were a reasonable and fair person. She is stonewalling, Speaker, on a pressing issue, and she knows it. When I stand on that side of this chamber with a Tim Hudak government, we'll control spending and there will be a level playing field.

So, back to the Premier: Is it so important to buy union peace that you will continue on a path to destruction? If you are not prepared to support our wage freeze bill, it is imperative that you explain right here and right now what you intend to do to save \$2 billion a year that you desperately need. Please do that.

Applause.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The reality is—oh, they've got to do their standing ovation.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we are on track to balance the budget by 2017-18. We said that was the plan. We have overachieved our targets for the last three years. We're ahead of schedule on that balanced budget target. So, contrary to what the member opposite is saying, we have found a way to constrain wages. We will continue to do that.

The other issue is that we wanted to introduce some changes and some transparency to the interest arbitration

process, because that's one of the issues that I know the party opposite has raised. They took those mechanisms out of the budget; they took those mechanisms that would have put more transparency in place in interest arbitration out of the budget. If we reintroduce those, I hope that the party opposite will support them.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Last fall, a legislative committee asked for documents related to the cancellation of private power contracts for gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville. My question to the Premier is a simple one: Does she really think that process worked well?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think what I did today was to ask that we broaden the mandate of the committee so that the committee could ask for all of the documentation across government. It's the exact reason that I gave this morning, because I think that the justice committee should have the mandate to ask a broader range of questions and that all that information should be available, and could in fact have the effect of a select committee. That's exactly why I asked my House leader to work with the opposition this morning, to find a way to broaden that mandate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, here's what people saw: The private power deals were cancelled for partisan purposes. The cost to the public was buried until after the election campaign, and when the government was finally compelled by committee to release information, the public watched as the government released documents, insisted that everything had been disclosed and then released more, and insisted again that everything had been disclosed and then released more again. Does the Premier think this is a process that works?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want the process to change. I want the questions to be broader. I want all the information to be available. That's why I made my statement this morning. That's why I've asked the House leader to work with the opposition to broaden the mandate of the justice committee.

Part of the problem with the process up to this point is that the mandate has been narrow. So, documents from the Ministry of Energy, the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority were all that were available. I have said clearly, I don't think that's broad enough. I think that we need to broaden the search, we need to broaden the questioning, and that's why I've asked the House leader to work with the opposition to do that.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: While we appreciate the government's intention to bring forward a motion to expand the powers of the committee, there's some well-earned skepticism about the committee's ability to get to the bottom of this.

We've proposed a much better alternative: Take this issue away from the Legislature and send it to an affordable public inquiry so we can focus on creating jobs, we can focus on improving health care, and we can focus on making life more affordable for the people of this province, here in this chamber.

Will the Premier reconsider her opposition to our simple proposal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand the reason that the leader of the third party has added the word "affordable" in front of "public inquiry," but I think that it is a contradiction in terms. I think that we have the mechanisms within the legislative process to get to the bottom of this, but I think that those mechanisms can be improved.

I had suggested a select committee; the Legislature chose the justice committee. So what I've said is, let's broaden the mandate of the justice committee. Let's give them the mandate to ask all of the questions around all of the issues surrounding these decisions, because I want us to know how to avoid having this kind of situation in the future. Siting energy infrastructure is a very complicated process, and I want to make sure we understand what happened, where we went wrong. We need to make sure that we find a way to avoid this kind of situation in the future.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. The Liberal government decided in 2010 that auto insurance companies needed a break, and so they changed the rules to help those companies save over \$2 billion a year. The Premier said that she wants to combat fraud, which will save them even more money.

I guess my question to the Premier is, at what point do drivers deserve a break in their auto insurance rates?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The leader of the third party is right that over our term, we have made a lot of changes in the auto insurance industry. When we first came into office in 2003, there were many changes that were made that actually reduced—I think at one point, if my memory serves me, there was an 11% reduction across the board in auto insurance premiums. They have gone up again and there is more work to be done, although they went down slightly last year.

I have said repeatedly that I want to work with the third party on this issue. I think we do need to work with the industry. We need to implement the recommendations of the Auto Insurance Anti-Fraud Task Force, to make sure that whatever fraud is in the system, we can get it out, and the money, the savings there need to be passed on to the premium holders.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Tomorrow I'm going to be meeting with the Insurance Bureau of Canada and I'm going to be keeping my ears open for good ideas. But I am going to be clear with those folks: My goal is to see insurance premiums drop by 15%, and I'm frankly not all

that interested in working together unless drivers actually get a break, a break that they've been waiting for, for far too long in this province.

Will the Premier back our efforts or will she keep backing a status quo that keeps leaving people paying more and more and more for their insurance rates?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm not big on the status quo in this instance. I think that there are improvements that need to be made. To that end, actually, last year I had a panel of people from the industry—brokers, the insurance bureau and folks who deal with this issue on a daily basis. I had many of my constituents come and talk to them about not just the issues of fraud, but some of the other issues of geographic distribution of premium rates and so on.

I know that there are a lot of issues that we need to talk about on this front, and I am absolutely willing to engage both with the industry and the third party on this issue.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: If the Premier went through a panel process this last year, I don't know why the heck the rates still keep going up. She certainly can't seem to get to the action. A lot of talk; no action.

I know the Premier is going to be in the Soo tomorrow. Nancy Bailey lives there, and she wrote to us to say that even with no accidents, her rates keep increasing. She says it's "making it impossible for some people to even use a car."

Ronda wrote, saying, "[R]ates generally go up every year with the insurer I currently use. I contact them to try to understand why, but am always left with vague answers.... Insurance companies are some of the richest corporations in the country ... yet rates continue to climb."

These women deserve some answers. The Premier has made life a hell of a lot better—sorry; excuse me. I withdraw that.

The Premier has made life a heck of a lot better for insurance companies. When will she make life more affordable for the drivers in Sault Ste. Marie and the rest of Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In this case, I appreciate the member taking care of herself.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Initiative.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, overall insurance rates went down very slightly last year. But I do not deny that this is an issue, which is why I have said consistently that there is money, I believe, to be found in the system. I think implementing the anti-fraud task force report—their recommendations—is a very important step that we have to take.

But the associated issue there is that there has to be a conversation with the industry that ties those reductions to premium reductions, as a result of the implementation

of the recommendations, and that's the piece I want to work on with the leader of the third party.

I'm happy to have that conversation. I, too, will be sitting down with the industry. The Minister of Finance will be sitting down with the industry. We need to find a way through this, because there are real needs and people are struggling with the costs of auto insurance. I absolutely accept that and look forward to working with the member on it.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Premier. Talking about the dismal state of our province's finances yesterday, your finance minister said there are a couple of things to put in perspective. Then he said, "We have now reduced our spending dramatically."

Premier, your government hasn't reduced spending at all. In fact, you're spending more than the previous government ever. Spending went from \$121 billion in 2010 to \$122 billion last year, and it's now projected to be \$125 billion this year.

You and the finance minister are responsible for the largest province in Canada, so I think it's very important to ask you this question: Premier, can you explain how going from \$121 billion two years ago to \$125 billion this year is a reduction in spending?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the member opposite has paid very close attention to all the discussions around the fiscal situation and the budgets and the economy over the last few years, and he will understand that what's really critical at this juncture is that we decrease the rate of growth in terms of our spending. That is the key factor in terms of what Mr. Drummond said to us. It's the key factor in terms of our staying on track to balance the budget by 2017-18.

And as I just said to one of his colleagues, we are actually overachieving on that front. We have a plan, and we have met the targets, and we will continue to meet those targets.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the Premier: Premier, if this is overachieving, I'd hate to see if you underachieved.

Premier, we can't afford to kick this can further down the road with your same policies that your cabinet has embraced. The Fraser Institute reported last month that Ontario's fiscal position is worse than California's. Our debt-to-GDP ratio is 37%, the same as Greece in 1984. We spend \$11 billion on interest charges. Every day of inaction digs us deeper in debt, and you're mortgaging our children's future.

The PC Party has put forward a number of ideas that would save money: for instance, an immediate, across-the-board public sector wage freeze. It would save \$2 billion. Today we will debate and vote on legislation to implement a wage freeze for the entire public sector. Premier, will you stand up with us for the Ontario people and support this bill?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I spoke to your colleague, the outcome in terms of constraining wages is exactly what we are achieving, and we will continue to work on that.

But we've held spending growth to 0.9%, which is in line with what Mr. Drummond suggested that we do. I know that the party opposite is exactly in favour of what Mr. Drummond suggested that we do. I think it's really important for the people of the province to understand that, as Don Drummond said in his report, "Ontario is neither a high-tax nor high-spend province." So he—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, that's what Mr. Drummond said.

The reality is that we have said—

Interjections.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Wrap up.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We have said clearly that we understand that we have to constrain our spending increases. That's what we're doing. That's why we're on track to balance the budget by 2017-18, and we're going to stay on track.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is for the Premier. Premier, tomorrow will be one year since I introduced a motion on the creation of an all-party committee to examine all legislation relating to northern Ontario. This motion passed with support from all three parties. Yet here we are a year later, and the government has failed to act on the establishment of the all-party northern committee. Instead, this government seems more interested in a photo op in Sault Ste. Marie with just a select few Liberal MPPs as your northern caucus.

Premier, will you establish an all-party northern committee to discuss northern concerns?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We're holding a cabinet meeting in Sault Ste. Marie. I made a commitment that we would do that within 30 days of my becoming the Premier and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —following through on that. We're also creating a cabinet committee on the north so that, as policies come forward, they will be looked at through a northern lens.

The time in Sault Ste. Marie tomorrow will not just be about the cabinet meeting. My ministers are meeting with stakeholders; they're going to be engaged with the community members. I think that's very, very important.

We are rededicating ourselves to making sure that we understand the issues of the north and that we engage with people in the north so that we can make sure that policies are sensitive to the issues in the north.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, my question is to the Premier. It's been a year since the northern committee

motion was passed by this House. Since then, your government has decided to dismantle the ONTC, cancel the Ontario Ranger Program, close northern provincial parks and cut jobs at the MNR, and continues to fail to react to issues that are killing jobs in the north, like high energy prices, faulty forest tenure policies and delays with the Ring of Fire.

Northerners are justifiably concerned that your government will only continue to pay lip service to the north's concerns. Once again I ask you: Will you do the right thing and create an all-party legislative committee and give northerners a real voice in this Legislature?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have spent a lot of time in the north over the last nine and a half years as a minister—

Mr. John Vanthof: So have I.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: And you have, too—absolutely. I appreciate the perspective. A lot of the issues that you've raised are issues that I have heard a lot about.

One of the reasons that we want the Northern Policy Institute to be real is that it will have people from the north on it, who will be able to advise the government, will be able to develop a policy perspective that will be real and that we will be able to tie to the policies that we develop here at Queen's Park.

I look forward to working with the member opposite on the issues that he raises. As I've said, we are setting up a number of mechanisms to make sure that we hear from and that we are able to put that northern lens on the policies that we develop here at Queen's Park.

IMMIGRANTS

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is to the brand new Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. May I say, Speaker, what a fantastic job he's doing.

As we all know, Canada is a country of immigrants, and my riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville is no different. People from all over the world call it home.

I hear first-hand the challenges many newcomers face, whether it's finding a job, learning a new language or finding a place to live. I am indeed fortunate that my community is served by organizations like the Peel newcomer centre, Dixie neighbourhood, Employment Access and India Rainbow. They do such a fantastic job.

Minister, my question to you is, what is the government doing to support newcomers so they can become effective members of our society and our economy?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I want to thank my colleague from Mississauga East for the question—thank you so much. She recognizes the vital contributions that newcomers make here in Ontario, and I thank her for her advocacy.

Mr. Speaker, on November 5, our government set a new direction for immigration in Ontario, introducing Ontario's first immigration strategy. The strategy has three key objectives: first, to attract a skilled workforce in Ontario and to build a stronger economy. Also, we're helping newcomers and their families achieve success

here in Ontario, and maximizing the diversity that we have here in this province to ensure that we continue to have prosperity.

This is a comprehensive plan, one that will attract the newcomers that our economy needs to make sure that they're successful. Implementing Ontario's immigration strategy is a critical step towards growing an economy that benefits all Ontarians. We know when newcomers succeed in this province, Ontario succeeds.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Minister, in my riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville, there are a number of employers who are having a hard time finding skilled workers they need for specialized fields and high-skilled sectors. But federal changes—and, may I say, Conservative federal changes—to immigration policies have resulted in fewer economic immigrants coming to Ontario. A growing labour shortage could negatively hurt our economy here in Ontario.

On top of that, for a third year in a row, the federal government has cut funding to Ontario settlement agencies. These Conservative federal cuts now total \$85 million. Even though we remain the number one destination for newcomers to Canada, Ontario has an immigration challenge. Minister, what is our government doing to address the concerns of employers in my riding?

Hon. Michael Coteau: We know that some employers are having a hard time finding workers for jobs that require post-secondary education, and also making sure that they have—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Michael Coteau: The fact is, without immigration, Ontario's aging population would begin to decline by 2014, and that's why our plan calls for the following: We want to make sure that our economic immigrants who are coming here to Ontario move from 52% to 70%. We also want to make sure that our provincial nominee numbers go from 1,000 to 5,000. The third thing: I want to make sure—and this is something I'm really proud of—that our francophone immigrants here in Ontario rise by 5%, and that we reach those targets—sorry, sets a target by 5%.

It's also crucial that we remind the federal government that immigration here is a shared responsibility. I encourage all members in this House on both sides to pick up the phone and talk to the federal Conservatives to make sure that we reach these targets.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, today hundreds of contractors from around Ontario are joining us in this House because of Bill 119. Your government has used Bill 119 to force contractors to pay for mandatory WSIB premiums. These contractors already pay for private insurance because it covers them 24/7, because if they slip or fall at work or at

home, their livelihood depends on their ability to work. Now they're being forced to pay WSIB premiums, insurance that costs six to seven times more than their existing private insurance that they will continue to need.

Minister, can you explain to the contractors here with us today why your government believes they should pay for inferior, redundant WSIB coverage? Enough is enough for these—

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

Minister of Labour?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Labour?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. I want to thank the member opposite for the question. I had the opportunity to meet with the member yesterday and also the member from Essex, and I look forward to working with both of them to ensure that we continue to improve the working conditions of all the workers in our province.

I also want to welcome all the hard-working construction workers and employers who are here today in the Legislature as well.

I think we all will agree that we collectively have the desire to improve the health and safety of all workers in the construction industry and to reduce the underground economic activity, and that's exactly what Bill 119 is doing. Ever since this legislation was brought forward in 2008, the WSIB has worked with construction stakeholders to ensure that we have a system that balances the concerns of workers and businesses.

We listened to the concerns of the stakeholders and we've given a four-year transition period to implement this legislation—

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: Minister, there's a 25-year-old Hamilton contractor who's here with us today in the House. His name is Justin. He has a wife and a 6-month-old daughter. Your government is forcing him to choose between paying \$5,000 a year for redundant WSIB coverage or saving money for his family and his daughter's future. Your government is forcing him to pay for this pointless insurance instead of saving \$150,000 for his daughter's education. He wants to play by the rules, but these rules just aren't fair and won't let him.

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Minister, can you explain to Justin why you are forcing him to choose between his family and his daughter's future, feeding that monstrous WSIB monopoly with another tax grab or choosing between staying legal and going out of business or having to join the underground economy?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Stop the clock. I will repeat what many Speakers have said in the past—that we absolutely invite and want our guests to be here to watch, and that's it: watch. We do not allow any participation whatsoever from the gal-

leries—all galleries. I would just remind us to please observe those rules. We would deeply appreciate it.

Minister of Labour?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. This is a very valid question. I really appreciate the member for asking this because there are some very significant differences between WSIB insurance versus private insurance. WSIB coverage not only deals with an injured worker at the time of their injury but also provides benefits to assist them in their post-injury state.

The WSIB provides a competitive but different no-fault insurance product that protects employers from costly lawsuits and has predictable rates, tax-deductible premiums and reliable benefits. The benefits paid by WSIB—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. I think the member from Oxford is going to get a warning if he doesn't watch it, especially when I get quiet. That's not the spot to start to inject.

Minister of Labour, finish, please.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. Benefits paid by WSIB can be more comprehensive and cover a broader range of services—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, second time, I've named his riding.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, this is very important—such as WSIB pays up to 85% net wage loss; benefits include loss of retirement income paid to injured workers from age 65; a special allowance for severely impaired workers, including independent living allowances; and, most importantly, work reintegration and retraining services, if needed. These are important differences between private insurance and WSIB.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. Today, Campaign 2000 released its annual report on child poverty. The report states that the government's 2012 budget “derailed effective anti-poverty measures.”

Will the government promise to help, not hurt, low-income families in the 2013 budget by, among other steps, at the very least, allowing social assistance recipients to keep the first \$200 of their monthly employment earnings?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I really appreciate the member's question, and I totally appreciate the work of Campaign 2000. In fact, I did some work for that organization before I was in elected office and I know that it's very sound work that they do. In fact, they were one of the poverty groups that called on the government (a) to have a poverty reduction strategy and (b), to put the Ontario child benefit in place, which has made a difference to tens of thousands of children.

Is there more to be done? Absolutely. Is the issue of the ability of people to keep more of the money that they

earn when they're working in the workforce, people with disabilities—absolutely. That's something that we need to look at, Mr. Speaker. It's something that we signalled in the throne speech that we believe needs to be addressed. It's one of the things that the Lankin-Sheikh report identified. I look forward to working with you on that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Again back to the Premier: Campaign 2000's report states that “policy decisions ... in the 2012 Ontario budget made survival even more difficult for the over 383,000 children living in poverty.” That's one in seven children in Ontario. As the report points out, the Liberal government has cut housing and health benefits, delayed child benefits, and frozen minimum wage below the poverty line.

Will the government help low-income families get back on their feet in the next budget—specifics now—or will it once again push them deeper into poverty?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the premise of some of the issues that the member raises I would have to question, in terms of some of the housing benefits, which we actually have combined and have changed. But we have continued to invest in affordable housing and will continue to do that.

I have said very clearly, and our throne speech outlined that one of the issues that we want to look at is how we can work to make sure that people who are earning—people who are on disability, on ODSP, and work can keep more of the money that they earn. I think it's an important issue, as well as some of the other social assistance issues that are raised by the Lankin-Sheikh report. I think that there is a lot of work to be done there, and I look forward to working with the member on those issues.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. It has been one year since the minister released her action plan for health care. In this plan, the minister promised to provide Ontarians with the right care, at the right time, in the right place. Many of my Ajax-Pickering constituents, especially seniors, rely on community services as part of their everyday health care.

Speaker, through you, can the minister please tell this House what this government has been doing to improve access to community services for seniors?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I welcome the question from the member from Ajax-Pickering because I think all of us in this House recognize that we need to do whatever we can to support our seniors to stay healthy and to stay home as long as possible.

Speaker, that's why in our last budget we prioritized community supports. We have a 4% increase in the community sector—that includes community care, home care and community services.

Each of the LHINs went through a process—and I would urge everyone here to check with their LHIN to find out what specific investments were made with this 4% increase in spending. The LHINs were tasked with the responsibility of reducing emergency department and ALC rates, reducing avoidable hospital admissions and increasing access to mental health and addiction services. The Central East LHIN, which is represented by the member, has done a fantastic job.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you, Speaker, and through you back to the minister: Demographics in Ontario are changing. In just four years, Ontario will be home to more people over the age of 65 than those under 14 years old. In 20 years, the number of seniors will double in the province. I've heard from many Ontarians that as they grow older, they want to maintain their health and independence. I know I certainly do.

Speaker, can the minister tell us how she plans to address the pressures that the health care system will face as the number of seniors grows, while allowing them to live independently?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: One way this increase—this 4% increase—will address the priorities is by providing home care for 90,000 more seniors. It enhances supportive housing, palliative care, caregiver respite programs, day programs for people with Alzheimer's, in-home respite—a range of programs with one goal, and that is to keep people at home, where they want to be, as long as possible.

We're also expanding house calls: 30,000 more people will receive house calls this year. We're increasing access to personal support workers—250 more short-stay beds for people who need a little bit of care after they're ready to leave hospital but they're not quite ready to go home. We're going to take care of them in short-stay beds. It will help 1,500 more seniors get that appropriate transition from hospital to home.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, and I welcome everybody here today in the audience, all the contractors etc.

In Ontario, we have over 600,000 people out of work. Each and every month the job losses continue to rise—48,000 in January alone. Over and over again, your government finds new ways to tax and squeeze scarce dollars out of the private sector while at the same time harassing these hard-working Ontarians. Two examples: your Bill 119 is a new WSIB tax on small business. It impacts small construction companies at an average yearly rate of about \$5,500 while at the same time giving them nothing. Your new trades tax on journeymen and apprentices is the same. It is a 600% increase over previous fees and offers them absolutely nothing. It is apparently—get this—covering the cost of hiring 150 new trades cops. Can you believe that?

1120

So, to the minister: Can you explain to me what the 150 new trades cops that the College of Trades is hiring will be doing that Ministry of Labour inspectors aren't already doing?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Speaker, I say this as charitably as I can in this place: The member's description of the College of Trades and the membership fee is grossly, grossly inaccurate. It does an absolute injustice to all tradespeople and, in particular, all 44 other professional sectors with similar regulatory bodies.

It's shameful that the member opposite does not think that the tradespeople of Ontario deserve the same respect and professional profile that teachers get, that social workers get, that architects get, that accountants get, that nurses get, that doctors get.

Well, on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we believe in our skilled trade workers. We will stand up for them and their right to govern themselves and make the important decisions that have to do with their industries, rather than have politicians like the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I hope we avoid trying to outshout each other.

Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Why didn't you ask them?

Minister, as I said, the new trades tax will see journeymen's and apprentices' fees raised by 600%. But yesterday in the House, in your statement on the College of Trades, you said, and I quote, "Not one cent of the registration fees collected by the College of Trades will go to the government."

Minister, we have correspondence directly from your College of Trades confirming that, "HST will be charged on top of the membership fee." So that is \$15.60 on top of the \$120 trade tax. That's \$11 million more on top of the \$84 million that the college will collect on the new trades tax. So, in effect, a journeyman who is currently paying \$20 per year for their C of Q will now see their fee increased to \$135.60, or 676%.

Minister, did you know about the HST or is the staff at the College of Trades incompetent?

Interjections.

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

Minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's always about character with these guys, Mr. Speaker. It's always about character, whether it's about our character or whether it's about character of hard-working skilled labourers in this province.

Why do the PCs think—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe North asked the question and I would hope he would give the courtesy to listen to the answers, because I can't hear.

Minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Why do the PCs think that decisions on compulsory trades, on apprenticeship ratios, on standards should be made by politicians, lobbyists and bureaucrats? I think that's pretty arrogant that the PC Party thinks that they know more about the skilled trades than our trade workers themselves. The College of Trades will empower this sector to make its own decisions. Why would he be opposed to that? The College of Trades will enhance consumer protection. Why would you be opposed to that? The College of Trades will better protect certified skilled workers from unfair competition from the underground economy. Mr. Speaker, I have no idea why they'd be opposed to that.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Over the last two weeks, New Democrats have been raising the alarm about cuts to front-line care workers, hospital beds and services in Windsor and London. Today, we're learning of another 35 cuts to staff and services at Bluewater Health in Sarnia. The people who live in Windsor, London and now Sarnia are justifiably concerned, but when questioned about this disturbing trend, the government says everything's hunky-dory.

Can the Premier please explain to Ontarians why her health minister thinks cuts to front-line services care is "okay"?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said earlier in this House, our health care sector is in a time of transformation. We are changing how we deliver care. We're changing for two reasons. One is that we have a demographic shift well under way. As our population ages, we need to deliver care differently.

The other reality is our fiscal reality. We simply don't have the luxury of the 6% or 7% annual increases to our health care budget that we used to have. As we transform our health care system and as we do things differently, we will be increasing supports in the community sector and there will be some reductions in our hospitals.

But we will always look at what's important to patients. That's the only thing that matters to me: Are patients getting better care? Are we able to serve more people? Is it higher-quality care—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think if you ask Ontarians, the answer would be no, Speaker. They're not getting better care. I've heard from concerned residents in Windsor and in London, and judging by media reports, I think I'll be hearing from people in Sarnia very soon. Patients are definitely not okay with cuts to their front-line hospital care, and front-line care workers have a hard time understanding how closing hospital beds is "not a bad thing," as the minister claims.

New Democrats have suggested a more balanced way to fund better home care by capping hospital CEO

salaries and finding savings in administrative costs of the LHINs and the CCACs. Will the Premier please explain to the people of Windsor, London, and now Sarnia, why her government prefers to cut hospital beds and front-line workers instead?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I think it is enormously important that we do measure how our health care system is doing, and we have entrenched metrics within our health care system that measure the quality of care and that measure access to care.

What matters to me is that people are getting access to care in a timely way. That's why we've invested in our wait time strategies and brought down our surgical and diagnostic wait times dramatically.

Speaker, it matters to me that people get access to primary care. That's why we now are committed to making sure all our seniors, for a start, have access to primary care. We measure quality in a way we never did before. These are metrics that matter to patients.

The NDP might choose to ignore our fiscal reality. The Conservative Party wants us to slash and burn. We have found the right spot. We're improving quality, and we're getting better value for our health care dollars.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will continue to use expressions that some Speakers have used in the past, and I think they're appropriate. If there's another conversation going on in between the question and the answer, take it outside.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: That means you, Bradley.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That means the member from Nepean–Carleton will not speak when I'm finished.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm sorry.

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

FIRE SAFETY

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. One of my constituents in Scarborough–Agincourt recently contacted me about fire safety in long-term facilities and retirement homes. She recalled from the 2012 fall session that the minister spoke about expediting the technical consultation which will identify fire safety improvements in residences for seniors, people with disabilities and other vulnerable Ontarians. I know that the technical consultation is a vital step and builds on preliminary consultations which identify some of the key areas of improvement, including enhancing inspections, training for owners and operators and staff, installation of automatic sprinklers and other fire safety retrofits.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you please tell the House the status of the technical consultations?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to thank the member from Scarborough–Agincourt for asking this very important question. Given the importance of this issue, I've asked the technical advisory committee to accelerate

the technical consultation by four months, and they did, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the technical advisory committee completed initiatives ahead of time. I'm pleased with the progress and want to thank everyone involved, including officials in the ministry and the Office of the Fire Marshal.

Over 45 days, Ontario has been seeking public input on proposed changes to the fire code and building code that will improve fire safety in residences for seniors, people with disabilities and other vulnerable individuals. Today is the last day for the consultations, and I want to make sure that everybody knows about it and everybody has their input.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents will be pleased to hear about these new developments. But, Minister, were these public consultations necessary when we already had gone through two sets of consultations?

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you please tell the House the reasons why we are going through this process?

1130

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Yes, it's a good question, because public consultation is required when making regulatory changes. Our proposed changes include: a phase-in of mandatory sprinklers for all existing care residents and retirement homes with more than four occupants over the next five years; annual validation of fire safety plans by local fire services; enhanced fire inspection and staff training; and fire safety enhancement for all new retirement homes.

Input from the public and impacted stakeholders enables us to strike the right balance. We've taken strong action, and Ontario is on the way to being the only province to make retrofit sprinklers mandatory. The safety of our most vulnerable citizens is a priority.

Mr. Speaker, all of us have someone like my mother who is looking to go to a residence; I'll make sure that there are sprinklers in the residence that she will go to.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the Premier. We began asking questions about the gas plants last April. We requested documents by way of motion in the estimates committee in May. The committee agreed to report to the House about the documents in July, which it did in August. It took a motion of contempt to see any documents come forward. Then McGuinty prorogued the Legislature for 127 days so this government could avoid answering questions and accountability. Then this House resumed to move contempt again in February, so that the justice committee could order an investigation on the gas plant scandal. Now, we finally have an admission that more documents are out there, and that they'll be released.

Premier, my question is simple: Does it really have to be this hard to ask for accountability from this government?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, there are really two questions to go back to the opposition: Will they support the unanimous consent motion that I plan to present to the House leaders at lunch today, which will allow the committee to not only look into the matter of the production of documents relating to the member's motion, but also look at the tendering, planning, commissioning, cancellation and relocation of the gas plants? And the second question is, will the honourable member commit that the Progressive Conservative Party will co-operate fully with the committee when it comes to their decision to cancel the plants and provide the type of policy analysis, funding and financial breakdown, and study that I'm sure went into their decision?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the government House leader is practising for when we're on that side of the House and they're really asking us these questions.

I'm going to ask this question back to the Premier. Premier, you were part of the government that made the decision to actually locate the gas plants. As a result of the Liberal decision to do this, we have wasted \$1.3 billion to not even produce one megawatt of power.

You've known about this scandal and our request for documents since last April. While you were in the McGuinty cabinet, did you ever express this desire for full openness and transparency, or is this a deathbed conversion in the dying days of your government?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, perhaps at the committee, the honourable member can say whether he opposed the PC plan to cancel the plant. Did he phone his fellow candidate Geoff Janoscik when he put out the release saying—

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: Wait, wait, wait—"Unlike the Dalton McGuinty Liberals, the only way to guarantee this power plant does not get built is to"—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville will withdraw.

Mr. Steve Clark: Withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And while I'm at it, bring it down.

Hon. John Milloy: Here it is, Mr. Speaker: "Unlike the Dalton McGuinty Liberals, the only way to guarantee this power plant does not get built is to elect a Tim Hudak Ontario PC government. A Tim Hudak government will cancel this plant."

I'll have to check the record; I don't remember the member from Cambridge opposing his party leader when he made that commitment.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we look forward to vigorous discussion at committee, where they can bring forward the policy analysis and costing, which I'm sure they did before making that commitment during the 2011 campaign.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development. Nine months ago, Knorr Brake Ltd. of Kingston received \$226,000 from this government's Eastern Ontario Development Fund. Yesterday, we learned that it would be shutting down its Kingston facility and moving its work to Watertown, New York.

When will this government start tying job guarantees to its so-called job-creation grants, and will the government immediately ask Knorr to return any money it has received?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The short answer is: We already do tie those requirements, those benchmarks and claw-back provisions to the agreements that we provide—in this case, to the Eastern Ontario Development Fund.

In the case of Knorr Brake—again, as I mentioned in a similar situation—our primary concern is with the workers who are at risk here, the workers and their families who are being laid off and impacted by this announcement. It's never good news to the community or the families themselves.

I want to make sure that the impression isn't left that these funds, in fact, aren't put to good use, because with the Eastern Ontario Development Fund, we've invested approximately \$60 million so far, leveraging \$600 million, and we have helped to create or retain 13,500 jobs thus far. This is an important fund. Of course, with this particular situation, we are very concerned with the workers and their families.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Second time I've asked members to take it outside. Maybe I'll refer specifically to the members to take it outside for the rest of the day.

Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Eighteen new jobs were supposed to be created in Kingston in return for the \$226,000 grant. Instead, 86 people in Kingston are losing their jobs as this company moves its business to New York. This is not a good or fair deal for the people of the province. Ontario has lost 300,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs on this government's watch.

Will this government immediately ask Knorr to return all funds forwarded to them, and when will it start including ironclad job guarantees in its granting program?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The member opposite obviously doesn't know this: Those clawback provisions are in place in the case of Knorr in Kingston. We have disbursed approximately \$130,000 to this company so far. We've asked for those funds back. The company has said that they will repay those funds.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

M. Shafiq Qaadri: J'ai le plaisir d'adresser ma question à la ministre des Services aux consommateurs.

My question, as I've just said, is to the Minister of Consumer Services. It's on the broad area of consumer

protection, specifically with reference to home inspectors. Of course, when couples and young families are embarking on a home purchase—usually the largest that they'll ever make in their entire lives—it can be a very complex and daunting undertaking. Of course, the list that folks have to go through is very lengthy: everything from deciding about location, complex rules of mortgages, the right real estate agent, nearby amenities, and so on. One of the things that the government is moving towards in 21st-century homebuying is to make sure that well-trained and professional home inspectors are available, especially before folks make that massive commitment, signing on the bottom line.

My question to the Minister of Consumer Services: Would she share with us what the government's plans are with reference to maintaining certification, having appropriate training, and bringing the necessary professionalism in this domain?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: First, I'd like to thank the member for Etobicoke North for his question and his overall appreciation of consumer protection in Ontario. Our government realizes that when consumers spend up to hundreds of thousands of dollars on a home, they want to know they've made a sound decision guided by qualified and reliable experts. As the member stated, one of the most important decision-making factors for all homebuyers is that home inspection. Homeowners and buyers want to rely on a qualified expert's opinion to support their decision-making process.

That's why our government recently announced our intent to consult on setting minimum qualifications for home inspectors in Ontario. We believe in raising standards for home inspectors, and this will help buyers and sellers. We want greater transparency when making one of the most important decisions that Ontarians make: purchasing a home.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands adjourned until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1300.

BIRTH OF MEMBER'S GRANDCHILD

Mr. John O'Toole: With your indulgence, Speaker, I'd like to announce to the House that last Thursday, February 21, at 9:30 p.m., my son Andrew and his wife, Alison, had their second little baby girl, Madison. She was born at Lakeridge Health in Oshawa at 9:30 in the evening, as I said, at eight pounds, four ounces. This is our 10th grandchild.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think the member was introducing them as if they were on their way to the House to present their grandchild for the first time.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to introduce Frank Campion, in the gallery. He's a councillor from the city

of Welland and he's here today around our health petitions.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I have the president of the Ontario Technical League. Steve Sell is from Burlington.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to introduce Allan and Marie Russell. They're hard-working contractors—a carpenter, a plumber—and their business is at risk with these changes in WSIB.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd also like to recognize one of my constituents, who has a drywall company: Shawn Keene, who is here to protest Bill 119. Welcome, Shawn.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, the Liberal government continues to prove their desire to discourage small business and debilitate economic growth in Ontario. Their new WSIB tax grab proves they don't know how to manage the economy. The CFIB has a good case that this is strictly trying to cover WSIB's own unfunded liability on the backs of these hard-working small business owners and independent contractors.

Mandatory WSIB is unfair because it forces business owners who have their own private insurance to pay WSIB premiums, dramatically raising the cost of doing business. This will increase the underground economy because prices will go up and this will encourage people to go to unlicensed contractors. CFIB also states it could potentially put 19% of independent contractors out of business due to increased costs.

Speaker, the PC Party will eliminate this tax. It does not increase worker safety since private coverage is generally more extensive and it does not deter the underground economy. In addition, the PC Party will continue its commitment to supporting small business by also eliminating the College of Trades.

Speaker, I have here today—and I'll present many petitions and many names of independent contractors, and people who are aren't even involved in the contracting field, because they think this WSIB change is a sham, it's unfair and it's going to kill jobs.

On behalf of my constituents of Elgin–Middlesex–London, I'm going to work as hard as I can to end this tax grab.

HAMILTON CENTRE FOR CIVIC INCLUSION

Mr. Paul Miller: “What's one thing you would change in your community that would make it better for you and your family?” “What can governments do to make you feel more included in Hamilton?”

Speaker, those questions come from the website of the Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion, or HCCI. This group works hard in our community to create opportu-

nities for civic inclusion. They hold what they call a conversation café, which is an opportunity to include representatives from as many ethnocultural backgrounds as possible talking about their hopes, their dreams, their vision for future Hamiltonians.

Some Hamilton politicians participated in the inaugural event. HCCI advertised the inaugural event in four languages and provided on-site interpreters to assist in as many other languages as they possibly could.

The idea of planning how Hamilton will look to all residents in the future and beginning that planning right now is such a smart and progressive idea. The HCCI website quotes a participant saying, “I'd like to see Hamilton become the best place for new immigrants to come to Canada and integrate into Canadian society.”

These conversation cafés begin the discussion about what Canadian society will look like in the future—in my children's future. Hamilton will be at the forefront with initiatives like the conversation cafés.

My compliments to the hard-working people who make the Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion the success it is.

CYCLONE MANUFACTURING

Mr. Bob Delaney: Late last year, I visited Taiwan with an Ontario delegation and a leading-edge western Mississauga aerospace firm, Cyclone Manufacturing. When Cyclone first moved to Meadowvale in 2004, they employed 80 people. With help from a Next Generation of Jobs Fund grant through the Ministry of Research and Innovation, along with their proprietary technology and a skilled and specialized workforce, Cyclone now employs some 400 people. They project 500 good-paying manufacturing jobs by this time next year.

Ontario helped Cyclone expand its ability to precision-manufacture airframe parts from a single block of aluminum, using no rivets or welds, with computer-assisted design and manufacturing.

Cyclone's clients include the who's who of aviation: Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Gulfstream, Airbus Industrie and more.

In Taiwan with Cyclone president Andrew Sochaj in December, I witnessed the signing of an \$11-million agreement between Cyclone and Taiwanese airframe maker AIDC. The two firms will produce the tail assembly of Bombardier Challenger series 300 jets.

Meadowvale is home to world-class aerospace technology. Cyclone Manufacturing, helped by the province of Ontario, has won lucrative international business and is building state-of-the-art aircraft and world-class manufacturing careers in western Mississauga.

JURY DUTY

Mr. John O'Toole: Today, more than half of Canadians in territories and provinces are allowed—if their citizens are over 65—to opt out of jury duty. I urge the House to extend a similar courtesy to Ontario seniors.

Most seniors are ready, willing and able to go through a jury selection process and perform their civic duty. At the same time, some older adults have family problems, health problems, mobility, transportation—and aren't able to perform their jury duty. Some are caring for their disabled spouse and have other challenges. It is difficult for some seniors to serve on jury. If they receive a summons, it is an added hardship to go before the judge to apply to be exempt.

Ontarians over 65 have worked hard, paid their taxes, raised their families, volunteered and built the high quality of life that Ontarians enjoy today.

Next week, I will be introducing a private member's bill to allow for seniors over 65 to apply and opt out of jury duty selection.

It's time for Ontario to consider joining other provinces such as British Columbia, PEI, Quebec, Saskatchewan and many of the other provinces and territories and allow seniors to opt out of jury duty and allow others to do the duty that they're required to do.

HOMELESSNESS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I rise today—really, a memorial to the seven who have died on the streets of Toronto since January and the 700 who have died on the streets of Toronto since the 1980s. A group of very dedicated people meet every year at the homeless memorial outside of the Holy Trinity church downtown.

But more to the point, where is the political will to do something about it? I think in the city of Toronto we're so inured now to seeing people sleeping on grates that we've forgotten that we can do something about it, Mr. Speaker. We can do something about it, and certainly we can do something about poverty, as we heard today, with the release of Campaign 2000's document, among many others.

I want to highlight an individual and an organization that are doing something about it. Bonnie Briggs, a phenomenal woman who lives in my riding, is responsible for that homeless memorial. It was she who originally set it up and who continues to do it. Also, Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre, a phenomenal organization that feeds hundreds of people every day—tonight is a fundraiser for them. I certainly recommend that any member or anyone who's near attend that. It's at 3030 Dundas Street. There, they will try to raise some funds to make up for the shortfall of funds that they do not get from this government or, of course, from the federal government either.

Again, it's time to recommit to do something about this so that no one else need die on the streets of Toronto.

1310

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I rise in the House today to speak about the issue of Alzheimer's. It's a form of dementia. I am going to reintroduce my bill again, which

was supported by both parties—and hopefully by both sponsors again.

We live in a country where there are now more people over the age of 65 than under the age of five. The issue of Alzheimer's is a tsunami that is going to overtake us in the near future if we do not do something about it now.

Our challenge is that this disease is a progressive disease for which there is no cure. The assumption is that families can just jump in and do it all, but that is simply not the case. It's a challenge that is 24/7 in terms of looking after someone. They need respite and they need support.

Most importantly, this government or any government needs to listen to the people who are either the caregivers with folks who have Alzheimer's dementia or to those in the medical profession who are now beginning to understand the extraordinary challenges of this aging society. It's not just the government that has all the answers. It's time that we actually sit down and talk to everyone who has something to say about this progressive disease on how we can work together to ensure that people have the support they need in order to stay at home to look after those with this incredible disease. So I'm looking for your support once again.

CURLING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. Rod Jackson: I'm very happy to rise today to speak about the 2013 Dominion Tankard, which brought the Dominion Men's Curling Championships to the Barrie Molson Centre earlier this month. It was my pleasure to be in attendance at the opening ceremonies in Barrie and be part of the opening ceremonies and speak with many of the curlers.

I'm always pleased to support tourism and sport in the region, and it was great to see how the Barrie Curling Club and Tourism Barrie came together to host a really, really excellent and smooth Dominion Tankard. There was a lot of curling talent gathered there, and it was a pleasure to watch. The Dominion Tankard event was a terrific showcase of the sport as 11 strong sides fought for the chance to represent the province of Ontario at the Brier championship, which is going on right now, I believe.

Congratulations are due to Team Howard, a great Simcoe county team, and his rink, consisting of skip Glenn Howard, who will be curling for his fifth Brier championship, and his team of Wayne Middaugh, Brent Laing and Craig Savill. I would like to wish Team Howard the best of luck at the upcoming Brier championship, which runs from March 2 to 10—so it's not on right now. It's a team full of strong community leaders and ambassadors for the sport. I know they will make Ontario proud and they'll continue to grow curling across the province and across the country, and actually worldwide, in the case of Team Howard.

Again, I must congratulate the organizers of the event and the Barrie region for hosting a very successful tournament. I was proud to help host the event and take

part in the ceremonies and actually watch some of the curling—world-class stuff. We hope they come back in the future.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I rise today to speak about safety in our communities. Later this afternoon, I will be reintroducing a bill that perhaps just by the title doesn't say what its intent is. It's Bill 8, the Liquor Licence Amendment Act (Serving Liquor in Certain Places). It's really a bill, as I said, that means to bring safety to our communities and to target booze cans.

What are booze cans? These are places, typically in urban neighbourhoods, where illegal alcohol is sold but that also attract a certain criminal element and therefore are not only a nuisance because of the noise or maybe because of safety—a fire hazard for their neighbouring residents and businesses—but also can endanger innocent lives. Many times, the lives that are endangered are the ones of our youth. We just have to go back a few days ago, February 24, when the life of a 25-year-old was taken in an after-hours club here in Toronto. It's typical of urban ridings, but it's a problem and an issue that is growing, and I look forward to other members' support.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr. Randy Hillier: Today I want to acknowledge the hundreds of men and women who took time off work to get involved with this institution we represent here: democracy.

I've long advocated that democracy is not a spectator sport, and that it's not something that you do only once every four years. In this Legislature, we lose sight of the impact that our decisions have on the people of this province, and the contractors who have joined us today from around Ontario are proof of just that.

Today, hundreds of contractors from around the province have taken a day off work, a day without pay, a day away from their families and businesses, to remind us all that one decision made in this House can take away their entire livelihoods for good, to remind us that a political decision like the passage of Bill 119 may pick winners but it also creates losers. It forces these men and women out of work or into the underground economy; it makes putting dinner on the table that much harder.

That's why, in a few minutes, I'll be tabling legislation to repeal the provisions of Bill 119, to level the playing field for everyone who wants to compete, live and work in this province. The contractors of Ontario have said enough is enough. Trop c'est trop.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I just have a point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will accept a point of order.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you so much; that's very kind of you.

I just want to do a correction from what I said earlier. Stephen Sell is the president of the Ontario Electrical League. I said that incorrectly, and I just wanted to correct that on record. Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member is always in order to correct her record.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FIRST RESPONDERS DAY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE JOUR DES PREMIERS INTERVENANTS

Mr. Klees moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 15, An Act to proclaim First Responders Day /
Projet de loi 15, Loi proclamant le Jour des premiers intervenants.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Frank Klees: First responders, as we all know, are volunteers and professionals who have dedicated their lives to public service. Their life-saving skills often make the difference between life and death, and their public service deserves to be recognized by us all in this province.

This bill was passed last October 4, unanimously, by all parties in recognition of the important work that first responders do. I am reintroducing it now, and I am hopeful that the government would recognize the importance of this bill, and that at the appropriate time, bring it forward for third reading so that it can be enacted—hopefully in time for this coming May 1.

MUNICIPAL AMENDMENT ACT (ELECTION OF CHAIR OF YORK REGION), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MUNICIPALITÉS (ÉLECTION DU PRÉSIDENT DE LA RÉGION DE YORK)

Ms. Jaczek moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 16, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 to provide that the head of council of The Regional Municipality of York must be elected /
Projet de loi 16, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités pour prévoir que le président du conseil de la municipalité régionale de York doit être élu.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Amending the Municipal Act, 2001, in this way will provide that the head of council of the regional municipality of York must be elected and may not be appointed.

You may recall that this bill, previously introduced by my colleague from Richmond Hill, did receive unanimous approval by this House on second reading earlier in 2012. Just as my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora has stated, when it comes up for debate on May 30, I certainly anticipate and hope that again we will pass it unanimously at second reading, and will be requesting a third reading vote as well.

1320

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND
INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT
(ALTERNATE INSURANCE PLANS), 2013
LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE
ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE
LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL
(RÉGIMES D'ASSURANCE
CONCURRENTS)

Mr. Hillier moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 17, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 to provide employers with the right to participate in alternate insurance plans / Projet de loi 17, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail pour accorder aux employeurs le droit de participer à des régimes d'assurance concurrents.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Randy Hillier: This bill amends the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, to allow an employer, at any time, to opt to participate in an insurance plan that is offered by a private sector insurer, instead of the insurance plan established under the act, if the alternate plan offers benefits to the employer's workers that are comparable to those offered by the insurance plan as it exists under the act as of the date that the amendments to the act come into force. To exercise the option, an employer is required to file a notice with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board containing the particulars specified in the regulations made under the act. If an alternate plan is in force, the employer or any workers of the employer who are affected by a decision of the insurer under the alternate plan may appeal the decision to the Financial Services Tribunal.

The bill also repeals amendments to the act made by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act, 2008—Bill 119—which came into force on January 1,

2013. Those amendments made insurance coverage mandatory in the construction industry for independent operators, sole proprietors, partners in partnerships, and executive officers of corporations. As a result, insurance coverage for those categories of persons in the construction industry reverts to being optional.

HAWKINS GIGNAC ACT (CARBON
MONOXIDE DETECTORS), 2013
LOI HAWKINS GIGNAC DE 2013
(DÉTECTEURS DE MONOXYDE
DE CARBONE)

Mr. Hardeman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 18, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 to require carbon monoxide detectors in certain residential buildings / Projet de loi 18, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la prévention et la protection contre l'incendie pour exiger l'installation de détecteurs de monoxyde de carbone dans certains immeubles d'habitation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, this bill would require carbon monoxide detectors in all homes with a fuel-burning appliance or an attached garage. The short title of the bill is the Hawkins Gignac Act, in memory of a family in my riding of Oxford who were tragically killed by carbon monoxide when their fireplace exhaust was blocked. Since I last brought this bill forward, Ontario has had another carbon monoxide tragedy: a senior in Tiny township who passed away just after Christmas.

I hope that, working together, we can pass this bill before any more tragedies occur.

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES**

REPETITIVE STRAIN INJURY

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Today marks the 14th annual International Repetitive Strain Injury Awareness Day. When we hear of injuries on the job, sometimes we think of falling and hitting your head. Others think of losing a limb. But work-related repetitive strain injuries, also known as RSIs, are among the most common ways of being injured on the job. It can result from doing the same motion over and over again without suitable breaks, or when our limbs are put in awkward positions doing repetitive work.

Whether it's a teenager stocking shelves at the local supermarket in Thunder Bay or someone simply sitting at

their computer in their office cubicle in Ottawa, RSIs can affect anyone, anywhere. The forces used on the job can be small—as simple as typing—but the impact can be devastating. Some end up with a constant, gnawing pain in their ligaments; others feel so much pain that they can't get a good night's sleep. Others struggle to even get out of bed.

RSIs are a major component of musculoskeletal disorders, or MSDs, which account for 42% of all lost-time injuries in Ontario. In 2010—in one year alone—that amounted to 739,000 working days and more than \$92 million in medical and other claims—so much pain and suffering for tens of thousands of workers every year across Ontario, yet so easy to overlook.

So each year we mark Repetitive Strain Injury Awareness Day to promote avoidance of these injuries, which can drastically change the lives of those who have them. That's why the Ministry of Labour continues to take action to help workers avoid these types of injuries. On our website—www.ontario.ca/labour—we have a wealth of resources, from videos to fact sheets, interactive tools, podcasts and posters. It contains dozens of sector-specific examples about how these hazards can be eliminated or controlled through innovative designs and workplace practices. Some of that information is available in 14 different languages in addition to English and French.

As part of our Safe at Work Ontario enforcement strategy, we conduct inspection blitzes that focus on MSD hazards. The ministry also conducts blitzes focusing on other hazards, with MSDs as a strong component.

Our government is committed to ensuring workers in this province are protected from injuries and major health hazards on the job, but it all starts with you. It starts in your workplace. Starting today, let's renew our efforts to ensure that our workplaces address these hazards. Let's work hard to ensure that our workers are protected from hazards that could result in years of pain.

Speaker, it starts with us. It starts with prevention, and prevention starts here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thanks for the opportunity to respond to the ministerial statement on the 14th annual repetitive stress injury day.

As has been pointed out, repetitive stress injuries are actually the most common kind of workplace injuries today. With more and more work being done with less variety—with keyboards, computers and a mouse in a stationary work style—there's more opportunity than ever before to become injured due to repetitive stress.

As some of you know, before being elected to the House I worked as an electrician. Each and every day, I worked using screwdrivers. Unfortunately for me, I became a statistic as well. I became afflicted with a repetitive stress injury in my wrist. My personal experience leads me to believe that we need greater awareness of repetitive stress injuries.

I'm sure the minister opposite has been told about how wonderful that solidarity is. I'm sure that there are some members of the third party that would agree. But as an

electrician, unionized under the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers at the time, solidarity and understanding of my injury was not something present on the job site.

My physician advised me to use a brace and not to use screwdrivers, for that repetitive twisting motion. But it was overcome through a nice and simple bit of 20th-century technology: the battery drill. So I went out and bought one. Unfortunately, when I got on the job site, the battery drill was not part of the prescribed tool list of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. I was not allowed to use a power drill. So much for solidarity and an understanding of repetitive stress injuries. Instead, they wanted me to continue to repeat that stress and pay for that brace and reduce my productivity.

1330

Instead of using that modern technology to solve a modern injury, all they did was further that injury. Instead of being a more productive worker who would put less of a strain on our health care system, my labour union, the IBEW, and their union rules forced me to be less productive and more injured.

I'm hopeful that in the years since that happened, the IBEW has actually started thinking more about this. I hope that they've started to understand repetitive stress injuries and have started protecting the workers they claim to represent. However, I'm skeptical, and from my own experience and the experience of friends, we've seen just how inflexible and uncompetitive our labour unions are in Ontario today.

I think my personal story illustrates the need for greater awareness of repetitive stress injuries. I know that repetitive stress injuries describe a collection of painful disorders of the tendons, muscles, nerves, back, arms and hands.

I'm pleased that there is this day for awareness of these painful and debilitating injuries—the repetitive stress injury day—and that we recognize just how frequent and unfortunate these injuries are.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased in this year, 2013, to stand to recognize repetitive strain injury day, a day to acknowledge that we still live in a climate and still participate in an economy that has yet to address one of the major components of workplace injury. As we've heard, statistics show that 40%—nearly 50%, actually—of all workplace injuries are attributable to repetitive strain injuries. That isn't necessarily what has been described in here time and time again—screwing a bolt into whatever you screw a bolt into. It is also things that we don't really know: things like constantly looking at a computer screen; a poor ergonomic situation in your working environment—things that can be easily addressed, things that have been studied, things that have been measured, but we have a government that has yet to act to enshrine those changes into the Occupational Health and Safety Act, which is exactly what is needed here, Mr. Speaker.

We can have all the best ergonomic devices in the world and things that fix these problems, but until the

government decides that it should become a measure of law, similar to all the other measures that are enshrined in the Occupational Health and Safety Act to protect workers from noxious gases and high impact and other things, we will not address this problem specifically.

Many of you may know that prior to political life, I was a construction labourer in the heavy construction sector, building bridges and roads and sewers and overpasses. I worked in a unionized environment—proud to be a union member of LIUNA Local 65, where, actually, under our collective agreement, we were allocated appropriate personal protective equipment. We had, our fellow brothers and sisters—I couldn't tell you how much solidarity there was when another, more senior, journeyman would witness and could see that we were possibly entering into a situation that might harm us. So there was solidarity, certainly, between the ranks when it came to health and safety and when it came to addressing the nature of our work.

Also, Mr. Speaker, we had buy-in from the company, the acknowledgment that when they make a workplace safer, it becomes more productive, it becomes more economical, it becomes more financially beneficial to them to provide us with the high-impact gloves when we were doing jackhammering, or clean and safe equipment, equipment that wasn't broken down. These are all things that lead to injury and lead to personal costs that many in this province still feel today.

Those who have worked in manufacturing sectors certainly know the strain and stress of a workplace injury.

What I can tell you, too, Mr. Speaker, is that our workers' compensation system does not completely—actually fails to address the rising nature. I'll tell you that between 1996 and 2006 the biggest increases to health care costs were for repetitive movement, and although lost-time claims have gone down, injury claims rates have decreased, workers are working in pain as a result of denied claims and aggressive claims.

This goes to the nature of precarious work scenarios in our province, where workers are forced to take jobs that don't offer benefits, that don't offer those types of protections, and those are some of the most vulnerable workers in our society. It's something that I think this government has to fully address, not only in the context of workplace safety, but also as an economic measure where we can start to promote good jobs, give our economy that signal that we are here as a government to support you in the creation of good jobs, and not simply rely on part-time precarious work as a measure of our economic stimulus.

There are so many injured workers that are out there today who are looking toward this government to provide protection, to send a signal that they are here, they are listening and they understand the system is not fully addressing the full scope of workplace injuries.

I stand here today, as a New Democrat, proud to support injured workers in this province, proud to lend my support and my efforts and my energy—and I am

certain on that, on behalf of my caucus—to fully address these workplace injuries, because there is a human cost, there is a financial cost and there is a societal cost.

I think this opportunity to address it is the first step, acknowledging that we can do more and can do better. I certainly look forward to working within this House to address those issues.

PETITIONS

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very pleased to be the first to present a petition today, and indeed every day.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario passed Bill 152, the Poverty Reduction Act, 2009 with an aim to ‘support a sustained long-term reduction of poverty in Ontario’;”—how have they done?—“and

“Whereas fulfilling the promise of this act will increase the health of the people in Ontario with the lowest incomes; and

“Whereas fulfilling the promise of this act will reduce health care costs in the long term by reducing the incidence of chronic disease; and

“Whereas fulfilling the promise of this act will increase the dignity of people with low incomes by reducing visits to food bank and meal programs in Ontario; and

“Whereas fulfilling the promise of this act will reduce inequity in Ontario and provide an economic stimulus by increased spending across Ontario;”

The petitioners petition the Legislative Assembly “to support the recommendations of the social assistance review commission and immediately implement an increase of \$100 a month to bring the base rate of Ontario Works from \$599 per month to \$699 per month as a down payment on adequacy while the system undergoes transformation.”

I am pleased to read this petition and present it to Justin, who will take it to the table, and to sign it.

ASSURANCE CONTRE LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL

M. Peter Shurman: J'ai une pétition à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario sur la Loi 119 :

« Attendu que depuis le 1^{er} janvier 2013, la CSPAAAT impose une protection obligatoire aux employeurs ou sociétaires qui étaient jusqu'à présent exempts de la CSPAAAT et qui avaient une assurance privée;

« Considérant que ce nouveau fardeau financier ne fait rien pour améliorer la sécurité des travailleurs et ne fait qu'augmenter les coûts d'exploitation des entreprises en Ontario;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Abrogez la protection obligatoire imposée par la Loi 119. »

Je vais la signer et la donner à M. Joshua.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Cindy Forster: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Re: Dr. Kevin Smith’s Niagara Health System report to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care proposed changes to the hospital services in south Niagara.

“Whereas the residents of south Niagara will not have equal, fair, safe and timely access to in-patient gynecological, obstetrical and pediatric services due to distance; and

“Whereas excessive travel times and lack of public transportation for residents in south Niagara will put patient safety at risk; and

“Whereas if implemented, Dr. Smith’s recommendations and the proposed location of a new south Niagara hospital in Niagara Falls is approved, a two-tier health system in Niagara will be created, where north Niagara will be overserved and south Niagara will be underserved in relation to the safe and timely access to health and hospital care; and

“Whereas if hospital services including in-patient gynecological and mental health, and all obstetrical and pediatric services from the Welland hospital site and the Greater Niagara hospital site will be relocated to the new north Niagara St. Catharines site in 2013 it will undermine the continued viability of these two sites as full-service hospital sites;

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

“We request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to maintain existing services at the Welland hospital site and the Niagara Falls hospital site and that no services are to be moved until this new south Niagara hospital is open and request that any approval for a new Niagara south hospital include a site that is centrally located in Welland.”

I agree with this petition and I affix my signature, and I will send it with—

M^{me} France Gélinas: How many signatures?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Twenty thousand.

1340

SPRINGWATER PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr. Rod Jackson: I have a petition from residents of Barrie to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas we oppose the termination of the operating budget for Springwater Provincial Park in Springwater township on March 31, 2013;

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

“We ask that the park remain operating and facilities such as the animal sanctuary, cabins/shelters, playground

equipment and ground maintenance remain intact and operating.”

I agree with this petition, I affix my name, and I will give it to page Joe to send to the table.

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

The member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Interjections.

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

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, I have a petition here.

“Whereas beginning 1 January 2013 WSIB was expanded to include groups of employers and principals who had previously been exempt from WSIB and had private insurance; and

“Whereas this new financial burden does nothing to improve worker safety and only drives up the cost of doing business in Ontario;

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

“To repeal the statutory obligations created by Bill 119.”

Speaker, I agree with this petition and affix my name to this—certified—over 4,000 signatures.

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

PROVINCIAL PARKS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): To the member for Kenora–Rainy River, my apologies, but you were completely blocked off from my view.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you, Speaker.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources has announced the end of overnight camping in 10 provincial parks,” including nine “in northern Ontario ... ; and

“Whereas this decision will result in job losses for northern Ontarians and negatively impact tourism and northern Ontario’s way of life; and

“Whereas local stakeholders and municipalities have not been consulted on these closures and have been denied the opportunity to make these parks more sustainable;

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

“To immediately suspend plans to cancel overnight camping at the” nine northern “provincial parks named above; and

“To consult with local municipalities, stakeholders and regional economic development organizations regarding the long-term viability of preserving northern Ontario’s provincial parks.”

I support this and will give this to page Joshua to deliver.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Miss Monique Taylor: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints against children’s aid societies; and

“Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate complaints against children’s aid societies; and

“Whereas people who feel they have been wronged by the actions of children’s aid societies are left feeling helpless with nowhere else to turn for help to correct systemic issues;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate children’s aid societies.”

I couldn’t agree with this more, Mr. Speaker. I will affix my name to it, along with the hundreds that have been put forward before, and give it to page John to bring to the Clerk.

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Mr. Bill Walker: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario re Bill 119:

“Whereas beginning 1 January 2013 WSIB was expanded to include groups of employers and principals who had previously been exempt from WSIB and had private insurance; and

“Whereas this new financial burden does nothing to improve worker safety and only drives up the cost of doing business in Ontario;

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

“To repeal the statutory obligations created by Bill 119.”

I strongly support it, will affix my name, and send it with page Lauren.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of the northeast:

“Whereas the Ontario government has made positron emission tomography (PET) scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients ...; and

“Whereas, since October 2009, insured PET scans are performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with Health Sciences North, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through Health Sciences

North” in Sudbury, “thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens” of the northeast.

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Luisa to bring it to the table.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: This is a petition mostly from St. George’s church in my riding.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario passed Bill 152, the Poverty Reduction Act, 2009 with an aim to ‘support a sustained long-term reduction of poverty in Ontario’; and

“Whereas fulfilling the promise of this act will increase the health of the people in Ontario with the lowest incomes; and

“Whereas fulfilling the promise of this act will reduce health care costs in the long term by reducing the incidence of chronic disease; and

“Whereas fulfilling the promise of this act will increase the dignity of people with low incomes by reducing visits to food bank and meal programs in Ontario; and

“Whereas fulfilling the promise of this act will reduce inequality in Ontario and provide an economic stimulus by increased spending across Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the recommendation of the social assistance review commission and immediately implement an increase of \$100 a month to bring the base rate of Ontario Works from \$599 per month to \$699 per month as a down payment on adequacy while the system undergoes transformation.”

I’m pleased to pass this petition on to Charlie.

AIR-RAIL LINK

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Parkdale–High Park.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It’s the greatest riding in the world, Mr. Speaker. And I’m reading:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I couldn't agree more with these thousands of folk, and I'm going to give it to Justin, having affixed my signature, to be delivered to the table.

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

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

“Whereas beginning 1 January 2013 WSIB was expanded to include groups of employers and principals who had previously been exempt from WSIB and had private insurance; and

“Whereas this new financial burden does nothing to improve worker safety and only drives up the cost of doing business in Ontario; and

“Whereas the chair of the WSIB”—in committee meetings last year—“admitted this will not help cover the accumulated WSIB debt, but make the problem worse by adding further liabilities;

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

“To repeal the statutory obligations created by Bill 119.”

I agree with this and will be signing it.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Miss Monique Taylor: It's a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the legislated cuts to the funding for ophthalmology diagnostic tests are up to 80%;

“Whereas these cuts were implemented without consulting physicians about the impact such cuts will have on the health care of patients;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to protect the ophthalmology services and consult with the physicians before making cuts to our health care.”

I couldn't agree with this more. I will affix my name to it and give it to page Justin to deliver.

1350

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition signed by a great many people in my riding of Oxford, and it is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas many of the resources of this planet are finite and are necessary to sustain both life and the quality of life for all future generations;

“Whereas the disposal of resources in landfills creates environmental hazards which will have significant human and financial costs for;

“Whereas all levels of government are elected to guarantee their constituents' physical, financial, emotional and mental well-being;

“Whereas the health risks to the community and watershed increase in direct relationship to the proximity of any landfill site;

“Whereas the placement of a landfill in a limestone quarry has been shown to be detrimental;

“Whereas the county of Oxford has passed a resolution requesting a moratorium on landfill construction or approval;

“Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, humbly petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To implement a moratorium in Oxford county on any future landfill construction or approval until such time as a full review of alternatives has been completed which would examine best practices in other jurisdictions around the world;

“That this review of alternatives would give special emphasis on (a) practices which involve the total recycling or composting of all products currently destined for landfill sites in Ontario and (b) the production of goods which can efficiently and practically be recycled or reused so as not to require disposal in landfills.”

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to present this petition, and I affix my signature to it.

INDOOR TANNING EQUIPMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from a group of youths in my riding, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas there is a growing body of evidence linking tanning bed use to increased cancer risk, the World Health Organization considers tanning beds a group 1 carcinogen, and use of tanning beds before the age of 30 raises one's risk of melanoma by 75%; and

“Whereas many groups, including the Canadian Cancer Society and the Ontario Medical Association, support a ban on the use of indoor tanning equipment by youths under the age of 18; and

“Whereas the provinces of British Columbia and Nova Scotia”—and Quebec—“have passed legislation banning youths from using indoor tanning equipment, and governments around the world are considering similar legislation; and

“Whereas there is broad public support in Ontario for increased regulation of the tanning industry, with 83%” of Ontarians “supporting a ban on indoor tanning for those under 18;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning youths under the age of 18 from using indoor tanning equipment....”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Stacey to bring it to the table.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

**COMPREHENSIVE PUBLIC SECTOR
COMPENSATION FREEZE ACT, 2013**

**LOI DE 2013 SUR LE GEL GLOBAL
DE LA RÉMUNÉRATION
DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC**

Mr. Shurman moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 5, An Act to freeze compensation for two years in the public sector / Projet de loi 5, Loi visant à geler la rémunération pendant deux ans dans le secteur public.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'm pleased to rise in the Legislature today and speak to what I consider to be an all-important subject, not only to our party but to every reasonable and thoughtful Ontarian out there.

Ontario currently has the highest debt in its history, and there is no sign of any abatement. It's imperative that Ontario have a plan to control its \$12-billion deficit and ballooning debt of over \$236 billion—a debt that is set to hit \$411 billion in just a few years, according to their own economist, Mr. Drummond—\$17,922 of debt for every man, woman and child in the province of Ontario. Ontarians are feeling this economic pinch. Meanwhile, public sector employees are faring pretty well.

I always thought that the union argument they put forward, of using strength in numbers to bargain collectively and level the playing field, had some merit. Now, the shoe is suddenly on the other foot.

I was once a union member, too. That may surprise some people. The Fraser Institute has noted very recently that public sector compensation now exceeds that of the private sector—similar jobs—by about 14%. Now that balloons to 27% when you factor in pensions and health and overall benefits. Another study by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business concurs. You can tell me, if you like, that those are right-wing think tanks or organizations, but it doesn't matter, because StatsCan is the source for the figures. It is indisputable. It is a fact: Private sector workers have been paying for raises for unionized government workers while they themselves are struggling to make ends meet. How is that a level playing field? Over half of all Ontario government program spending goes to public sector labour costs. The single largest item that we spend money on here in Ontario: labour. We cannot afford business-as-usual salary increases any more than the private sector can, and yet it goes on and on.

The McGuinty-Wynne government is the perpetrator of billion-dollar spending scandals, from eHealth to Ornge, and the most recent power plant fiasco ongoing. Liberals cancelled power plants for political gain, and they cost taxpayers at least \$230 million to save the seats

of the member for Mississauga South and the member for Oakville. We think maybe another billion is in there, and the Premier says, "We have no money." You know what? About that, she's right, but she takes no responsibility. The PC caucus is ready to be transparent, to balance the books, to get Ontario out of the debt that the McGuinty-Wynne government has created for us.

Tim Hudak and the PC caucus want a two-year broader public sector legislated wage freeze to save \$2 billion each year. Pretty plain, pretty simple; no exceptions. That will help Ontario level that playing field, which is precisely what every union claims is the only fair approach. It has to work two ways. We cannot begin to control costs without putting a temporary break on a range of out-of-control cost items.

Public sector employees also retire 1.3 years on average earlier than private sector workers. In 2011, job losses were greater in Ontario's private sector than in the public sector; 3.9% of private sector workers lost their jobs that year, compared with only 0.7% of public sector workers, another advantage—Fraser Institute. And 76% of Ontario's public sector workers were covered by a registered pension plan of some type in 2011; that compares to 26% of private sector workers—three times as many in the public sector. Again I have to say: Who has the advantage? Which way is that level playing field tilting, now that it's not level? Is it a level playing field, the one that the unions say is the fairest thing, or is it not? I think the thing speaks for itself: From 2004-10, public sector compensation grew at 4.99% compounding, well above the rate of inflation, which averaged 1.94% during the same time period.

The McGuinty-Wynne government bought labour peace, but they did it on our backs, and when I say "our," I'm talking about everybody who isn't in a union working for the public sector in the province of Ontario. Taxpayers are funding what I call a public service protection racket. That's what this nudge, nudge, wink, wink deal is. Thanks to the Liberal government, the public sector is now a new elite, funded by ordinary Ontarians, protected by union bosses, brought to you by the McGuinty-Wynne government—a level playing field indeed.

Union bosses are controlling Ontario's fiscal agenda, using taxpayers' pocketbooks to feather their own nests. Ontario cannot afford to have unions continue to control the agenda. It has been 10 years of driving up public sector spending and putting the needs of union bosses first; 10 years of taxpayers footing the bill for the Liberals' political gain; 10 years of creating a new and privileged class at the taxpayers' expense. It is now time for action. These are all reasons why we need a two-year, broader public sector legislated wage freeze.

It has been made very, very clear that the McGuinty-Wynne government will continue down this path to financial ruin. We've been here—what?—a week and maybe a couple of days, and that's what we've heard in answers about this given in question period.

1400

When questioned by PC leader Tim Hudak last week, Premier Wynne said that the Liberal government would

not support a wage freeze. The Premier said that there is “wage constraint in place.” But in the same breath, she went on to admit, “The current 12-month average annual wage increase for the broader public service is 0.2%.” First of all, I don’t believe her, and secondly, that’s not a zero.

In this morning’s question period, I myself questioned the Premier, and what I asked her was, “If you’re not prepared to save \$2 billion a year by implementing what we are proposing in Bill 5, please name one item—just give me one item—that you profess or contend will save \$2 billion a year.” I heard no answer to that question; I heard no item. And the reason is very simple: She has no answer.

The McGuinty-Wynne Liberals not only lack a concrete plan but also the backbone to make the necessary changes to get us off this path of financial ruin.

As outlined by Don Drummond in his report, the province’s deficit could balloon to \$30.2 billion by 2017, and our total debt load, already worth 35% of annual economic output, could soar to 51% by that time. This is completely unsustainable. While the average Ontarian doesn’t follow the debates that deal with this on a day-to-day basis in this place, they understand, at the level of going out and finding a job, keeping a job, building a company, keeping a company afloat, establishing a new one—whatever it takes to make money, to put food on the family table—that they’re having trouble, and they’re having trouble because this government has created the conditions where that trouble is going to go on and get worse. Don’t believe me; take a look across the pond at Europe.

I’m going to tell you something. He mentioned, Don Drummond did, that we could soar to 51% and it’s unsustainable. It’s something else: It’s actually immoral, when you consider what you’re doing. Ontario families and businesses are feeling the negative repercussions of the McGuinty-Wynne government’s spending sprees. We need a paradigm shift; we need that.

Even with our current record low interest rates, interest payments on Ontario’s debt will reach almost \$11 billion this year—\$11 billion. If you transpose that and say that that’s a ministry like any other ministry—(1) health; (2) education; (3) debt servicing—interest. What kind of a government does that? And it consumes 9.2% of government revenues in total—a statistically valid fact. So we’re throwing \$11 billion out the window every single year.

When we have a 1% rise in interest rates, which will surely come—it’s inevitable—that alone would add about \$500 million per year to the interest level. Go to 2%, which also is coming somewhere down the road, and that’s another \$500 million, so you’re adding a billion.

Over the last nine years, the McGuinty-Wynne legacy “increased program spending by an average of 6.1% annually”—I’m quoting here—“nearly twice the combined rate of inflation and population growth” at 3.1%. This is from the Fraser Institute, published last week.

The National Post’s Kelly McParland wrote “Ontario’s debt has been gathering speed like a rock plunging down a hill.” That was in November, not very long ago.

The McGuinty-Wynne government has not laid out a plan to rein in their spending or balance the books. Premier Wynne will not take the necessary steps to get Ontario’s spending under control and commit to a legislated wage freeze. The public sector simply cannot escape belt-tightening. We need to end the unfair free ride for public sector employees who, while valued, are not superior to private sector workers. That’s the thing that nobody seems to understand.

Both Moody’s and Standard and Poor’s downgraded Ontario’s credit ratings last year. In April 2012, when Moody’s downgraded Ontario’s rating, they said that there are “significant risks surrounding” their “ability to achieve their medium-term fiscal targets and stabilize and then reverse the recent accumulation in debt.... Expense growth targets appear particularly ambitious.” I submit to you, Speaker, that holds true today.

We need a signal to investors that Ontario is ready to tackle its economic challenges and get our financial house in order. Regaining control of our finances will spur the additional creation of jobs and get our economy moving again. Start reining in spending with a broader public sector legislated wage freeze. Please, give this some thought.

Tim Hudak and the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party have a concrete plan to get Ontario back on track again, and Speaker, that’s exactly what we intend to do.

Interjections.

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

Further debate? The member for Kenora–Rainy River.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you, Speaker. There was a lot of talk just now about the Conservative plan to balance the books, but it really is a misnomer that Conservatives are great stewards of the public purse, because they’re not. If you look at a number of balanced budgets by party, both provincially and federally, you find that the NDP has the best fiscal record in Canada. And I encourage the Conservatives to check that out. We have a better record than both the Conservatives and the Liberals. Not only do we as a party have the highest number of balanced budgets, but we also, if we do go into a deficit, have the smallest average size of a deficit compared to the GDP. Why? I believe it’s because the NDP doesn’t dismiss ideas or back ourselves into corners based on ideology or buzzwords, which is happening right here and right now with the Conservative Party.

The fact is that imposing across-the-board public sector wage freezes is unconstitutional and will end up costing us more money. It will cost the province more money and it will put us further away from the goal of balancing the budget, just like the proposed privatization of the LCBO, as recently proposed by the leader of the PCs. The LCBO is profitable, and so privatization would actually cost the province more money, and it makes no sense. So why would the Conservatives want to privatize

the LCBO if they are truly concerned about the financial bottom line? I would contend it's because they're philosophically opposed to public ownership and unionized jobs. It's not that it is a cost to the Ontario taxpayers; it's just that they're philosophically opposed to having a just society.

Another example of privatization costing us more is road maintenance. It costs us more financially, it has a huge social cost and there's no guarantee of having adequate service. The fact is—and this is a fact I believe the Conservatives need to come to grips with—that there are basic costs of doing business that can't be mitigated.

I'll give you a third and final example of some of the financially reckless and ideological decisions that are made by the PCs that defy logic and end up costing us more money, and that is the closure of the Experimental Lakes Area in my area by the federal government. It will cost the public purse \$50 million to close this facility, because they have to, according to an agreement that they've signed with the provincial government, restore those lakes to the original pristine condition. But they would rather incur \$50 million than they would to spend \$2 million to continue to operate this invaluable research centre. Again, it's because they are ideologically opposed.

New Democrats believe that there is a more balanced way to balance the budget. Not only is it financially reckless to impose this unconstitutional plan of across-the-board wage freezes but it's also unjust. It is unjust to make hundreds of thousands of reasonably paid public servants carry the burden of Ontario's fiscal challenges while letting those who should be paying more off the hook. It's also unjust to freeze modest wages while simultaneously continuing to pay their managers automatic bonuses totalling \$35.6 million. I believe, along with other New Democrats, that we need to ban these automatic bonuses.

A couple of other things that we could do to balance the budget that don't require doing something so unconstitutional and costly would be to close some of the corporate tax loopholes by permanently delaying the HST's input tax credits—that will net the treasury \$1.3 billion annually by 2019—and to work with the federal government to increase corporate tax compliance by reducing the ability of corporations to eliminate or decrease payment of their provincial corporate income tax by shifting profits and losses across Canada. That would bring us about \$50 million in year 1 and about \$200 million by 2017-18. There are other options, options that will actually do what the Conservatives are claiming that they are concerned about, that will help bring in money to the province and help us balance the budget sooner, which is something that we are all concerned about. But there is a way we can do that that is both financially responsible and respectful of the people who work to make this province what it is today.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: I'm happy to engage in this debate on the bill brought forward by the member from Thorn-

hill. I think it's a valuable debate to have and a necessary one, too. Although I may disagree with the approach the bill takes, I think the member does bring out some very concerning economic facts of life.

There are some serious economic challenges facing this province, and I don't think enough people understand the impact that salary, wages and benefits, and pension legacies have on the provincial books. They almost think this is automatic: The money is always going to be there to employ all of our doctors, police officers, firefighters and nurses.

There is a great dependency on human resources in a government of this size. So to bring up the issue of the compensation costs as it refers to provincial government finances I think is a valid concern to raise. As the member said, it's not just the pure salaries that are of concern—and they're not just a concern to us here; everybody, I think, has concerns about the cost of living, concerns about government expenditures and concerns about the fact that, "My job is not guaranteed. I don't know whether I'm going to get a paycheque at the end of the week. I don't know if I'm going to get benefits for my kids' teeth." That's a huge number of people who don't have those protections in place, so they say, "Why, then, do some people have it and I don't?" You're creating this friction, which is a reality.

The member's approach to eliminating this friction is one I don't agree with because, ultimately, it's really going to be almost a bureaucratic nightmare, because you're going to have to impose, essentially, wage control; back to the days of Stanfield and Trudeau, remember? Wage and price controls promised back and forth. You really need to create a whole bureaucracy in terms of identifying which wages you're going to freeze at what point in time.

You can imagine what the physicians and our nurses will say when you tell them their wages are frozen. Some will say, "Well, I've already been frozen for three or four years. Now you're going to freeze me, and the others haven't been frozen? When do I catch up?" There is a real need to look at the consequence because you're going to create, really, something that's contrary to basic Conservative fiscal ideology, and that is to have government intervene in the marketplace and impose a law over market forces, over compensation. That's not very Conservative, really. The marketplace should be able to take care of those issues.

But obviously, the marketplace is not working, because the market has been hijacked by these latte-drinking speculators on Wall Street and the backroom boys in London, England, who manipulate the world financial system at their whim for hedge funds etc. Therefore, we are all victims of this basic manipulation of the world's finances, and governments are caught up in this consequence.

It's not just the Ontario government that's facing these consequences. Just last week, you heard Alberta: Their deficit is four times higher than they predicted. Alberta, that has an overwhelming amount of oil that's gushing

out of the tar sands—they are now facing deficit issues. And let's not talk about the fact that almost all provinces now are facing deficits while the federal government sits back with its laissez-faire attitude, saying, "Oh, well, we're taking care of things." Meanwhile, it's the provinces that have to pay for the biggest-ticket item, and that is health care.

I think the member is right when he says that eventually, if we keep going this way, where provinces keep paying for health care all by themselves, we're going to have two ministries here in Ontario. We're going to have the Ministry of Finance collecting dollars and the Ministry of Health spending dollars. That's where we're getting to, because we do not have a federal plan to support these enormous expenses on health care right across Canada. Basically, the federal government has withdrawn from health care. I mean, who is the Minister of Health? I have no idea—federally. I have no idea who it is. I have no idea who they are.

We are on the front lines here in the province of Ontario. We're trying to do our best. If you look at the recent—we've made some very good successes. It hasn't been easy to get OPSEU to come to an agreement, basically, to a zero increase. The physicians came to an agreement—that was very, very difficult. We did come to that agreement with the physicians of Ontario. But AMAPCEO, and also three of the five major teachers' unions, have agreed to hold the line. So at least there's very good progress. It's not what it should be, but at least there is definite progress.

I would think, at this time, to implement this really draconian, interventionist, government-does-everything plan of "Zap, your wages are freezing" isn't going to work. The member from Thornhill knows that's not what government is about. They shouldn't be regulating people's daily wages. That's not their job.

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Just before I begin, I would say the thing that's draconian around this place is the size of debt that this government is running up. That's what's so draconian.

Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in the House today to offer my perspective on Bill 5, An Act to freeze compensation for two years in the public sector. My colleague has introduced this bill. It's a responsible approach. We have a responsibility to the taxpayers in this province to get Ontario back on track, back to fiscal health.

I often think about the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals. They inherited a province that was prosperous, and unfortunately, they're leaving Ontario a disaster.

As many of the members in this House are aware, in Ontario it's very difficult to get a job in the private sector. Many men and women across the province are waking up each morning without a job to go to, and if they have a job, they are often struggling to make ends meet. At a time like this, when the economy is screeching to a halt—in fact, this morning almost 600,000 men and

women woke up without a job—government needs to be investing its money into creating jobs and growing Ontario's economy and investing in things that are important to Ontarians, like health care and education.

When I talk about the economy screeching to a halt, I think about January job numbers: 48,000 people in the private sector, in January, lost their jobs. That's 73 months that the unemployment rate in Ontario has been higher than the national average. The Liberal decisions over the last 10 years are killing jobs in the province, running up the debt and are leading Ontario down a very difficult path and a very dangerous path.

The Liberal government should be doing everything they can to eliminate the deficit and to eliminate the debt. This would ensure that they are attracting investment to the province, which is essential for creating jobs for this generation and the next.

This legislation calls for a two-year broader public sector legislated wage freeze. This will save the province \$2 billion each year. That extra money could go a long way to reducing the debt, growing our economy and creating jobs.

As many members in our caucus have said over the last week and a half, we are in the middle of the greatest jobs crisis in our province's history and the greatest debt crisis in our history. In fact, there was a report out a couple weeks ago showing that by fiscal year 2019-20, the debt in the province of Ontario is going to hit \$550 billion.

Speaker—you'll know this very well—the blame, the responsibility, lies at the feet of this Liberal government. We can't begin to control costs without putting a temporary brake on a range of out-of-control costs. This is the best thing for this province right now and for Ontario families.

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As I've said many times in this House, I come from a small business background, and it's because of my business background that I would like to offer a small business perspective to Bill 5.

Speaker, people in business know that when times are tough, when your profits aren't there, you have to make tough decisions to rein in costs. A government isn't much different than that. The size and cost of government today in the province of Ontario has grown far beyond the ability of Ontario families to pay, so I strongly support this bill. I would encourage all of my colleagues in this House to recognize the responsibility that they have, and that's to get the books back in balance here in the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm happy to stand up today and speak to Bill 5, the Comprehensive Public Sector Compensation Freeze Act.

Speaker, I think we all agree that there have been tough times in Ontario and we're facing economic challenges in Ontario, but how we approach those economic challenges is how I'd like to speak to it, because it has to

be balanced. When the member originally talked about jobs—that's what I was going to talk about. We talk about how bad things are and how everybody has got to tighten their belts and how the broader public sector employees have to have a wage freeze and how teachers had to have a wage freeze and how it's horrible that our economy is in this state, but workers have to take the brunt of it.

But we need to talk about job creation because when people are working, that's when we're stimulating our economy. That's when people who are working are supporting our economy, their communities and their neighbourhoods. They're spending their money. They're paying their taxes, Speaker. They're going out to restaurants, to support their local restaurants. They're going to their local hardware stores. The member here used to own a hardware store. If they don't have a job, they're not going to fix the roof on their house. They're not going to do their painting and renovations. They're not going to stimulate the economy.

When Ontarians have jobs, that's when we're going to have a better fiscal health checkup, so we need to make sure we have a plan for those jobs. Part of that, Speaker, is, we talked about our First Start for youth, and I think that's a great way to get the economy stimulated. Youth in Ontario last year was at 182,000 for unemployment. That is too high a number. When you're just coming out of university, when you're young and you want to look to the future, those kinds of unemployment rates are quite un motivating and discouraging for young people. We need to look at ways to stimulate young people between the ages of 20 and 26 to look for work with good, sustainable jobs so they can contribute back to the economy.

Speaker, these are tough times. There's no doubt about it. We all agree that we're facing economic challenges here. But when we ask people to take their fair share, we also have to talk about that this government has misused some of the public purse's money, and having scandals like eHealth and Ornge and cancelling gas plants and misusing the public funds that way is a bit of a travesty. Then we turn around and we say that public sector workers have to take the hit for a two-year wage freeze, or we have to ask teachers to take their two-year wage freeze.

They talked about this in the throne speech: fair. It's got to be a fair society. This has got to be a fair approach. The fair approach is also asking corporations, big banks, to put in their fair share, to contribute to helping the economy get to a healthy state. One of the proposals that we have made is to close corporate tax loopholes.

Having said that, Speaker, we also talked about how, when you look at management bonuses, right now, with our Ontario public service management bonuses, there are 8,700 Ontario public service managers. Out of that, 8,000—sorry; let's see here. I've got my figures wrong. There are 8,900 Ontario public service managers, and of those, 8,700 received bonuses in 2011. So if you translate into percentages, that's 98% of eligible Ontario public service managers who received bonuses that year. When

you talk about a bonus, you think of it as a performance issue, right? You've done a great job, so you get a reward. But when you look at that, were 98% of Ontario public service managers such high performers that they got that kind of bonus?

So it's very difficult, when you're talking about bonuses that total approximately \$3.5 million in 2011 and you're asking public sector workers to take a wage freeze, that's not a fair theme that was talked in throne speech. I just want to put that out there—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thirty-five million dollars.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Correction: \$35 million. Thank you to my colleague.

So, when we're talking about fairness, we have to look at a holistic approach. It's not the workers who are going to take the brunt of it. It's not going to be the corporations that take the brunt of it. We all have to contribute to that, and that's what is going to make society healthy.

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

Hon. David Zimmer: I want to speak to this bill, brought by the member opposite for Thornhill. I'm rather surprised that he's bringing forward a bill for a pay freeze in the public sector. He's made great sound and fury over there that this is needed to rein in the public sector. I made a note of his remarks. He said, "The public sector is out of control and needs to be reined in," hence his private member's bill.

But, as usual, when we're introducing a piece of legislation, it is always a good thing, once in a while, to have a look at the facts that go behind the initiative to introduce a public sector pay freeze. Here are a couple of important facts to consider when reflecting or deciding whether or not we should support his bill.

Fact number one: The fact is that public sector pay increases, in the last 12 months, have averaged 0.2%. That's hardly—hardly—public sector wages out of control that need to be reined in.

Second fact: Through this government working in partnership with the unions, we have already reached wage agreements with the OMA, the Ontario Medical Association; AMAPCEO, the professional employees' group within the public service union; OPSEU; three of the five unions representing school workers; and we are making progress with OSSTF and other teachers' unions. Those two facts just by themselves hardly support the idea that public sector wages are out of control.

Secondly, there's a legal problem here. The Supreme Court of Canada has said that with unions and collective agreements, you have to go through a period of sitting down with them and negotiating in good faith. If you don't go through the process of sitting down with the union, whether it's—well, any of the public sector unions—and negotiating with them in good faith, and you do try to impose wage control, that will probably be held unconstitutional, as happened in British Columbia, where the Supreme Court of Canada said that a piece of BC legislation that just tore up the collective agreement and imposed wage freezes and so on was unconstitutional

because the government had skipped this requirement of sitting down and negotiating in good faith.

What was the result of that? Well, at the end of the day, BC taxpayers had to retroactively pay about \$85 million to about 9,000 affected workers. What the court said, in effect, was that that could have all been avoided had the government of British Columbia just sat down and acted on its constitutional responsibilities to negotiate with the unions in good faith.

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In summary, the two problems with this bill are (1) there isn't a crisis. Public sector wages are not out of control—0.2%. (2) We've already got settlements in place, and we've shown that if we sit down and negotiate on a very principled basis, we can reach agreements that meet the requirements of the government, recognizing its fiscal constraints.

Of course, the third issue, to summarize it, is what the member opposite is introducing. If it was successful and his private member's bill passed, it would work its way up to the Supreme Court and it would get just all ripped apart by the Supreme Court, for the same reasons they ripped apart the British Columbia government's initiative to skip the requirement for collective bargaining in good faith.

So one wonders why the member opposite from Thornhill is bringing forward this bill. Well, I think, and I don't mean to be disrespectful, the fact of the matter is that he's got a headline-grabber here, because tomorrow morning in the *Star* and in the *Globe and Mail* and in the *Sun* and in the papers up in your riding, up Thornhill way, there will be big, big stories about the member for Thornhill, who is trying to rein in a profligate public sector. The only thing is, I urge those newspapers, when they write the story, that they think of those facts: 0.2%, which is not public sector wages out of control; a history of this government negotiating in good faith with a variety of unions and realizing its goals of respecting the fiscal constraints they are in; and thirdly, what he's doing is illegal.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm pleased to rise and speak in favour of this vital bill.

I first of all want to sound out the alarm bells. Ontario is in a fiscal crisis. In case you didn't hear that, Ontario is in a fiscal crisis.

Interjections.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I think the members across the way, Speaker, are calling out that they want raises or something. I just can't quite hear what they are saying, but you're not getting a raise.

A recent Fraser Forum report has compared Ontario unfavourably to California and Greece. The studies show that despite California having a population three times the size of Ontario's, Ontario's outstanding debt is almost twice as large. In fact, our interest payments, as a percentage of revenue, are 8.9%, as opposed to 2.8% in California.

Another unfavourable indicator is the fact that our debt, as a percentage of GDP, is 37%—the exact same level as Greece in 1984. The Drummond report has indicated that if bold action is not taken, our debt-to-GDP ratio will rise over 50%; our overall debt will hit \$400 billion.

I want the members opposite to really consider these statistics, because for the past year they have been avoiding taking the necessary action to solve these problems. I want the members opposite to understand the urgency of our fiscal problems. The economic future of our province is at stake. The longer we delay, the further we dig ourselves into this hole, the harder it will be to dig ourselves out. You need to stop mortgaging our children's future. It is not fair to continue to borrow from future generations so that we may fuel the government's out-of-control spending.

It takes courage to pursue the kind of action that is necessary when facing this crisis. I'm proud to say that the PC Party has courageously advocated several measures and initiatives that would curb government spending and put Ontario back on the path to prosperity.

Today we are here debating a measure that would begin a sensible set of cost-saving measures. An across-the-board public sector wage freeze would save the province a much-needed \$2 billion. When it comes to balancing the budgets and reducing costs, it makes sense to begin with the public sector. Public sector compensation costs 55 cents of every dollar spent by the government. It is the single largest item the government spends money on. Finding savings in this aspect of our public finances represents a big step in the direction of fiscal prudence and restraint.

Beyond that, the level of public compensation far exceeds that of the people in the private sector, who ultimately foot the bill. The Fraser Institute notes that wages of public sector workers are 14% greater than those of private sector workers. The CFIB notes that the figure is closer to 27%, when considering all benefits. This is simply not fair. From a moral perspective, people working in comparable professions should not experience such a wage disparity. But there are some obvious economic reasons for why this statistic is so troubling. First, it distorts our labour markets. It used to be that those who did seek employment in the public sector did so because the hours are generally more reasonable and they have greater job security. Consequently, the labour market would assess the discount on your wage in return for these benefits. It was accepted that those in the private sector would earn more due to the increased risk associated with uncertain job security and other factors. At a 27% premium, the public sector distorts the labour market by discouraging employment in the private sector. Make no mistake, Speaker: It's the health of our private sector that ultimately determines the health of our economy.

The second troubling insight about this wage disparity is what it indicates. A study by the European Commission found the labour markets of a number of European countries—they found that private sector workers in

Germany, France and Denmark, some of Europe's strongest economies, earn more than those in the public sector. However, distressed economies, Greece, Portugal and Spain, experienced the opposite. In fact, public sector workers in Greece earned about 31% more than their private sector counterparts. This is frighteningly similar to the degree of wage disparity in Ontario, and we need to take action soon.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I don't have long, Mr. Speaker, but I did want to respond to a couple of points that the speaker just before me from the Progressive Conservatives made. If austerity budgets worked—and he pointed to Greece—then Greece would be in great shape. If austerity budgets worked, then so would Spain and Italy. This is far from the case.

Certainly from Roosevelt's New Deal law, we know the trickle-down theory of economics: You make the rich very rich—which is what's happening in this province—and somehow that wealth will just trickle down to the people at the bottom. It never worked and it won't ever work. We see south of the border right now the huge debate about the cuts and how they are going to then spiral the American economy into a recession. Austerity does not work. That is what the PCs are proposing.

He mentions Germany and other very highly unionized countries. Of course they're doing well in the private sector there, because their private sectors are unionized; because, quite frankly, the unions brought us the middle class. That's how we got a middle class in the first place. That's how we got any good labour laws: unions. This idea of union bosses—these are democratic organizations elected by their members.

If we want a balanced approach to a balanced budget, we look at the corporations and their loopholes. We look at the wealthy and the little amount of tax that they pay. We look at the managers in the public service, not the workers. We look at the incredible bonuses being paid to those managers in the OPS, not to their workers. Finally, what we do is we enable people to make a decent living so that they can then spend money, and that spurs the economy. That's kind of economics 101.

That's why the NDP, when in government, has the best record of balanced budgets, historically, in Canada, of any of the parties, because we actually pay attention to economics and not just to bookkeeping.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to commend, to the members listening, the remarks made by the member from Thornhill. It's important to put this debate in perspective. The deficit in Ontario is \$12 billion, and the third-highest expenditure is the servicing of our accumulated debt, which is \$236 billion. That amounts, as I look at some of the young people here today, to \$17,900 worth of debt for every man, woman and child. That's deferred taxes—that's exactly what it is—and they keep spending recklessly.

The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London said that there's a completely disproportionate relationship to the public sector and the private sector. I think he made the point that the difference between the public sector and the private sector in comparable jobs is 14%, and when you factor in the benefit plans, it's as high as 27%. It gives you some reflection on just how bad and out of balance this system of the public sector is.

Now, when you look at the current discussion with the teachers, the increase in income for a teacher from 2003 to the current time has been 25% in pay. It's even greater for the ones who are higher on the grid. I want to put it in perspective in a broader sense. The member from Thornhill, I think, did a very, very respectable summary in the short time he was allowed. But 17%—almost one in five people working now work for the government in some role: police, fire, ambulance, doctor, nurse, professor etc. People working in the public sector shouldn't be criticized.

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Here's what has happened: It's the government's policies that are wrong. The public sector—whether they're professors, teachers, nurses—do respectable work, and it should be reflected in the growth in the economy. They shouldn't be getting wage increases that are in excess of the growth and the revenue of the economy.

And here's the issue: Don Drummond—he's a very respected economist—said that Ontario has a structural deficit. Their spending is increasing faster than the growth in revenue.

Here's the final remark in the benefits to the public sector. In an article this week in the paper, it said that when you look at pensions, in the public sector, 76% plus of people have a defined benefit plan, and in the private sector, it's 25%.

Now, what does that mean? Here's what it means in the public sector—and this is another article in the paper this week. It said that a person working until 55 in the public sector who is on the sunshine list, making over \$100,000 a year—and by the way, the number on the sunshine list has gone from 20,000 to 80,000—that person who retires at 55 and lives to be actuarially 84 would receive an additional \$2 million—and not working.

Interjection: Each person.

Mr. John O'Toole: Each person would receive \$2 million. Put these things in perspective and just ask yourself the question, not in any malicious way: Is it sustainable? Well, ask Greece, when they're trying to reduce the entitlements. That's the problem across the world: It's the bureaucracy and the growth in employment in the public sector, when we talk about 600,000 families without a job. And they're the ones that create the tax revenue stream. I put to you that the current model is not sustainable.

The member from Thornhill and Tim Hudak have put a suggestion on the board, and that's a public sector wage freeze which would save \$2 billion. No one gets hurt. I ask for their support.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you very much, Speaker. There were a number of speakers, and I would ordinarily thank them all individually, but I'll thank you collectively, because notwithstanding the fact that we all come to this place with our individual opinions and our differently-informed points of view, the input is appreciated.

I want to correct something that seems to be out there, based on the comments that I've heard. This is not a complex bill, and it's not about a lot of things that seem to be imputed to it. It is about correcting an imbalance, and that's about all it's about: correcting an imbalance.

I spent an incredible amount of my 12-minute presentations talking about the fact that the unions themselves preach a level playing field when they're fighting for their members and negotiating collective agreements. Basically, I've never argued with anybody about playing on a level playing field; nobody does. But when it tilts this way and the ball is always running in one direction, you have to question it.

For many years, perhaps unions had a point in the public sector when they said, "We need some redress." That redress has long since passed, and we now have quoted plenty of statistical information that has its basis in StatsCan material, that says, yes, there is an imbalance, and that imbalance is in favour of public sector workers, and it is being carried on the backs of ordinary taxpayers, who have been hurt just as much and now are being hurt worse.

Very particularly, to the comments of my friend from Parkdale–High Park: Look, there are three things that came out in what she said that are patently untrue in terms of my intent. One is, I don't engage in union-bashing. As I said, I've been a member of a union myself, and I have great respect for everybody who works in the broader public sector.

This is not about cutting anything, and it's not about austerity. It's about putting the brakes on for a little while and letting that playing field come back into balance. That's all it's about. That's why we want the breather. That's what this bill purports to do: Give the government a breather.

We want this government—and if not this government, then our government—to fix it, and that's what we're going to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We will take the vote at the end of private members' business.

LIQUOR LICENCE
AMENDMENT ACT (SERVING LIQUOR
IN CERTAIN PLACES), 2013
LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES PERMIS D'ALCOOL
(SERVICE D'ALCOOL
DANS CERTAINS LIEUX)

Mrs. Albanese moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act in relation to serving liquor in certain places / Projet de loi 8, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les permis d'alcool relativement au service d'alcool dans certains lieux.

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

Mrs. Laura Albanese: It's an honour to rise in the House today for the second reading of my private member's bill, Bill 8, the Liquor Licence Amendment Act (Serving Liquor in Certain Places), 2013. I had the opportunity of introducing this bill in the past session and I'm trying again.

This bill is the result of much consultation and input from my community, York South–Weston, specifically on booze cans. I would like to especially thank the two city councillors of York South–Weston: first of all, Frances Nunziata, who is a councillor for ward 11 in the city of Toronto and with whom I've worked very closely on this issue. Welcome to Queen's Park, Frances.

I would also like to introduce Staff Sergeant Daryle Gerry and Sergeant Steve Lorriman of 12 Division, Toronto Police Service. Welcome to Queen's Park. These are all people who are very dedicated to combating the dangers these places present to our community.

I also wanted to mention that Councillor Nunziata last June presented a motion, seconded by Councillor Josh Colle, at Toronto city council that was passed, and I would like to thank them for that. The motion was in support of my bill.

Our former superintendent of 12 Division, now Deputy Chief Mark Saunders, also deserves gratitude for both his time and support towards this bill. His input and that of other members of 12 Division has been crucial in forming this bill.

Before I continue, I would also like to clarify for all of you what is a booze can. Booze cans are places where alcohol is served illegally, either an establishment that has a licence and then proceeds to sell alcohol after permitted hours, or an establishment that does not possess a liquor licence. This could be your local neighbourhood restaurant or bar operating after hours, or, as is often the case in my riding, the back room of a hair salon or perhaps a music store. Fortunately, not many ridings in Ontario have hair salons that are open at 2 a.m. every night of the week. Well, we do. And sometimes these businesses act as a front for booze cans. Again, I make the example of a music store that after business hours will close its doors and only let trusted clientele inside. They're sort of like the speakeasies of the 1920s, where a password would get you in, and inside, liquor was being sold illegally. The owners of such establishments usually claim they're throwing a private birthday party. It's therefore very difficult for the police to gain entry to such booze cans in order to collect the necessary information that is needed for a warrant.

These establishments then go on to become a public nuisance for the residents, for the businesses, who complain about the noise that they emit and the fire

hazard that they pose. For the patrons, it's also a hazard because they are usually crammed in very small rooms.

But the alcohol and the noise are not the main issues here. The problem that we are facing in York South–Weston and other ridings is that these booze cans attract a criminal element for quick money. So they are magnets for gang members, drug trafficking, sometimes prostitution or gun violence, and they affect negatively the quality of life for area residents by making them feel unsafe near their own homes.

The new superintendent of 12 Division, Douglas Quan, confirms that the Toronto Police Service dedicates a great deal of personnel and resources in response to acts of violent crime. Their experience demonstrates that many of the crimes of sudden gun violence to which police respond occur at or in close proximity to these types of locations where alcohol is being sold illegally. Also, many incidents of extreme violence occur at known locations being operated by persons with or without a licence or a special occasion permit.

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We only need to look back—as I had the opportunity to mention just today, a few hours ago here in the House—just a few days, to February 24 of this year, to see how true Superintendent Quan's words are. Shots rang out at an after-hours club on February 24 in North York, here in Toronto, ending the life of a 25-year-old man.

Allow me to go into the details of Bill 8. As we all know, the Liquor Licence Act regulates the licensing and the possession of alcohol in the province of Ontario. It already sets out the offences and the penalties for infractions of the act, such as selling to minors or selling liquor after hours. However, the Liquor Licence Act needs more teeth.

My bill amends it in two ways. First, it creates a new offence of serving liquor in any place other than a residence, premises with a liquor licence or a private place, as defined by the regulations. This is important, because it will help the police address those booze cans that are run in establishments like a hairdresser's salon. Once a business closes its doors to its customers, it practically becomes a private place. This is why the police have difficulty prosecuting those booze cans that masquerade as private parties at a salon.

As I mentioned previously, these establishments are often very difficult to infiltrate. Often, the doorman will only let in the people that he knows and he trusts, or that are brought in by trusted friends, making the job of the policeto get inside, undercover, extremely difficult. In order to prove that an offence is taking place under the current provisions of the Liquor Licence Act, a police officer needs to get inside and document, over and over, that alcohol is being sold, and identify who is who within this establishment. It can take months to gather the necessary evidence.

With this amendment, it would be an offence to serve alcohol at such so-called private parties, making it much easier to shut down these operations. Again, I want to

repeat: Truly private places like homes and backyards will not be affected by this amendment. Neither will legitimate operators operating within a liquor licence.

Secondly, Bill 8 provides for penalties and bail conditions relating to the new offence, and a similar offence under the regulations. Many of the people running booze cans can be repeat offenders; if they are caught running a booze can one day, they will often set up shop somewhere else, two doors down, the next day. They may, for example, not sell alcohol directly, but then become the doorman or the manager of the place, and the offender may have a brother or a friend selling the alcohol while they continue to bring their trusted clientele with them.

If passed, an individual caught illegally selling or serving alcohol will now be subject to more stringent bail conditions. If this person is then caught again, procuring or being in possession of alcohol for the intent of traffic or being on premises where alcohol is illegally served or sold, the offender would be liable for additional penalties, and it would be possible to immediately suspend an establishment's liquor licence for at least seven days.

This piece of legislation is important for making communities safer. Since I've been elected, in 2007, there have been a number of very disturbing incidents of violence in my riding. I just want to mention a few. In February of 2011, a man was shot in the head in a small shop at Weston and Lawrence. In early 2009, there was a shooting in a suspected booze can that claimed the life of a man, and two others were injured. In 2008, a man was convicted for the 2006 murder of a young father, shot at close range in a booze can.

The dangers posed by booze cans can also spill out on to the streets and affect innocent bystanders. Last year, in March, a man stumbled out of a booze can around 3:30 on a Sunday morning and fired at least four shots at a condo building in my riding, at 1 Hickory Tree Road. People were just astonished. They were shocked at having shots at their window. You can just imagine the fear of some of the constituents.

Community members in York South–Weston have been working together with Councillor Nunziata, the police and city staff to address the issues of problem properties for years, holding monthly meetings and safety audits, in which I participate as well.

Bill 8 was conceived in this context: as a more effective tool for police to use in truly eradicating this problem. A booze can may already be illegal, but if police don't have the proper tools to deter and eliminate them in York South–Weston, in Trinity–Spadina, in York Centre, in Davenport, in Ajax, in Barrie or anywhere else in the province, they are just going to continue to flourish.

I want to mention this: In 2011 in Trinity–Spadina, the police shut down a place where 200 people were crammed in. It was a yoga studio. At night, it turned into a booze can. That's why it's important to keep away repeat offenders even from the premises of booze cans.

The further tragedy is that so many of the lives that are lost to violence at booze cans are those of our youth. That

is why I've been working on developing an integrated local strategy, along with community groups, our government, other levels of government and local agencies. This bill represents one part of that goal—to prevent and deter crime—but this doesn't pull me away from my focus on another very necessary part of the strategy. I'm working to better connect our youth to employment, to training, to recreational opportunities so they don't end up involved in booze cans and possible other criminal activities in the first place.

I hope that I have painted a sufficient picture of the need for this bill. I can assure you that the intent is not to penalize good operators or to unduly punish first-time offenders or otherwise legitimate establishments. This bill is not about shutting down a restaurant or withdrawing a licence because its last patron was sold a drink at 2:15 a.m. This bill is meant truly to empower so that we can keep our community safer. It's about making sure that a small group intent on operating a criminal enterprise can't bring their crime and their clientele into our wonderful neighbourhoods. Urban ridings need this. The city of Toronto is probably unique in Canada: It has a third generation of gang culture.

I strongly believe it's the right thing to do. I hope that my colleagues opposite will be supporting this bill, even though they're not facing, perhaps, the same conditions in their own riding.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to speak this afternoon as the Progressive Conservative Attorney General critic to debate Bill 8, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act in relation to serving liquor in certain places.

Bill 8, of course, is a recent reintroduction by the member for York South–Weston, and I first want to congratulate the member for taking the time to craft a private member's bill that focuses on attempting to make Ontario's communities safer. Certainly, this is a cause we can agree on, Speaker.

Bill 8 seeks to curb the illegal sale and service of alcohol and the operation of what is known as booze cans by giving police the tools they need, and have asked for, to deter offenders and keep communities safe.

If passed, Bill 8 would create a series of strong potential bail conditions an officer may impose upon an offender, including not being able to attend certain places that liquor is served; not being able to attend where liquor is licensed to be sold outside of prescribed hours; not being able to possess, except at their own residence, more liquor than is deemed reasonable for their personal use; and any other condition that officers in charge consider necessary to prevent re-offence. I think this is an important part of what the member opposite is trying to do because, as she raised in her own speech, it's often the same people reoffending in different locations, so you need to do more than simply target the individual locations.

The bill also establishes a new measure which states that offenders under the newly created offence are liable to imprisonment for repeat offences.

As I mentioned earlier, the motivation for this legislation is community safety and promoting a sense of security for residents within their homes and on our streets. I applaud the fact that Bill 8 is aimed at illegal operators and is meant to be a deterrent to behaviour that detracts from our community's sense of safety.

I do have a few concerns, however, and I'm sure that they will be addressed or can be addressed at committee. For example, I'm concerned that by strengthening the penalties so much, we risk the fact that first-time offenders and otherwise good operators could find themselves in a situation of non-compliance. We must be careful not to capture legal operators and penalize them unnecessarily without the opportunity for them to come into full compliance, as most first-time offenders usually do.

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That being said, I do feel these concerns can be adequately addressed at the committee stage. Moreover, I think the cause for making our communities safer and stopping these booze cans from endangering our families and communities is a worthwhile one. It is also worth noting that the Toronto Police Service believes Bill 8 would help in combatting these dangerous booze cans and make our communities safer in the process.

In closing, I would just like to note that these booze cans are about much more than just the illegal sale of alcohol. These places often become hot spots for other illegal activities and crimes, including shootings and, most tragically, deaths. It is for these reasons and more that I will be supporting Bill 8 this afternoon. I'm looking forward to its further refinement at committee. Congratulations.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to rise. This is one of my favourite times: private members' public business. I think it's all of ours. I'm hopeful too in this term, and this is generally speaking, that some of these bills actually see fruition and that we get them passed into law. I know we're working at that at House leaders', but it has been a long time coming so let's hope it comes this session.

To the member from York South–Weston, I completely understand—and to the guests, to Frances and to 12th division, welcome to Queen's Park—the concern behind this bill. Certainly, in my riding we have concerns. I live about two doors from Queen Street in the west end of Toronto in Parkdale, and our problem is not so much booze cans or illegal operations; our problem are quite legal operations that oversell, that don't pay attention to either the spirit or the letter of the law, and where some parts of Queen Street are rendered uninhabitable, especially for women after dark, because you've got overserving; you've got knife fights; you've got all sorts of problems that come with overserving, at that end of the street.

I have to tell you that I'm meeting with my own division this week, 11th division, and also with, I hope,

the AGCL—what is it? AGCO? I always get the acronym wrong—the Alcohol and Gaming Commission this week as well, because I’m frustrated. These are legal establishments. We’ve had problems with them, and we’ve dealt with them and with problem properties for month after month. But here’s the problem, and this is with legal establishments: I’ve been told by the police that you have to catch them in action. You have to actually catch the crime. If they’re overserving, you have to catch them overserving. If they’re serving underage, you have to catch them serving underage, or you have to have the methods to set up a kind of vice sting, which not all divisions have the time or the money to do over something that, quite frankly, in the great scheme of things, is a more minor offence, to actually be able to charge the owners with doing anything wrong at all. Ditto the liquor commission. They say, “Where is the evidence? Show us the evidence before we can pull their licence.” That’s where I’m starting; I’m starting with the legal establishments—difficult enough to get action on these files, and I understand that.

When it comes to illegal actions, “Good luck” is all I’m saying to the member opposite. We’re going to pass this on. We think it absolutely should go to committee. There is some fine-tuning, as the Progressive Conservatives have pointed out, that we’d like to see as well, but certainly there’s enough merit in the bill that we need to move it on.

My concern is more with the entire area of how you get a liquor licence, what happens after you get it, and how that’s policed. The whole area is rife with problems. If we have to depend on our police forces to enforce what really shouldn’t be their role—overserving, serving underage and things like that in legal establishments—then, good grief; good luck with the illegal establishments.

I have some concerns, and I just wanted to note them so that the member can make a note of them; for example, something else that happens along Queen Street that’s a very good thing, which is openings and art galleries. Here, you have art galleries. Their job is not ever to sell liquor, but they have openings at regular times. They have to get a licence for that. I would hate to see organizations—small business. Lord knows, we need our small business, and we’re not a particularly hospitable environment right now in Ontario or in Toronto for small business. We need our small business to thrive. I would hate to see establishments that aren’t strictly restaurants or bars but do get liquor permits being penalized in any way, shape or form.

Ditto, I’m concerned a little bit about some minorities in our community that love to party, and their parties tend to go on longer and they tend to be louder; let’s face it. I can say this because my last name is DiNovo. One of those communities, and the member opposite can appreciate this, is Italians.

Again, I’m concerned that first-time offenders get caught in a net that’s really meant for clearly illegal oper-

ations that are ongoing—so just to make sure that that’s looked at.

The other, wider issue is with any law that’s penalty-based; that is to say, if it’s all about the punishment, it’s very difficult to deter practice, right? If it’s all about catching them first and then hammering them with a punishment, people tend to be pretty short in terms of their memory. I appreciate that, yes, if these places are getting a slap on the wrist, they’ll be up and running tomorrow, but on the other hand, just because they’ve given a larger fine doesn’t mean that they won’t be up and running tomorrow as well. That’s just a more, if you will, philosophical problem with a kind of penalty-based response to this.

Some of the issues that the member raised—I’m also kind of wondering how this is going to work well. If it’s difficult to get in—the doorman’s there; they know the undercover police officer isn’t one of their regular members—I mean, you still have the problem of enforcement. Again, I point back to my original issue: We can’t even enforce our liquor laws with legal establishments, never mind with illegal ones.

Certainly, I think that there’s no problem in moving this bill on.

The other comments that I would really like to make, though, are more about the situation that finds young people ending up in booze cans, and that certainly is true of York South–Weston. Again, we hate to see victims penalized.

The folk who hang out in booze cans, let’s face it, are not doctors and lawyers, usually—maybe way downtown; maybe in Trinity–Spadina, but certainly not in York South–Weston or in Parkdale. These are not high-earning individuals who hang out there. A lot of them are kids. A lot of them are kids from various minorities. This speaks, again, to the high rates of poverty, the high rates of joblessness among our youth. The member alluded to it briefly, but truly, that’s the backdrop to this. Quite frankly, that’s a far more important focus for this House than higher and stiffer penalties for illegal establishments serving alcohol.

I really do plead not just with the member but with the entire government bench: Isn’t it about time we did something about youth joblessness? Isn’t it about time we did something about youth poverty, which is getting worse and worse and worse?

We just had a stat come out last week from both McMaster University and also from the United Way, saying that precarious employment now affects all workers. In fact, it affects about 40% to 50% of workers. Some 40% to 50% of all workers in the GTA say they don’t know if they’ll have a job next year. This is not the kind of atmosphere in which we want to raise our children.

So if we want to protect our children and protect folk who live in areas that have a high rate of impoverishment, a high rate of marginalization, we don’t want to just punish them when they mess up, Mr. Speaker. We want to find ways to prevent that mess-up in the first place.

That's what is not only lacking in this bill; it's also lacking in the Liberal government's response and the way they're going about business. We're not seeing, for example, policies to create jobs. We're not seeing absolutely specific methods of attacking poverty. We're not seeing ways of keeping kids in post-secondary education.

We have the highest, most expensive tuition in Canada right now, the highest student debt in Canada right now. So if you're going to say to a young person, "Why are you hanging out and partying all the time? Why don't you go back to school?"—it's very, very difficult to say that when there's just no way that they can afford it.

We heard today, with Campaign 2000 and child poverty, a young woman describe her arduous adventure in trying to get a post-secondary education while trying to find daycare for her child and trying desperately to get off social assistance. These are statistics waiting to happen. This is the problem.

Certainly, illegal establishments selling liquor aren't the solution, and certainly, neither is this bill. That's really a point that needs to be made, that attacking the symptom of a problem is not attacking the problem itself.

1510

So yes, in short, does the New Democratic Party think this is a bill with some merit that should go on to committee? Absolutely. We're going to vote for it, and we're going to put forward our recommendations for amendments at that time, although I'd love to hear the member speak to those suggestions.

Again, to the two larger issues: One, on the larger issue of enforcement—trust me; I'm speaking to police and the liquor commission as we meet here—how do you enforce these laws generally, even in legal establishments? The situation we have now is not working. It hasn't worked in the seven years I've been elected. I've heard complaints from my residents constantly about legal establishments and still can't seem to get them shut down, even though they break the law every week. That's number one.

Number two, the larger backdrop to this bill: the backdrop of youth unemployment, high tuition fees, increasing poverty among our young and what we do about that. If we do something about that, we won't have quite the problem of youth acting out in dangerous and illegal ways that we do. We can't expect our police and our bureaucrats to be social workers. We do expect it of them, actually, and we shouldn't have to, but we do expect it of them. We should be helping them do their jobs by actually attacking the core problems that this is a symptom of.

So, yes, thank you for bringing it forward. Yes, we will support this going forward to committee. Yes, we will propose some amendments to make it stronger. But two things: One, nothing's working in terms of the way we give licences out to establishments, legal or illegal, I might add; and two, my goodness, instead of looking at the symptoms of the underlying problem, why don't we finally, as government, look at the problem, which is

youth unemployment, youth not in school, dead-end jobs for youth and the fact our youth can't afford to go to school anymore?

Those are the problems, and for those problems, this isn't the solution.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by saying that I'll be sharing my time with the members from Etobicoke Centre and Willowdale.

First, I want to thank the member from York South—Weston for her leadership and advocacy work in reintroducing this legislation to the House, because I hear, extensively, her passion, her commitment to protecting her community but, most importantly, advocacy work to make sure her community is safe.

The proposed Bill 8, if passed by the House, will address two things: hopefully reduce crime and illegal sales of alcohol after hours in her community. The member from York South—Weston talked about how this is not just in the city of Toronto; it's across Ontario.

But I think the bigger issue here is the concern about how we help our police community with respect to these kinds of crime-related incidents. We heard from the member in her remarks earlier the fact that there have been some critical incidents, there have been deaths. More importantly, how do we help the police community in terms of this whole issue of bail conditions, the whole issue of the reoffender? Because this kind of criminal activity is not just one time only; we're dealing with repeat offenders. How do we do deterrence? More importantly, the concern across the city of Toronto—I'm from the eastern part of the city—is continuous repeat offenders.

The other big concern with this particular proposed legislation is the fact we want to get the message out that if you are going to continue this kind of illegal activity and you are convicted in court, there will be sentencing attached to this kind of offence. Furthermore, we, as a community, have a responsibility in this House to ensure that every community is safe.

The comments today have been focused on urban areas exclusively. I would challenge that this is not just an urban issue; this is across Ontario. There will be incidents that involve crime, and there will be illegal sales somewhere. We need to ensure that the law enforcement community as well as the legal community have the right tools to protect and ensure that these kinds of criminal activities get reduced, if not prevented.

The other piece here: This is not the first time the House has been addressing this issue. Last year, I believe in June 2012—maybe the member could, if that's not correct, correct my dates—all three parties had supported this particular bill, and the fact is that the members opposite already indicated support for this particular bill. So I want to continue this dialogue, and I think it's the right thing to do to move this bill to the committee.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: This afternoon, I want to give credit to the member from York South–Weston for bringing this bill forward again. I think it's very reasoned and well-intentioned. I enjoyed very much your comments with respect to relating your action and your decision to incidents in your community of York South–Weston. That's really why we are generally here, and I'd say in the broader sense, where you get into policy, you don't find so much accommodation in here. But often government or opposition are trying to achieve desirable outcomes, and in this case here, our critic for the Attorney General, from Dufferin–Caledon, was very complimentary as well.

I want to recognize the fact that you're working with the lower-tier municipalities, the councillors in your area of York. I have, like many others, followed some of these inappropriate outcomes at these after-hour clubs. They are just generally unacceptable.

I just want to put on the record that all of us here—and I know the Liberals, for instance, often find themselves at the National Club, a very popular hangout for notable members, and in our case, the Albany Club. Very wealthy people would find themselves after hours perhaps at the Toronto Club—not me, personally—and other clubs that are quite highly respected and where people want to have, out of camera's eye, some discussions perhaps after a regal event. But a last concern is what the hotel and restaurant association has mentioned.

I was at an event where people knew the owners of this club—they knew them—and they brought out, because it was a 50th wedding anniversary, an aged bottle of port. This was maybe 2 in the morning. This was a couple of years ago, and I won't mention the place in case the police raid the place. But I think there are occasions, and I believe that the police do have the appropriate tools—it's these repeat offenders that have been mentioned by your colleague and your caucus that we need to address. I would be, in that respect, encouraging this bill to pass and to go to committee so that the implementation mechanisms are in place.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

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

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I, too, would like to add my support to the member from York South–Weston with the reintroduction of this bill. I think everyone has identified the fact that this is an illegal activity that is occurring and needs to be stopped.

Interestingly enough, probably the after-hour clubs started because of the hospitality industry itself ending at 2 a.m., and the hospitality folks had someplace to go. Also, interestingly enough, after-hour clubs do not have websites or they don't need to advertise; it's simply word of mouth that people seem to be able to go.

What is concerning to me is that when you listen to what the police have to say, not only could there be activities that go on within the club that are illegal, but also, there was one in particular that caught my attention where they had identified the particular club, and when

they went and knocked on the door, the door was actually chained, which means that someone could not get in, but it also meant someone could not get out.

We have had too many incidents over the last number of years where there have been extraordinary fires; many people have lost their lives. I would hate to think that we put this into our society, where we know this might happen, but we haven't put in place the necessary tools for the police in order to shut these down so this cannot happen.

So I am very supportive of the approach that the member has taken. And, yes, it is very much within her community—I suspect it's within many communities—but I think there's a broader fiduciary responsibility as a member of this House to look at how we can in fact ensure the safety of the people of Ontario. One of the ways is always to shut down illegal activity, to give the police the support that they do need in order to make sure that these activities are not occurring.

The other thing that I found fascinating was their ability to shut down and to move, and they may just move down the street—amazing.

1520

Again, I'm very supportive of the member from York South–Weston. I encourage her to make sure that this bill goes through on second reading to the appropriate committee, where it will receive the necessary public scrutiny so that we can in fact have third reading.

Thank you again to the member and thank you to everyone in this House for their support.

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

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a real pleasure to rise and speak to this private member's bill again. I did it when it was introduced in the last session, and I supported it then as I will now. I do have a couple of minor concerns, and certainly some words of support for it as well.

I think it's important that any time we have an opportunity to reinforce some of the laws that are currently in place and make sure they're applied properly, we should take advantage of it. This is a case where I think we need to be careful that we're not overregulating. I don't think this is a case where it is overregulation. Sometimes we in Legislatures, whether they're provincial, federal or municipal, think we can regulate or legislate everything. I don't think this is a case where overregulation is a problem; I think it's actually identifying a very specific problem that exists, especially in larger urban areas like Toronto and the GTA, and in fact more and more in a place like Barrie. I know that as things maybe get more difficult and tighten up with rules and attention in places like Toronto, a lot of people who run these types of establishments—booze cans—move to places like Barrie, where there is less attention being paid to what the actual problem is. We do see some movement, some of this culture moving towards a place like Barrie, and it's important to make sure that the nasty things that go along with it that have already been mentioned, the other crimes that often go along with things like booze cans,

like any type of violence—even things as heinous as prostitution or other criminal activities are often bred in these places.

But that's not to say that every place that happens to stay open a little bit past—and I think it's important to note that some restaurants and hotels have mentioned that they do have some issue with the potential for the intent of this bill to be lost a little bit, and have it over-applied, say, in their cases. So if we, for example, have a hotel or a restaurant that has a bar that stays open a little too late by accident or whatever, maybe they would be punished in a way that was far more punitive than maybe deserved, especially for a first offence. If things like that are recognized and dealt with at committee—some wording of the bill may be altered in such a way that the intent is clear. I don't think when I say that that I'm going to the core of your intent, member from York South–Weston; that's not my intention. I just think it's important to be clear about the intent.

Having come from a municipal background as well, I know that quite often, bylaws and laws that we make as legislators—the intent is lost at the enforcement level. I can give examples where bylaw officers in the city of Barrie or anywhere in our country—bylaws could actually be misinterpreted and enforcement can go too far because the discretion of the bylaw officer or the officer isn't being adhered to.

I think as long as we are very careful about how we apply the law, or the amendment, and we make sure that the discretion of officers can't be mistaken and that certain businesses aren't punitively punished for maybe first-time mistakes they've made, it's a great amendment that should be supported.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: It's very important to speak to this bill, and I congratulate the member from York South–Weston for bringing it forward, as she has twice.

The term “booze cans” is really a bit of a misnomer. These are not your after-hours clubs; these are drug dens, places where they sell and trade guns on a regular basis. It's a place where they kill people. I know of one place on Atlas Avenue: There were two murders before they finally closed the place down. It took about eight years to do it. There was another place on St. Clair and Kenwood. I remember two people were killed at the same booze can. I don't know, it took six, seven years to finally—I don't even think they closed it; it basically went out of business because the patrons were afraid of going there and getting killed.

I've got another quasi-booze can—finally, after 10 years, we actually closed it—in Lawrence Heights: 10 years operating in a Toronto Community Housing complex, 10 years of selling booze and dope. I don't know how many people were shot and killed in front of and around this place. But for 10 years, they operated illegally, after hours, shooting people, selling guns, dope and drugs. You can't close these places down.

I had a police officer coming to me from 13 Division—as former mayor Nunziata knows—at Oakwood

and Rogers Road. This bar is still open. They found a sawed-off shotgun behind the toilet—because that's what they do; they don't carry the guns with them, these criminals. What they do is they leave them in preferred booze cans and places, and then they pick them up, and you rent a gun there or whatever you want to do.

The police officer found a sawed-off shotgun, went to the Alcohol and Gaming Commission and said, “Listen, let's suspend the licence of this place”—not even close it down.

“Well, you can't do that, because you can't prove that the owner knew that the sawed-off shotgun was in the place.”

The officer said, “Yeah, but if they sell peanuts at happy hour, you're going to suspend their licence. But if there's a sawed-off shotgun in the place: ‘Oh, no, we can't do that.’”

There is a lot out of whack with the Alcohol and Gaming Commission. They need a reality check. You have to go through hell and back to get them to close down the most notorious of places. Councillor Nunziata will tell you. You go time and time again. You go with a councillor; you go with the residents. You appear at hearings, and they bring their lawyers, and then there's some other technicality. They claim the Charter of Rights and Freedoms—the right and freedom to have a booze-can licence. You can't close them down. But the poor, ordinary guy who's running a legitimate restaurant—“Oh, you didn't put the right sign on the wall there. We're going to have to possibly—you've got to come in for a hearing, to suspend your licence.” There's a sushi place on Eglinton; they were going to close the guy down because he didn't have some sign on the wall. It is totally out of whack.

Unless you see the reality of this thing and the amount of police hours wasted, going to these hearings, filling out reports—this has been going on in economic boom times and in economic down times, so it's not the economy, folks. It's just a fact.

We in the provincial Legislature have got to pay more attention to these street issues, the real life of people and the fact that they drain our resources. They shoot and kill people. They make money under the table; it's all part of funnelling the underground crime economy we have in some of our cities. This is an attempt to deal with that reality.

Just ask the city officials at the old city of York. How many hours at metro council—staff hours—we used to have task forces. We had the city works commissioner. The fire marshal used to go in; we used to call in the fire marshal. The police—we had everybody in the city working on booze-can control. Meanwhile, we can't do the other business. So, all the money and time—on these criminals, really. They operate these criminal places under our nose. They laugh at us, this area of government.

And the poor cops: They're there, trying to do the best they can. Every day, they're there, trying to do their job. Everybody says, “Oh, the police have got to do more.”

Well, the police are caught in the middle, because every time they try to bring something to someone's attention, they say, "Well, listen, according to the Alcohol and Gaming Commission and all of these rules"—if you look at the rules—in fact, I looked at the rules, because I was trying to close this one place down on Eglinton Avenue. There are all these reasons why you can close a place down; there are about 50 of them.

I said, "How come there isn't anything here that, if someone gets shot and killed in a place, you can close it down? How come, if they find guns in the place, you can't close it down? Why isn't that one of your 50 reasons?"

Too many peanuts at happy hour, and all this stuff: They all had that down. Loud music—all those were listed there. Peanuts were right at the top. But people getting killed—"Why isn't it on the list?" I said. I even had the head of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission come in, trying to explain this nonsense to me. They can't.

It's not about a magic solution, but it is about this place spending more time on the real things that affect people, and they're not solved by big policy issues. As the member from Durham said, it's about getting your feet on the ground and doing things, rather than just talking yourselves to death about policy nonsense. Let's fix some of the problems, right?

You're from Durham; you know full well all the policy nonsense we hear around here. We need to help real people, help the police, help the community, help small business and listen to the local councillors. They're trying to do a job; we should help them try to do that job, and I think we can. I'm optimistic this will finally be a little bit of a ray of light into this long, long, sad tale of booze cans.

1530

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 8, the Liquor Licence Amendment Act.

I want to begin by congratulating the member for YorkSouth–Weston for introducing this bill. As we have just heard from the member from Eglinton–Lawrence—and anyone who has lived in the GTA knows that for years this has cropped up, certainly as a problem. Obviously, the bill before us addresses this issue for a serious situation in Toronto, but other communities as well.

The bill seeks to address the problem of booze cans—illegal bars in which patrons can buy alcohol after legal closing hours. Booze cans are not just a problem for illegal alcohol, as many have said. They are centres for drug dealing, organized crime, prostitution and violence.

As these places operate illegally, their patrons are without any of the protections that people would expect in a normal, legal business establishment. We've even heard of cases where the doors are chained shut to keep out the police, which obviously could lead to a catastrophe if there was a fire or if there was a health

emergency. And too often, when the police manage to close down one of these operations, it just opens in a new location, not far away.

In the last few years, media reports have told us that several men have died in shootings at booze cans and police have made multiple arrests on drug and liquor charges. It is clear that the police need more help from the Legislature so that the law helps them to close these criminal activities down. I certainly support the strengthening of penalties, as current fines are considered by illegal operators as simply the cost of doing business. We need a system that doesn't allow it to be worthwhile to pay a fine and keep on operating.

I will be supporting this bill and looking forward to it going for public consultation. We have heard, for instance, from the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association, some concerns about the manner in which the bill might be implemented, and that's exactly why committee hearings exist.

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

The member for York–South Weston, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank all the members who have spoken to the bill: the members from Dufferin–Caledon, Parkdale–High Park, Scarborough–Agincourt, Durham, Etobicoke Centre, Barrie, Eglinton–Lawrence and York–Simcoe. Thank you very much for your comments and for your support.

The intent of the bill, as I mentioned earlier, is not to capture legal operators, good businesses; the intent is really to target those problem establishments that some of us have spoken about.

I look forward to the opportunity to fine-tune the bill, to enlarge it, to have public consultations, so that we can make sure that those that are operating within a licence would not be affected by this bill, but the ones that are really causing the violence and the anguish in our communities would instead be able to be shut down.

I would say to the member for Parkdale–High Park that we are also, in our community, finding some establishments that are legal and have a licence and have been speaking to the AGCO, and we know that there are problems there as well. But you have to speak to your police officers, to your division, and ask them how long it takes to shut these places down. It is really mind-boggling when you hear what they have to go through.

Secondly, I want to also just highlight for a moment—you said that I spoke briefly about the larger focus of youth. Well, we are trying, and that's because that's not what this bill is about. This is about—it could be called a small building block, but it's really aimed at making a big difference in our communities. Our throne speech does speak about the opportunities that we have to offer our youth, and I've been working on that in my community as well. Thank you very much for your support.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We'll take the vote at the end of private members' business.

JAYESH'S LAW (WORKER SAFETY
AT SERVICE STATIONS), 2013

LOI JAYESH DE 2013
SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DES TRAVAILLEURS
DANS LES STATIONS-SERVICE

Mr. Colle moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 12, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to worker safety at service stations / Projet de loi 12, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui a trait à la sécurité des travailleurs dans les stations-service.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: I first would like to introduce the widow of Jayesh Prajapati, Vaishali Prajapati, who's here with us, and Jayesh's son, Rishabh Prajapati, and their family friends who came in from Ajax and Scarborough: Manisha Shah, Mital Prajapati and Arvind Prajapati. Welcome.

If I could just start out, I introduced this bill before and I appreciate everybody knowing a little bit about it, but I'll just give you a bit of the background, just the story that precipitated this bill.

Jayesh Prajapati was a gas station attendant at a gas station around the corner from where I lived. One Saturday night, someone came and filled up two big red jerry cans worth of gas, filled up his SUV, and then Jayesh, who was very conscientious at his job and really took his job seriously, tried to stop the person from getting away. Unfortunately, Jayesh was run over and dragged down the street and subsequently lost his life as a result of this encounter with this person.

As a result of that, I was there trying to deal with the situation. It's right across the street from a Toronto Community Housing building, 855 Roselawn. I noticed there were a lot of the residents there and they talked about how wonderful this man was, Jayesh. Whenever they were short money for chocolate bars or coffee, he would say, "It's okay. It's okay." And this is a guy working for \$10 an hour.

I remember someone came and told me a story about someone who was trying to fill up their bicycle with air and didn't have any money to put air in the bicycle tires. He said, "Don't worry, you don't have any money. I'll do it."

Jayesh came to Canada from Gujarat in India about six years ago. He became a Canadian citizen about three years ago and was very proud to be a Canadian. He had an MA in chemistry. He was really an educated man and he was just basically unable to find work. He applied everywhere, but he did find this job at a gas station.

Jayesh worked basically from 3 o'clock in the afternoon until midnight, six days a week. And he would come by bus and subway from—he lived in Rexdale at the time—probably a couple of hours every day each way, six days a week, at \$10 an hour.

So when this occurred, and just finding out what a wonderful person he was and the fact that it was just such

a horrific tragedy—no one should have to die this way—I tried to see if I could help and tried to find out if there was anything wrong that we could fix or make better.

I found a similar situation in British Columbia, where in 2007 Grant De Patie had been dragged to his death for \$75, and they had passed a law in British Columbia in 2008 called Grant's Law, as a result of this horrific death that occurred to this young man, Grant, who worked at the gas station after school.

I also then talked to various gas station operators and owners. I talked to representatives of the oil companies. I talked to representatives of the police, convenience store representatives. I talked to just anybody who might have an idea of what we could do.

1540

I came up with a proposal, basically, to try to deal with this. It's not a perfect proposal, but at least it's an attempt to deal with this situation that is really—I never realized it was so large. In 2010, we had 10,000 reported gas-and-dashes in Ontario—10,000 reported. The police tell me there are probably double that number at least that aren't reported—the police don't record all this stuff. We could have 20,000 of these occurring in Ontario. It's a regular, daily thing.

And it's not casual people who are doing this kind of criminal act of stealing gas. The alleged person in the case of Jayesh had an 18-year criminal record—18 years of doing this stuff. He almost ran over a cop a couple years ago. He's still on the loose, by the way—the alleged person. Another alleged person ran over a gas station attendant in Mississauga a year and a half earlier. They arrested him. He went to court—slap on the wrist, house arrest. He took off to Alberta. In Alberta he was charged with all kinds of crimes. He stuck up a transit officer with a gun. He's still on the loose, because the courts don't take this seriously.

If you ask the cops, they're the biggest supporters of doing something, because they say, "We chase these people. We become collection agents for the oil companies. We have to track these people down." They get their licence plates and find out it's a stolen licence plate. They go to court. They've got a lawyer. The judges say, "Oh well, it's just theft under 5,000 bucks. Big deal. Just pay the amount and a \$100 fine. Goodbye."

So they know they can get away with this stuff, and the cops are spending a lot of time. That's why Police Chief Blair is a big supporter of my proposal, Chief Jolliffe of York region is a big supporter, Hamilton Police Chief De Caire—in Hamilton they had a huge problem a couple years ago, and they tried to do something about it.

Front-line police officers know that with the situation right now, they can't really do their job protecting gas station operators, nor can they protect the public. They're afraid of their own officers being confronted by gas thieves. It is not a victimless crime. You're not ripping off the oil or gas company—they'll say, "Well, the gas company, they're big." You're basically jeopardizing the

safety of that operator working for 10 bucks an hour or a patron who happens to be there or a police officer who has to answer. They're the victims of this kind of criminal activity. Many of these people are habitual gas thieves. They get stolen licence plates and put them on; they fill up for other people.

Therefore, I tried to find out what we can do. The thing that worked in BC—this was put forth by the government of BC, the BC Federation of Labour and the gas station industry out there—is that they put in a law that basically said you have to have prepayment. In other words, you have prepayment through a credit card or debit card. They've had a law in BC since 2008 that means you have prepayment before you get gas. It has basically stopped gas and dash completely in British Columbia; it doesn't exist.

In almost every US state, that's the norm—city ordinance or state ordinance, that's what it is. If you as a Canadian go to get gas, you have to have your credit card and you have a problem sometimes. You have to put in your zip code and then you've got to go inside. But anyway, it's all prepayment. Seventy percent of the gas we acquire right now is by prepayment, so I suggested that we put in a prepayment-type system.

In listening to people over the last number of months, I also said, this isn't a real problem that I know of in Kenora, or it's not a real problem in Kapuskasing, but it's a real problem in the big cities. Therefore, if there's a municipality that feels it's not a problem, they can opt out of it. But it is a serious problem from Ottawa to Toronto to Hamilton to Ajax. It's happening regularly.

The other thing I'm asking for is, as I said, that there's a dirty little secret in this industry, and it's that the poor guy who's making \$10 an hour—they basically have this deal where they say, "Well, if they steal from you and the guy takes off, you have to pay 50% of the cost of the gas theft." They take it out of their wages, and that's what they do. I've heard from family members and I've heard from gas station operators that this is one of the things. Not all operators do it, but it's too common a practice. That's why it risks the lives of these people, because they say, "I'm making 10 bucks an hour. Then if this guy takes off and I've got to pay that \$100 or \$200 bill, there goes most of my wages for my rent." It's a common practice that is tolerated and should be abolished. That's why in this bill I'm saying there should be heavy, strict penalties for anybody who deducts wages from these workers for gas theft. Why should a guy or a woman making 10 bucks an hour be paying for this kind of theft? That's too common and should be stopped.

The third thing I'm asking for is something that is done in a number of US states which I think would be a deterrent: If you are convicted of gas theft, you should be liable to have your licence suspended. As I said, many of these guys do it over and over again. Again, there was a guy in Scarborough last week. Since February and March, he's done about 12 stations in Scarborough. There's a guy, another guy—anyways, they're habitual,

and they get away with it. That's why you should at least suspend their licence if you can.

Those are the three recommendations that I put forward in this bill, just to try and send a serious message out that this is not something we should tolerate and accept as sort of just normal. Because right now you can imagine the thousands that occur where these people—whether they are the independent gas station operators or whether they are the station attendants, they shouldn't have to go to work every day wondering whether or not they're going to confront one of these criminals and whether or not they are going to come home at night. It's one of the most dangerous jobs there probably is right now in the city. This is crazy, that working for 10 bucks an hour I go risk my life, and what for? Certainly our oil companies are doing very well. They want to make their workplaces safe, and I told them, "You've got to do better to support these wonderful workers. You've got to put up good cameras in your gas stations, proper lighting," because sometimes they say they take the picture of the licence plate, but the pictures are so grainy they are inadmissible in court. The criminal gas thieves know that they can get away with this right now in Ontario.

That's why I say I think we should at least look at some of these suggestions I put forward to try and protect these vulnerable, marginal workers, who are usually students or people who cannot find another job but are working. They want to pay their bills. They are trying their best to make a living here in our city. So let's try and look at these suggestions.

Again, the Ontario association of police chiefs supports my bill, and the CAA supports this bill, because they know—they get these reports—this is too common. These criminals are laughing at us, that they get away with this kind of stuff. Our families that go to work and their brothers and sisters that go to work shouldn't have to be putting up with this kind of violent criminal activity with no punishment or no accountability.

Thank you for listening.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'm pleased to speak on Bill 12. I do want to give a bit of a different perspective, a perspective from a rural member, on this bill.

I want to speak in favour of the intention of this bill. Let me be clear: No employee of a gas station should have their pay taken from them, their property and their hard work diminished, because of someone stealing gasoline. But we should also be clear on the law as it stands today. Even the member for Eglinton–Lawrence admits it's already illegal to charge an employee for stolen gas. And I'm sure, as most members are, especially those from urban Ontario, most gas stations already require prepayment. So the bill in effect has redundancy in it. It recriminalizes something that is already criminal, something already in our labour code.

Again, I want to emphasize that the bill is well-intentioned. So what will be the actual effect of this

legislation? From a rural perspective, it will make jobs of gas station attendants and owners more difficult in rural Ontario. Though I know many members may forget that Toronto is not the entire province, I might want to remind them just how we do things in rural Ontario.

The gas station where I buy my gas is Donaldson's gas station in Perth. He runs an account, a tab, for all the small businesses in the area. They come in, they get their gas, they sign a little pad and they go on, and at the end of the month they come in and pay their bill. That practice would no longer be available.

1550

I'm a big supporter of the intent of this bill, but the member for Eglinton–Lawrence is asking us to criminalize an already criminal activity, something we already cover in our labour legislation, as well. He's asking us to support a bill that in all likelihood will not reduce the number of lawbreakers in this province.

Here in Toronto you may not notice it when a gas station closes—there are thousands more—but in my rural communities, your gas station may be the source for your groceries as well, the latest news, and the hub of that community. Many members undoubtedly know gas stations are closing—that's not a thing of the past. Ever-increasingly harsh environmental legislation and taxes, which only increase as the years go on, have driven many gas stations out of business throughout Ontario.

This bill, though well-intentioned, would make the jobs of gas station owners and attendants, especially those in rural areas, much more difficult. It is for these reasons that I won't be supporting Bill 12. It was a terrible tragedy that happened to Jayesh, but I don't want to see it compounded by having people losing their jobs throughout rural Ontario with this bill.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm happy to stand to this Bill 12 today, Jayesh's Law. I would like to start by sending my condolences to the Prajapati family. I'm very sorry for your loss. Nobody should have to die when they go to work. So I'll just leave that part at that.

Good on you, member, for bringing a bill such as this forward. I'll also speak to the portion of the previous member's speech that spoke to me, because I read in the changes of the new bill that municipalities will be able to opt out of it for reasons just as you spoke to, because they are serious concerns of our northern members, and how life is different for them. So seeing that, in this bill, it's important for me to see. I thank you for those changes.

There has to be accountability on the part of the gas station owners. First of all, there cannot be the wage clawback, when they are taking money back from employees. Employees shouldn't have to be fearful that they are going to have to pay for something that is stolen from that establishment, regardless of what it could be. This happens in different sectors, across many jobs. In hospitality, if you are a waitress and you are short because somebody doesn't pay their bill, owners are

forcing these employees to pay that back. It's against the law. We need to make sure that the laws are acted upon, that the laws that are already there are being used. We need to make sure that we have good whistle-blowing laws to go along with those kinds of things so that families like this aren't found to be in such positions.

We also need to increase the minimum wage so that we don't have gas attendants making \$10 an hour. Trying to support families on \$10 an hour is an absolutely impossible task to do. Making sure that families and employees are able to make a decent living wage would not leave them in a position of feeling fearful so that they are chasing down somebody who is causing a theft—which is going to come back on them.

I can only commend Jayesh for his dedication to his job, to ensuring that everything was proper in the till at the end of the day, and that he was standing up for the community that he believes in and that he lived in—and saying that no, you can't steal; it's not right to do that. But we need to ensure that employees realize that it's not their responsibility to do that; to take a licence plate and to phone that in to a police officer to allow them to chase it down—and I'm sure, like the member said previously, the OPP and the police of this province don't want to be chasing down, to be the collection agency for the gas pumps.

I fully support this bill. I think that we definitely need to do something extra to put a little bit of an extra highlight on what's happening across the province, when people are just stealing and thinking that they're going to get away with it, because it's not right. We need to make sure that we're protecting employees—again, like I said, making sure we have whistle-blowing laws in place for them so that they're not afraid to call on their employer when they're being forced to pay for lost and missing money from their tills, however that may come about.

When this all happened, I went into the gas stations in my riding in Hamilton Mountain. I spoke with gas attendants to see how they felt about it, to see what they were thinking. I was completely shocked. I ran into two young persons who were working in a Pioneer, and I asked them what they thought about it and if their boss expected them to pay for thefts at the pumps. He said to me, "Well, it's my responsibility." I was completely shocked. I was like, "What do you mean it's your responsibility?" He said, "Well, I'm put in charge of this gas pump and I just can't let people run away with it. It's my responsibility to make sure that that gas is safe. If the owner is putting me in charge of that, I have to make sure that I'm responsible for that." I was completely blown away. I was in awe. I couldn't believe that somebody was actually brainwashed to the fact by an employer that it was this person's \$10-an-hour wage responsibility to make sure that gas was not stolen.

I did everything in my power to try to convince these young people that that's not the way it is, that there are laws in place to make sure that they're not being charged for that, but they were convinced that it was their responsibility.

I congratulate you for bringing this bill forward. I hope that we are able to do good things in this province by making a little bit of a difference to families. Again, my condolences to the family, and I'll leave the rest to my members here.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate today, and hopefully this is a private member's initiative that can do some good to make some good come from what was a very tragic event, involving the family who has joined us here today to show their support for this initiative.

I think we have to remember that the victim of this crime, that shocked us all, was a Canadian citizen, a man who had moved to this country with his family to seek a better life. He was a father, he was a husband, he was a family member who went out and tried to do the best he could to support his family. On the evening that this occurred and it all happened, he lost his life because of \$112 worth of gasoline.

I commend the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for seeing if there's something that we in this chamber can do to make this better, to at least honour the memory of Jayesh by saying this will not happen again, or will happen a lot less in the future, or that somebody else that is put in the same position as Jayesh will not have to go through what he went through: lose his life and leave a family without a husband and without a dad. It's a devastating result for \$112 worth of gasoline.

The member from Eglinton–Lawrence has shown us that there's something we can do, that there are examples around the continent of North America where changes have been made, and those changes have resulted in real results that prevent this type of occurrence. I think all you have to do, to answer the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, is look at the example of British Columbia, is look at the city of Vancouver, where the year before they implemented the prepayment program, there were about 170 of these crimes; in 2011, there was one.

When you look at the province of Ontario, we've got somewhere between 10,000 and 20,000 occurrences a year. That means between 10,000 and 20,000 times we put somebody in the position that Jayesh Prajapati was put in that resulted in the loss of his life.

1600

We've got the ability today, as individual members, not as partisan members—I don't think any party has a position on this. This is private members' time. This is where we bring our humanity to the chamber. We have an opportunity to do something about that today if we follow the initiative that's put forward by the member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

People I know who are responsible for policing in the province of Ontario are lining up behind this bill and imploring us to do it. The chief of police in the region of Halton, Chief Steve Tanner, is also the president of the Ontario chiefs of police. He suggested that we do this. He

supports this bill fully. He knows that it's going to make a difference. He knows that it's going to prevent the loss of life. He also knows his police service members on their very, very valuable time will not have to go out and police this type of crime because a prepayment program will simply stop it from occurring.

It seems to me we can make a very special, a very easy step today by ensuring that the province of Ontario adheres to the practice in just about every other state of the union and a lot of other provinces in the country of Canada, and that is, just ask us to pay for our gas before we pump it. That's the only inconvenience to the average Canadian, the average Ontarian as a result of this. Had this been in place on the night that this crime occurred, Jayesh Prajapati would still be here today. We can do better in the future. I'd ask all members to support the initiative from the member from Eglinton–Lawrence today.

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

Mr. Rod Jackson: Thank you, Speaker. It is an honour to speak to this. I want to start off by giving my sincere and heartfelt condolences to the family of Jayesh on their loss. I can't even begin to imagine what it is that your family has gone through with this loss and I hope I never have to be in a position where I understand that, so my heartfelt condolences to you.

As well, to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for putting this bill forward: I know it's very well-intended and I understand exactly what the thinking is that goes into this. However, I think there has to be an ounce of pragmatism that goes into a bill like this, too. When I take into account that charging employees for stolen gas is already illegal, I think really what we're talk about is an application of a law that's already in existence.

I go back to my municipal days, when residents would come to me and say they want the speed limit reduced on their street because people were speeding on it. It doesn't mean people are going to stop speeding because you reduce the speed limit. Just because you try to over-enforce a law that is already in existence, it doesn't mean it's going to stop it, necessarily.

Right now, gas stations are free to operate a prepaid system if they so wish. If a region finds there's a problem, if a provider of those services feel there's a problem with people gassing up and dashing away, then they can deal with it by implementing a prepaid system. Certainly, I think an awareness around what employees' rights are is something that is very warranted. Frankly, stiffer penalties for those who do gas up and dash wouldn't be out of line. That part of it I do agree with.

But the fact that there's just nothing stopping gas stations—I know in Barrie, I'm not aware—and I gas up all over that city. I'm not aware of one place that has a prepaid system in operation because there's no need for it, there's no driven need for it, like in many rural municipalities. Barrie's not so rural anymore but we just don't have this problem. It's going to cause an undue

burden on many of our small businesses that doesn't exist already, and I don't think it's going to solve a problem. The crimes that are going to be committed by these people are going to be committed anyway. I really wouldn't mind seeing stronger penalties and better awareness from employees of what their rights are. Certainly, if there is an issue with employees who do not recognize that they are not responsible when someone steals while they're on their watch—and that could go for any retail employee too. This can apply across the board. It kind of gets to, where does this ball stop rolling?

Although I really do, again, think this is a well-intended bill, I think it is a very emotional issue that needs a more pragmatic approach to solve it. I do thank the member for putting it forward. I know that private members' bills are always very interesting and well thought out. I can't support it as it stands now.

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

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm pleased to stand and rise to speak today on behalf of my constituents in Davenport and speak to Jayesh's Law (Worker Safety at Service Stations), a bill brought forward by the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. I also want to thank the family for coming out and to share my condolences. It's obviously just an awful thing to go through. I'm happy to support this bill. I think it should go to committee and it should be looked at carefully. I appreciate that the member has revised the bill to make it more compatible with smaller communities, which can opt out if it's appropriate there, so I think that that's a good thing there.

I think that what we really need to talk about here, and I think my colleague spoke to this a bit earlier, is about worker safety in Ontario. The United Way put out a report this week on precarious work. It said that in the GTHA, almost half of all workers experience precarious work, which means that they don't know if they are going to have work next week. It means that they don't have regular hours. It means that they work shift work. It means they don't get any benefits. It means they can't count on a pension.

Those numbers are shocking. Half of workers in this city are experiencing this kind of work, and that's absolutely unacceptable. I think we've come to accept this; we've come to say, "This is just the nature of the new global economy, that people can't expect to go to work and come back and have enough money to support their family." I think that's unacceptable. I think that we can do better, and I think that people in this chamber have a responsibility to make sure that people go to work and come home having earned a wage that will pay to support their family. I think there are things that we can do about it here.

I think this speaks to the tragedy that happened here, where people are in such precarious situations because they are so dependent on keeping that job. I think it's a disgrace that people are in that situation.

I see that in the bill, there's something here that requires gas station employers to provide work safety

training. Absolutely, I would agree, but I think we need to make sure that employers across this province are actually making sure that their employees know their rights, that we strengthen the rights of employees in this province and that we actually have the resources to inspect workplaces and make sure that workers in every workplace in this province know their rights and that bad bosses can't get away with it.

On top of that, I think we need to reduce the kind of precarious experience that people feel in their workplace, the kind of anxiety that people feel in their workplace, and make sure that they have the support: that we actually invest in our social safety system, that we take the poverty-reduction strategy that all members in this House agreed to and move it forward, that we actually move forward on some of the recommendations around the social assistance review in this province.

I think the first thing, a very easy thing, that we could do would be to bring back labour enforcement in this province and make sure that we have the resources so enforcement officers are going into workplaces. This is something that this government promised to do and has failed to actually do. I would ask them today to step up and spend the money to have labour enforcement officers in every workplace.

I'm going to leave some time to my colleague, who I know wants to speak this.

Again, my heart goes out to you folks here. Thank you for coming, and thank you to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for bringing forward this bill. We will support it and send it to committee.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I am pleased to have been given the opportunity to address this very important public-safety issue. Like my colleagues before me, I want to recognize the widow and the son in this tragedy. Every Ontarian should be concerned about this kind of public safety, because we as elected members, first and foremost, are individuals and citizens of this great province, and we have a responsibility to everyday workers going to work and not able to come home. I do want to recognize that piece.

The proposed legislation, if passed, provides stability but, more importantly, addresses the issue of public safety. This government, our government, is concerned about and takes public safety, especially employee and worker safety—importantly. More importantly, there is data in British Columbia to support and demonstrate to us that we need to address this issue—but not just in British Columbia, Mr. Speaker. Other states such as South Carolina, Kentucky, Missouri, Minnesota and Texas all have this kind of "pay before you put in your gas."

Furthermore, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, in his proposed legislation, talks about the fact that if someone is convicted of the offence, their licence will be suspended. Other states are doing that: Montana, Indiana and Missouri.

So we have examples of other jurisdictions in North America protecting their workers, protecting their community, providing a better community.

1610

The other concern of this particular legislation I'm talking about is that it is happening every day across Ontario. Just this week alone, the Toronto police are talking about trying to search for the suspect who has committed nine thefts in Scarborough and York region over gas-and-dash.

We are not just putting public safety here—we're putting limited resources from the Toronto Police Services Board to address this kind of issue. And yet we have the potential ability in this House to pass legislation to address public safety and prevention—because the focus should always be on prevention. How do we prevent this kind of criminality, and how do we collectively support our community?

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to end my remarks because I know my colleague the minister will be addressing this issue. I want to give him extra time to address this issue.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: First, as is the principle here today—Mr. Colle and I have had many years here together—some would say too many. But the fact is, in sentiment, I certainly agree. There's Jayesh's Law—and I respect the family that's here and the tragedy that you suffered. I think, respectfully, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence is attempting to do the right thing.

It's a very emotional issue, and as such, we respond to these things with measures that often, perhaps—and there's probably some reason here that with the Liberals and the NDP, that it will probably carry.

In a small business sense—here's what I think, technically. I personally try to relate these things to my community. What's missing in the gas station set-up is they're all self-serve now. I think of seniors and persons with special needs who have trouble filling their car up, because no one serves gas anymore.

By the same token, I have been in situations where I've had to pay in advance, and I'm at the pump, trying to put the gas in, not knowing that I have to pay in advance. You go into this little cubicle, and you feel like, "I could get held up." It's almost like, "Excuse me, sir. Can I have \$20 worth of gas?" or something. So it isn't working very well for the customers or, as you've described, for the employees, who are exposed to vulnerability.

You can't be all things to all people here, so I'm sort of not supporting this bill, because I think it's more of an emotional bent. I understand, in your remarks, when you spoke on the introduction of the bill on the 26th—just recently—that there are 10,000 gas thefts a year, and your intent here is to look at people on minimum wage, mostly.

But I think it's a useful discussion, and the useful discussion is this: The large companies, whether it's Husky, Shell, Esso, or even Beaver—the independents—

should be listening, because I think having employees who feel safe and work safe—they're not going to be ripping you off in some other way of saying, "Somebody short-changed me," or "I have a bad cheque" or trading money or whatever they do—perhaps counterfeit etc.

But I think the large companies should be listening and do the right thing for the employees on their own. Business shouldn't be micromanaged and told what to do. It's assuming that they're all bad behaviours.

This event in itself is a tragedy. I think there was an inquest, and I think that inquests should be paid attention to. As I've said before, persons in these situations are often working at night or in vulnerable situations. They may have a modest income and really need the job and the income.

I think it's unconscionable that an employer of any standing would deduct the loss at the till for someone who did the deed of gas-and-dash, I guess they call it. But I still try to think of, in my riding of Durham, which is Uxbridge, which is a fairly modest community—Scugog and the Port Perry area and sort of Clarington is, I think, a more friendly area. I don't hear much of this; I might hear a bit of it in Pickering as you get closer to Toronto. Other than that, I haven't really heard of any events. I did call two or three people that I know who operate two or three gas stations and they say, "We're at risk anyway," because at night, you are depending on people's honesty to come and pay after you've got the gas.

I think one of the suggestions that I think is worthy of consideration is having an appropriate camera system—video recording. I don't encourage people to put themselves at risk to intervene in these situations at all. Even if it's a bank robber, the banks tell them, "Hand the money over, and we'll deal with it later."

In the same case here, I think that's another message. This debate today does serve a purpose. It tells the large companies these are risks; it tells them it's completely unreasonable to take it from their pay; and the third thing is they shouldn't try to intervene. The police themselves would tell you that: If you're intervening, you're putting yourself at risk unnecessarily.

As such, it's in that sentiment that the debate has been worthwhile. It makes a contribution to making our communities safer. It educates the public in terms of these events.

I put to you that I've travelled in the States, and I found it rather intimidating to, at night, get out of the car at the side of some highway and find out that you have to go in and pay for the gas and maybe not have—they want your credit card and they're locked up. I'm wondering if I get the credit card back.

Again, I know I'm pretty well filling time here, and I'm quite aware of that. There is a certain amount of time for debate, and I've had the pleasure and the privilege of preparing for that.

I commend the member from Eglinton–Lawrence and wish him luck in the outcome of this bill.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: First of all, I'd like to extend my condolences to the family. It's a tragedy, and we certainly are all upset about it.

I also would like to commend Mr. Colle from Eglinton–Lawrence for his effort. It's a good bill, and I think more and more around this Legislature, when good things come forward—doesn't matter from whom or what party—that people should vote on that basis, not on partisan politics.

Over the years, I've seen many, many of these incidents happen at gas stations and variety stores. We just recently had a death in Hamilton at a store where someone went in and robbed the clerk and pushed her downstairs and killed her. Luckily, there was a surveillance camera, and they got him.

But these things have got to stop. These people are just doing their job. They're honourable people. They want to do the right thing. They want to do right by their employer. They want to do right by their family. They're just working, and when things like this happen, it's wrong.

There are a couple of little things that have to be changed in the bill, but that can be done at committee. At this point, I think it's a good effort, and I certainly, in my personal position, will be supporting it. Our party will be supporting it to pass second reading. We think this is long overdue, and I really appreciate the member bringing this forward because I think it's a worthy, worthy cause, and we maybe can save some lives down the road.

I would like to also see continued improvement in surveillance equipment at facilities, not just cameras. I want to catch licence plates. I want to catch a better view of the suspect. I want better cameras, more expensive ones, so you can get details so when they cover up and try to hide, we can catch them.

Once again, thank you, Mr. Colle, for bringing this forward. You'll be getting the support, at this point, from the NDP.

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this bill. As the Minister of Labour, I felt it's really important that I speak about this bill and pass my personal condolences on to Mr. Prajapati's family. From the bottom of my heart, from our government, please accept our condolences on your tragic loss. It's not just a loss to your family; it's a loss to all of us.

This is an important issue, not only in light of this tragedy, but in all respects. Of course, we cannot afford to lose any other lives. I do want to thank the MPP from Eglinton–Lawrence for bringing this issue forward and giving it the profile necessary.

1620

I wanted to take a little bit of time to just talk about what's already in place in terms of laws within the

Ministry of Labour. We already have laws in place that cover situations such as gas-and-dash in the Employment Standards Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Act. These laws, if obeyed, can help prevent situations such as these.

To be absolutely clear, the Employment Standards Act clearly states that an employer cannot deduct wages from an employee working at a gas station because someone leaves without paying. There are no exceptions whatsoever to these laws. If an employee feels the employer has made deductions that contravene the Employment Standards Act, they should call our employment standards information centre at 1-800-531-5551 and file a claim with the ministry, and it will be fully investigated.

On the other hand, the Occupational Health and Safety Act requires employers to have workplace violence and harassment policies in place, and programs to implement those policies. Employers are also required to assess the risks of workplace violence and to have measures and procedures in place to control those risks. All these measures are there to ensure that our workplaces, like gas stations—the kind Mr. Prajapati worked at—are safe places.

Due to Mr. Colle's advocacy on this issue, the Ministry of Labour has taken very swift action to ensure that our gas stations are safe. In the case of the gas station where Mr. Prajapati worked, the ministry conducted two investigations into five gas stations that were owned by this entity. In addition, we put together a targeted action plan that includes a blitz of employment standards inspections of gas stations across the province. While the blitz is still under way, from April 1, 2012, to February 21, 2013, the ministry has completed 284 employment standards inspections across the province and determined that there were \$240,000 in wages owing to 2,120 vulnerable employees. During that same period, the ministry's Employment Standards Program only found six violations of deductions from wages.

In addition to the blitz, the Ministry of Labour is undertaking other actions, including distributing health and safety materials to employers during inspections, launching a dedicated Web page on deductions from wages, reaching out to all gas station owners and franchisees through their umbrella organizations, and providing materials in multiple languages for both employers and workers to ensure they understand their rights and responsibilities.

Speaker, this is an important issue. I think the member from Eglinton–Lawrence has raised some unique issues that we need to address. We need to make sure that the health and safety of workers working in gas stations across the province, be it large cities or small towns, are protected and that those workers are working in safe environments. That is why I'm encouraging all members in this House to vote in favour of this bill so we can take it to the committee and study this in a little bit more detail so that we can see how we can implement measures that will protect the health and safety of workers.

I am very much interested and I am already working with Mr. Colle to find ways to ensure that all gas stations are safe places to work and that we ensure that workers, especially the vulnerable workers working at these gas stations, are not working in precarious employment situations, that they actually are safe and earning income in a legal fashion that is in compliance with both the Employment Standards Act and Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Thank you to Mr. Prajapati's family and Mr. Colle for raising this issue.

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

The member for Eglinton–Lawrence, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Mike Colle: Thank you. I wanted to again thank Vaishali Prajapati and Rishabh, her 12-year-old son, for showing the courage to fight against this injustice. This is not easy.

In this case here, you're also taking on some of the world's largest multinationals. It's not about small business, folks. They don't like this change. We need to change this thing to protect vulnerable people. In the United States, it's almost in every state—same oil companies. We have to do something that protects people who are intimidated and marginalized. The member from Hamilton Mountain said it best: She walked into the station—

Interjections.

Mr. Mike Colle: I know the members from the Tory party don't care.

She walked into the station, and you know what the young person told you: that she was afraid, basically did not understand that it wasn't her job to chase down the gas-and-dash thief. That's what it is—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: There's wholesale intimidation of these marginal workers who are working for \$10—they're afraid if they go to the Labour Relations Board, they're going to lose their job; they're not going to get the hours. They've just come to this country or they don't know English or they're young students. They're afraid to go to the Labour Relations Board.

Sure, there are laws in place—folks, they're not working. There are 10,000 reported cases a year under your noses; another 10,000 aren't reported, breaking the law. Your police chiefs are saying that you've got to make this thing stop. The police chiefs—Chief Blair; Chief Jolliffe, York region—are saying that this is a farce that we can't protect ordinary workers at gas stations at night or when they're doing their job. It's not working.

Let's make the laws tougher, enforce them and put these criminals behind bars. It's as simple as that, folks. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

COMPREHENSIVE PUBLIC SECTOR
COMPENSATION FREEZE ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE GEL GLOBAL
DE LA RÉMUNÉRATION
DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 1, standing in the name of Mr. Shurman.

Mr. Shurman has moved second reading of Bill 5. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a bunch of noes.

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

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

We will take the vote on this motion at the end of our business.

LIQUOR LICENCE
AMENDMENT ACT (SERVING LIQUOR
IN CERTAIN PLACES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES PERMIS D'ALCOOL
(SERVICE D'ALCOOL
DANS CERTAINS LIEUX)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mrs. Albanese has moved second reading of Bill 8. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mrs. Albanese, referral?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would ask that the bill be referred to the committee on regulations and private bills.

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

JAYESH'S LAW (WORKER SAFETY
AT SERVICE STATIONS), 2013

LOI JAYESH DE 2013
SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DES TRAVAILLEURS
DANS LES STATIONS-SERVICE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Colle has moved second reading of Bill 12. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: I move that the bill be moved to the committee on general government.

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

COMPREHENSIVE PUBLIC SECTOR
COMPENSATION FREEZE ACT, 2013
LOI DE 2013 SUR LE GEL GLOBAL
DE LA RÉMUNÉRATION
DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1628 to 1633.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I have all members take their seats, please.

Mr. Shurman has moved Bill 5. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

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

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Forster, Cindy	Naqvi, Yasir
Bisson, Gilles	Gélinas, France	Piruzza, Teresa
Cansfield, Donna H.	Hoskins, Eric	Prue, Michael
Chan, Michael	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chiarelli, Bob	Kwinter, Monte	Schein, Jonah
Colle, Mike	Mantha, Michael	Singh, Jagmeet
Damerla, Dipika	Marchese, Rosario	Taylor, Monique
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Vanthof, John
Dickson, Joe	Miller, Paul	Wong, Soo
DiNovo, Cheri	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	Moridi, Reza	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 36; the nays are 35.

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

Second reading agreed to.

Mr. Peter Shurman: To the committee on the Legislative Assembly.

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

Orders of the day?

Hon. John Milloy: I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Is it the pleasure of the House that the House be adjourned? Agreed? Agreed.

This House stands adjourned until March 4 at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1639.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Best, Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
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 Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
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 Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
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	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
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	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre 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, Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
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	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Millroy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth-Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
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 Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron-Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	London West / London-Ouest	
Vacant	Windsor-Tecumseh	

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Soo Wong
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Laurie Scott, Todd Smith
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Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
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Jane McKenna
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