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**Official Report
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Monday 25 March 2013

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des débats
(Hansard)**

Lundi 25 mars 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 25 March 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 25 mars 2013

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: As a former legislative page myself, it gives me great pleasure to introduce a former page from my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and his family back to Queen's Park today. I'd like to introduce former page Case Noordermeer, his brother James, sister Nicola and the parents, David and Susan. Thank you very much and welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: It's my privilege to recognize and introduce, right here, Michael Malette; his father, Remi Malette; and M.J. Bergeron. They are the parents and grandfather of our page captain today, Magalie Malette, who's busy doing a service right now.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a great, proud moment for me to introduce, in the members' east gallery today, my cousin Catherine Chornoboy and her daughter Cassandra Chornoboy, who is a student at the University of Guelph and currently the Wellington county Queen of the Furrow. Cassandra will be at the 100th anniversary of the IPM this September in beautiful Mitchell, Ontario. If I was a betting person, I'd be putting my money on Cassandra. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm a little jealous. Next time I'm going to wear my tiara.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'd like to introduce page Fae Alexander's grandmother, Jennifer Wood, who is in the visitors' east gallery, and also her grandfather, who is here with her. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the member from Thunder Bay–Superior North, I would like to welcome mom Vivian Wood-Alexander, grandmother Jennifer Wood and grandfather John Wood for page Fae Alexander. Welcome and thank you.

From the member from Huron–Bruce, I understand that soon to be joining us are Val Millson and Colin Jansen, mom and brother of page Ellen Jansen. Welcome and thank you very much.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Premier. Premier, yet another abuse of taxpayers' money has been uncovered at eHealth. This time, we've learned that the

scandal-plagued agency approved thousands of dollars in expenses to pay for the chief operating officer's PhD. These expenses included tuition, books, student fees and regular flights from Toronto to Ottawa.

Premier, at a time when nearly 600,000 Ontarians are out of work, do you support this use of taxpayers' money?

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for the question.

This of course is information that has been available for many, many months. I remember talking about this at committee, Speaker, I think it was last July.

What's important is that all expenses are reviewed and approved by the Integrity Commissioner. If, in the opinion of the Integrity Commissioner, an expense is inappropriate, those expenses are repaid, no questions asked. So it's very important—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —that the member opposite understands that all expenses are reviewed and approved.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: We only recently got those documents, Minister, because your government progressed; we didn't get those until just recently.

Premier, Ontarians expect their elected representatives to make tough choices to balance the province's books and get our economy back in gear. What they don't expect is that rogue government agencies like eHealth will sign off on thousands of dollars of expenses to give bureaucrats a free ride through university, especially when many Ontarians have had to use their own hard-earned money to upgrade their skills just to get back into the workplace.

It's time to show some real leadership here, Premier. So will you order the chief operating officer at eHealth to pay this money back today?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's unfortunate that the member opposite and indeed many of his colleagues continue to refer to eHealth Ontario as a waste. I can assure you that we are getting excellent value. Ask any doctor, ask any nurse in this province, and they will talk about how eHealth is improving patient care.

Just a few months ago, I met with physicians and patients at the North York Family Health Team. I heard directly from those providers and from patients about how eHealth is transforming the way they deliver care.

So people with chronic disease like diabetes are getting much higher quality care because of these eHealth records.

Charles Lake is a patient there. He told his story about how he needed to tell his story over and over again to different physicians. Now, thanks to the good work at eHealth, he's getting excellent care in a way that works for him.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: I would think that telling students in Ontario that answer—most have to pay their own tuition and actually take public transit or drive to class. Only a student at eHealth actually gets on a plane to go to class.

1040

Back to the Premier: When the Minister of Health first got her job, she was given a very specific mandate to clean up the years of Liberal scandal. But after nearly four years on the job, the minister has failed at every turn. Take the \$700-million debacle at Ornge, or the more than \$2 billion spent at eHealth on nothing more than waste and mismanagement. And now we've uncovered yet another scandal over at eHealth.

In the private sector, if you spent a billion dollars and produced no results other than a company-wide scandal, you'd get fired. In the Wynne government, you actually get promoted. So, Premier, how can Ontarians have faith in your leadership when your newly appointed Deputy Premier can't even manage her own ministry?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I understand that the members opposite do not support eHealth Ontario. They want to keep patient care back in the previous century.

But let me tell you about Norma Mitchell. Norma is a senior in the province of Ontario and, like many people who show up in our emergency departments, she wouldn't always remember exactly what drug she's on, what the strength is. But thanks to eHealth Ontario, when Norma showed up at the Sunnybrook Hospital emergency department, her doctor had access to the drug profile viewer. He knew exactly what drugs she was taking. That's important information when someone comes to an emergency department. It changes the care they deliver for the better. It saves lives.

The member opposite might think eHealth is a waste. eHealth is saving lives, and the sooner he understands that, the better we'll all be.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Premier, you're fond of conversations, so let me tell you about the conversation we're having over at the justice committee. You see, over there, those people put their hand on a Bible and they swear an oath. Over here, when asked about the gas plant documents, you say, "All that has been asked for has been provided." Yet the cabinet secretary, Peter Wallace, confirmed at the committee that

we have not yet been provided with all the government documents.

You're telling us one thing here, Premier, and people swearing an oath over in committee are telling us the opposite. Can you please explain the difference between your statements here and those of sworn witnesses?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would like to respond to the member opposite by saying a couple of things.

First of all, I am very pleased that the committee is doing its work, that the committee has a broadened mandate and the committee is examining documents, is bringing witnesses forward and is hearing that testimony.

I want to just quote from Peter Wallace, who said, "I'm satisfied that the Ministry of Energy responded to the request in good faith and worked appropriately to provide the documents requested by the committee." So the secretary of cabinet seems to believe that we have provided everything that was asked for.

We're going to continue to do that. That was the whole point of opening the mandate of the committee and providing that it could ask questions about all aspects of these decisions, which I would have hoped the member opposite would have agreed with.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: In addition to the cabinet secretary swearing an oath that we don't have all the documents, we had another conversation. This time it was with JoAnne Butler, the vice-president of Ontario Power Authority. She also swore an oath. Under oath, she told us that the Liberal government knew full well that on top of the \$40 million in sunk costs to cancel Oakville, there would be hundreds of millions of dollars of additional necessary costs. And she said the government signed off on the document that stated that very fact on September 24. Yet one day later, on September 25, Premier, you stood in this House and told us the total cost of the Oakville relocation was \$40 million.

Can you, again, explain the difference between your statements and those of those people under oath?

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

Hon. John Milloy: The question of cost is something that is being looked into by the Auditor General, an officer of this Legislature. It's also part of the mandate of the committee itself.

I can't help but comment on the first question from the honourable member about the production of documents. It was government members who went forward to the committee and offered to provide all documents on the gas plants in a much broader search than had ever been conducted before—

Interjections.

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

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, as I said before, I thought I was going to have to phone the legislative television service because, to my shock, I watched on TV when the government made that motion and all oppos-

ition members put up their hands to oppose the production of the same sorts of documents that he's asking about today. If there's anyone that has some explaining to do, it's that member.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: We've now heard, first from the province's top bureaucrat, that while you knew one thing to be true, Hansard shows you said something completely opposite. Then we heard, under oath, from the Ontario Power Authority that while you again knew one thing to be true, Hansard shows that again you said something completely different in this House.

In a recent media interview, you said, "To the best of our ability, at every ... juncture, we have given the information that we had." Premier, sworn testimony at the justice committee has proven now that is not the case.

Can you again please explain the difference between your statements in the Legislature and those of people who swore under oath in the justice committee?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I listened intently, and I didn't hear any explanation from the member as to why he and his colleagues in the opposition decided to vote against a motion put forward by the government to produce a vast range of documents.

But when it comes to costing, Mr. Speaker, let me quote from Bruce Sharp, the expert who appeared in front of the committee. This is what he had to say: "The situation begs for these numbers to be confirmed and publicized. I can think of no better provider of this service than Ontario Auditor General Jim McCarter and his staff."

Mr. Speaker, an officer of this Legislature, the Auditor General, is looking into the matter. The committee itself has the mandate to hear from witnesses. Let's let the committee and the Auditor General do their work.

As I've said before, though, I look forward to the Progressive Conservatives coming forward and explaining their opposition to the gas plant and the type of data analysis and costing that they did.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. New Democrats have identified tax loopholes worth about \$1.6 billion that can be invested in building prosperity that every Ontario family can share in. I understand the Minister of Finance has written to his federal counterpart about closing loopholes worth \$200 million, to ensure that companies earning money in Ontario pay taxes in Ontario.

Will the Premier tell Ontarians whether the government still plans to move ahead with a new loophole that lets Ontario's biggest corporations skip paying the HST when they entertain their clients?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: This is one of those areas where I think we have a lot of common ground with the third party, Mr. Speaker. Corporate tax avoidance has been a priority of our government, and the Minister of

Finance has made it very clear that it's an area that we're looking at. That's why he has been in touch with the federal government. We believe that it's essential to ensuring we can provide public services like health care, education, infrastructure and roads that we make sure we do everything to provide for that revenue, Mr. Speaker.

We will continue to work, obviously, with the federal government and to make sure that they're doing what they can. We will also take responsibility to make this a priority going forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In the last budget, New Democrats made sure that the deficit could be reduced ahead of schedule without making cuts that hurt families. That's what a balanced approach means, Speaker.

Will the Premier tell Ontarians whether the government plans to proceed with a tax giveaway that will cost the treasury over \$1 billion a year so Ontario's largest corporations get to write off the taxes on drinks and dinner?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What we are going to do is we're going to present a budget, Mr. Speaker, that balances fiscal responsibility and building a fairer society. That's what we have said we're going to do, and that's why I believe that there is common ground, actually, with both parties on the opposite side of the House.

It does trouble me that the Leader of the Opposition has said out of hand that he's not even going to read the budget and he's not going to support it.

1050

I think it's very responsible that the leader of the third party has said that they are willing to look for some things that we may be able to work on together. This is one of them, Mr. Speaker. That's why the Minister of Finance wrote to his counterparts in the federal government last week. That's why we are, in our own budget process, looking at where those tax compliance issues can be addressed.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, the letter that I saw that the Minister of Finance wrote to the federal government didn't speak about the issue that I'm speaking about today.

Last week, the finance minister said he would look at restricted input tax credits. I think the people want the government to move beyond looking at these things, Speaker. They want to move beyond that as much as they want to move beyond the conversation. People would love to see incentives that get companies hiring instead of the kind of incentive that we see now, which is an incentive for people taking people out for drinks and dinner.

In tough economic times, the government needs to make some really tough choices. Why are they choosing business expense accounts ahead of job creation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think I've already answered this question. These are issues that concern us. These are things that we are paying attention to.

The leader of the third party notes that looking at issues or having a conversation about an issue is not a worthwhile activity. I'd suggest, Mr. Speaker, that in order to make a decision that's informed, in order to be able to make a reasonable assessment of a situation, you actually have to look at the facts. You actually have to look at the complexity of the issues before us. That's what I mean when I say we're looking at these things, because it's very simple to pick out an issue and talk about it in isolation, outside of the context of the larger budget, outside of the context of the larger fiscal situation. We're not going to do that. We're not going to make knee-jerk decisions. We're not going to look at things outside of the context of all of the other issues that we have to contemplate. We're going to look at the relationship among these issues and bring forward a budget that is responsible and focuses on a fairer society and fiscal responsibility.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I don't know what the Liberals have been doing for the last 10 years, but I think the people want them to get down to some action.

My question is to the Premier. People in Ontario have seen the cost of living rise faster than their paycheques. The HST took a net \$350 out of the ordinary family budget. At the same time, the government wants to help big businesses pay for a night out on the town. Now the Premier is saying she's open to new taxes that would hit family budgets real hard. Does the Premier think it's fair to ask people to pay yet another sales tax while the government plans to let Ontario's largest corporations write off theirs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm very glad that the leader of the third party asked this question, because the underlying premise of this question—and this is what I believe she's asserting—is that we can afford, given the current situation and given our current revenue streams, to build the transit that is needed in the GTHA and that we can afford to build the infrastructure and repair the infrastructure that's needed around this province.

I believe that that is a flawed assumption. I believe that it is not possible without new revenue streams to build the transit that's needed, and I believe if we follow the path that the leader of the third party is laying out for us, we will miss another generation of transit building in this region that will stunt the economy of this province for another generation.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This is not the time to make the comments, when I am getting quiet.

Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: How disappointing. What the Premier missed is that I was asserting that everyday families in Ontario cannot actually afford more Liberal taxes

that hurt their family budget. That's the point I'm making, Speaker.

People in Ontario are wondering why the government seems more interested in helping out their well-connected friends than they are in helping out everyday families, whether that's pushing casinos into cities that don't want them or giving Ontario's largest corporations a tax giveaway when they buy dinners and drinks.

The Premier says she's open to plans that could hit family budgets yet again. Why is the government moving ahead with a tax giveaway that could hand billions to Ontario's largest corporations?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Here's what we've done to help people: the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit, the Children's Activity Tax Credit, the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit, the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit, the northern Ontario energy benefit, Mr. Speaker. Each one of those initiatives has helped people with their costs.

But here's what I find disappointing and what I think we cannot afford to do, and that is to put off the building of transit. The leader of the third party has picked on one of the revenue tools, Mr. Speaker, and there is a whole range of them, but the reality is we cannot wait another generation, another 30 years, to build the transit that is needed to grow the economy of this province.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Too bad the Liberal government took \$4 billion out of Transit City and cancelled the bus replacement program, Speaker. That's the commitment to transit in this province.

I think Ontarians want to know what the Premier's priorities are. They're being told that these are tough times. They're losing hospital services and they're losing services in schools. They just saw the HST increase the price of hydro, home heating and gasoline, and now they're being told another increase could be on the way. Meanwhile, the government has earmarked over \$1 billion annually so Ontario's largest corporations get to write off things like drinks and meals when they entertain their clients. Does the Premier think that that is a balanced approach to priorities?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Unfortunately for the leader of the third party, I was the Minister of Transportation when we made those decisions around transit build in Toronto. We didn't take \$4 billion out, Mr. Speaker. We just simply slowed down the implementation. That \$4 billion is building that Eglinton Crosstown line right now—\$8.4 billion.

Mr. Speaker, it is astonishing to me that the third party would not be supportive, with the Toronto member sitting in that—the Hamilton member, the people who know that we need transit, that they would take a position against a progressive transit-building strategy in this province. I don't understand where they're coming from, but I think that they should reconsider and they should be with us on this.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock. New question.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Premier. When you became Premier, you promised to be open and transparent about your government's decision to cancel power plants in vulnerable Liberal ridings. You said it was important to make sure that all the documents were made available. But last week in committee, secretary of cabinet Peter Wallace testified that the opposition has not been provided with all the government documents relating to the Mississauga and Oakville power plant cancellations.

You promised all of the documents weeks ago, but we still haven't seen them. Can we expect that there's going to be another document drop sometime before question period on Thursday? Or are you going to release it at 5 o'clock on Good Friday?

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

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, I can just quote Secretary Wallace and what he said to the committee: "It is my belief that the Ministry of Energy acted in good faith in searching for and producing documents in their possession that they understood were responsive to the committee's request."

But again, Mr. Speaker, unless my memory is failing me, I believe that the member who asked the question was the same one who sat there with opposition members when the government came forward with a motion to produce a wide variety, across-the-board production of documents related to the gas plants from all ministries, far broader than had ever been asked for. And, to my astonishment, that very member raised his hand and voted against it, Mr. Speaker, so perhaps in the supplementary he can explain his opposition to that request.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Clearly we have different definitions about what it means to be open and transparent.

Mr. Wallace made another revelation last week. He explained how the Ministry of the Attorney General launched an investigation into serious concerns of political interference at the Ontario Power Authority that were highlighted in an email that you were aware of. But when issues were raised about document disclosure, your government failed to even disclose that the Attorney General's office was conducting an investigation.

Why was this investigation conducted in secret? Why didn't your government, at any time, given the gravity of this serious scandal, inform the public that there was an ongoing investigation into the potential cover-up and withholding of documents by political staff—not civil servants, political staff?

Hon. John Milloy: The honourable member will know that Secretary Wallace provided a detailed explanation of that matter. But, you know, going back to the member's first question, he stood here and talked about the political

aspect of the decision to cancel those plants, yet he fails to talk about his own party's opposition to the plants and the fact that they made it a centrepiece of their campaign.

Perhaps it's time to remind members of the Mississauga South PC candidate robocall, one of my favourites, and a favourite over here: "Hi there. This is Geoff Janosik, your Mississauga South Ontario PC candidate. I'm calling about the McGuinty-Sousa power plant that the Liberal government decided to build in your backyard. I am against this power plant, and as your MPP, I will fight to stop the power plant from being built. Unlike the Liberals, our team has been knocking on doors every single evening for several months"—

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

Interjections.

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

CASINOS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. Figures released by MPAC show that many OLG casinos are worth far less today than they were at the last assessment, in 2008, and this in turn is devastating the finances of their host communities. Examples: a \$12-million drop in Sault Ste. Marie; \$40 million at Caesars Windsor, who just today, by the way, announced another 38 people laid off; and a \$173-million drop at Fallsview Casino.

MPAC blames these drops on this government's wrong-headed OLG privatization and expansion plans. Why won't this government put a moratorium on further OLG expansion plans until the people of Ontario have had their say?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There are a number of issues here. The one about people having their say: The reality is that we are not imposing casinos on municipalities. It's up to municipalities to decide whether they want a casino. It might be a very worthwhile activity for the member opposite to talk to some of his colleagues and friends on Toronto city council and have that discussion about how they are going to vote and what they're going to decide.

But the reality is that one of the key reasons that OLG is changing the business model and is renewing the business model is just that: A decade ago, our border casinos and slot facilities generated over \$800 million in annual profit. Today that number is less than \$100 million, because of the dollar, because of the tourism patterns and so on. The job of the OLG is to modernize and to move the industry along. That's what the transformation is about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: And in the meantime, the people have no say. Nearly \$260 million in value has been wiped out at five Ontario casinos, all of which were built with public dollars. And this plunge in property values hits municipalities all at once—

Interjection.

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

Mr. Michael Prue:—resulting in a huge year-over-year decline in municipal revenues, just like in the north. Added to this, there is mass confusion over the municipal hosting formula that results in municipalities being completely in the dark about potential casino revenues.

Why won't this government admit that its OLG privatization and expansion plans are in total shambles?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I think the member opposite—a member of the party that brought casinos and brought gambling to Ontario—understands that the industry changes. One of the realities of the industry is that the borders are not providing the same kind of revenue that they did a decade ago.

OLG is tasked with modernizing the industry; that's what they're doing. We've been very clear on two fronts: We've said very clearly that municipalities will decide whether they want to have a casino in their jurisdiction, and secondly, I made it very clear last week that the formula will be the same across the province—that there will be no special deals. I think there's actually clarity in this process, and it's up to municipalities to decide what their proposal will be.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Premier, in her capacity as Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Livestock farmers in the rural parts of my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham were severely impacted by last summer's drought. A real concern has been a shortage in forages for livestock. Farmers have been calling for deadlines of the federal-provincial AgriRecovery program to be extended. In the minister's last update to the House, she said our government was working with the federal government to extend the program, but that the conversation was still in progress.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister please provide this House with an update on the status of this extension?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you to the member for Oak Ridges–Markham for the question.

I'm pleased to have been able to have a conversation with both of my critics in the last couple of weeks on this issue and on others. I heard from farmers across Ontario who were concerned about the deadline extensions; both critics brought that forward, and I'm happy to report that we have extended both deadlines. The deadline for buying feed or moving animals under the Canada-Ontario forage and livestock transportation assistance program has been extended to June 1 and, as well, the deadline for farmers to submit their program application forms has been extended to June 14.

I had heard of these issues before I met with the critics. They reinforced the concern, and I was able to tell them that I was working on it. I knew it was important for livestock producers who faced feed shortages to have the time they needed to purchase and to ship hay for their animals. This extension is very helpful for them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you to the minister for that response. I'm very pleased to hear that Ontario livestock farmers will be able to access this program through until June.

Farmers are also working together through a program called HayEast. This partnership has farmers from western Canada and farmers from Ontario working together on a volunteer basis to bring hay and forages to our province. In the fall, the Ontario government stepped up early, along with the federal government, to provide immediate support of up to \$500,000 and up to \$2.5 million to match donations in support of HayEast ending on February 28 of this year.

Can the minister please inform this House about the status of the HayEast program?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much for the question. I just want to take a moment to thank all of the farmers and all of the folks who have donated to the HayEast program. It really is inspiring to see the mutual support system that is in place. In 2003, Ontario farmers and suppliers helped out their western cousins, and western farmers returned the favour this year.

I also want to report to the House that the new Ontario government is providing an additional \$150,000 to HayEast this spring. It will extend the program and it will bring available out-of-province hay to farmers who need it in Ontario. Mark Wales, the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, said, "This news will help ease the minds of many Ontario farmers who are still looking for hay to get their livestock through to the summer season." This is good news for farmers in Ontario.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question today is for the Premier. Premier, what started as a flagrant misuse of taxpayer money by promoting eco-terrorism through a tax-funded broadcaster has now become yet another complete embarrassment for the province of Ontario. With the Premiers of Alberta and BC criticizing your Pipe Trouble as "disappointing," "offensive" and "contrary to Canada's interests," we've also heard from Canada's federal minister of heritage calling it "tasteless."

We know that your friend Dalton McGuinty has continually made derogatory comments about Alberta resource development. Premier, do you intend to continue the outright hostility towards the province of Alberta and its huge potential for job creation right here in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Education.

1110

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. I think it's important to know, first off, that TVO is responsible for its own editorial content. It is not appropriate for politicians to dictate editorial content.

Having said that, what we have done is raised questions with TVO in—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Liz Sandals: We have raised questions with TVO to find out how—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Lanark, too.

Hon. Liz Sandals: —the programming in question meets their educational standards, and have their fiscal standards been met?

I'm pleased to report that TVO has indicated that it is going to appoint two independent experts, and they will be looking at the game in question and report back to us. Meantime, the game has been taken off the—

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier: On Saturday I wrote to you outlining the more than 500 Ontario-based companies engaged in Alberta resource development and the thousands of people these firms employ. I also outlined that over the next 25 years, Ontario will gain some \$63 billion in additional GDP as a result of Alberta's resource development. You will also know that in Ontario we are facing the worst jobs crisis of our lifetime and that nearly 600,000 men and women woke up this morning without a job.

Premier, are you willing to risk the future of our province and the future for these 600,000 men and women by continuing the disrespectful public comments about the resource development sector, or will you reject the past comments made by Dalton McGuinty and Minister Brad Duguid and immediately embrace Alberta's resource development for the potential of Ontario?

Hon. Liz Sandals: We have recognized the public concern on this particular issue and I want to reinforce that TVO has in fact taken the game in question down from their website and is appointing experts to report on that. I am waiting until I get that report to make any judgment about the particular game in question.

But on the larger issue, which is Ontario's support of the tech sector which serves the oil and gas sector, absolutely we understand that those are critical jobs. Ontario wants to invest in jobs and we want those people who are investing in jobs in Ontario to be part of the Canadian economy in supplying other provinces. Absolutely that is our strategy.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Premier. Premier, for the last two weeks we have heard about the horrific story of a young girl suffering physical and sexual abuse at the hands of a person whose care she was placed into by the children's aid society. We have heard that the children's aid was aware of the abuse, yet nothing was done. I have repeatedly asked the minister to investigate and provide Ontarians with an answer as to how this could have occurred. We have not yet heard a response.

Can the Premier outline the steps her government is taking to ensure this kind of breach of protection never happens again?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Community and Social Services is going to want to speak to the supplementary.

I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, that we are going to do and are doing everything we can to keep the children of this province safe. It is absolutely a first principle of ours that every ministry that works in the protection of children, whether it's Ministry of Children and Youth Services or Ministry of Education or Ministry of Community and Social Services—it is absolutely our objective to put in place the protections, to put in place the regulations, to put in place the supports and the funding that will allow children to flourish. That is our objective, Mr. Speaker, and I know the minister will speak to the details of what's happening.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back to the Premier: Premier, your Minister of Children and Youth Services has indicated that Ombudsman oversight is not a priority to your government, yet Ontario remains the only province in Canada that does not have this kind of oversight. In spite of this fact, the Ombudsman office receives hundreds of complaints each year.

Speaker, the terrible case of this young woman who spent years being ignored by a system that is supposed to protect her makes it clear that it's time for Ombudsman oversight. Will the Premier listen, and grant the Ombudsman oversight of children's aid societies?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, over the last several years, our government has taken yeoman's steps to put in place protections for children, the children's advocate being one—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Lanark, second time.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: —some other mechanisms.

I know from speaking with my colleague the Minister of Children and Youth Services that she is reviewing the particulars of this case, with a view to attempting to ensure that the kinds of difficulties that are apparent don't repeat themselves.

I also understand that the member opposite may have a private member's bill coming up for discussion soon in the House, and I look forward to having and listening to that debate.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Research and Innovation. This government is focused on building a strong, healthy and prosperous province. Supporting the work of our institutions and their researchers is critical to our efforts to remain competitive in this global economy and address our current-day challenges. It is through our institutions and collaboration with our partners that informed research findings and innovative solutions are possible. As we move towards a knowledge-

based economy, our success depends on our ability to lead in research and innovation.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Research and Innovation: What is this government doing to ensure that the research and innovation efforts of our institutions and their researchers are being supported?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I thank the member for that question.

Mr. Speaker, our government knows that through research and innovation, our universities, colleges, hospitals and research institutions can deliver discoveries that will lead to leading technologies.

To date, our ministry has announced and committed \$626 million through the Ontario Research Fund-Research Infrastructure program. The Research Infrastructure program supports the modernization, development and purchase of new research infrastructure for our universities and research institutions. That's why we recently announced new money for the Ontario Research Fund-Research Infrastructure program. Now 1,800 researchers working on 17 research projects in seven research institutions in the Toronto area are supported by this \$36-million investment. This is good news for our researchers and our research institutions in the GTA.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Soo Wong: It is great to hear that our government is supporting the work that will deliver important discoveries and turn research into leading technologies. This will ensure that Ontario is a world-class research and innovation hub.

In this highly competitive global economy, it is also important that we foster a vibrant science community that will help grow tomorrow's economies and find solutions to important questions.

Mr. Speaker, through you back to the Minister of Research and Innovation: Could the minister please share with us more about the institutions that will be benefiting from the \$36-million announcement, and what kind of projects these investments will help make possible?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Our government recognizes the importance of modernization and development and acquisition of new infrastructure for our research institutions. Our recent investment of \$36 million will support our researchers in the area of medical and also in the energy sector at the following prominent research institutions in the greater Toronto area: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Hospital for Sick Children, Sunnybrook Research Institute, University Health Network, University of Toronto, York University, Ryerson University.

Mr. Speaker, the infrastructure projects funded under this announcement will help support our researchers to collaborate with each other. This collaboration will lead to new technologies and treatments for diseases such as Alzheimer's and dementia, and also research and innovation in the area of energy conservation and renewable and sustainable energy.

This investment will help Ontario remain a leader in research and innovation in the world.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Rural Affairs. This past Saturday, the London Free Press reported that the Western Fair Raceway will lose at least 20 jobs when the Slots at Racetracks Program comes to an end this week. Western Fair is in a relatively good position compared to other tracks in Ontario. It has signed a commercial lease for its slots and is one of only six tracks to get transitional funding. Despite this, they've announced the loss of 20 jobs, even before the official end of the program.

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Minister, Ontario is facing a jobs crisis. London, in particular, has been hard hit with our jobless rate climbing above 9.1% last month, and yet the best racetrack deal you could offer still kills jobs. Why do you have no will to save thousands of horse-racing-related jobs when Ontario is suffering its worst job crisis in a generation?

Hon. Jeff Leal: The member raises a very important question—an important question for all of rural Ontario. As you know, we've put a horse race panel in effect—the honourable John Snobelen, the honourable Elmer Buchanan and the honourable John Wilkinson—who put forward a panel recommendation: 24 recommendations that we are moving forward with. We have reached tentative agreements with six horse racing tracks across the province of Ontario. Mr. Speaker, if I could just take a moment to quote Sue Leslie of the Ontario Horse Racing Industry Association: “We now have the opportunity to plan a more sustainable future for the horse racing and breeding industry, working in partnership with the government instead of competing against the province's other gaming products.”

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the minister: Minister, all these agreements with our tracks have occurred behind a wall of secrecy. People's livelihoods hang in a balance and you're wheeling and dealing without any scrutiny. All the while, the job losses continue to mount: 800 jobs at Kawartha, 100 jobs at Woodbine, now 20 jobs at Western Fair, and that's just to start.

Last August, you said supporting the horse industry was an investment, an investment that supports thousands of jobs province-wide. Why, since becoming minister, have you changed your tune and decided to kill the jobs of thousands of Ontarians?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Not at all, Mr. Speaker. What I said in August, that the horse racing industry is an important investment—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I found it interesting it was relatively quiet when the question was asked. Let's see if we can get there for the answer.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, the plan that's been put in place, the recommendations for the panel—

Mr. John Yakabuski: I guess this is the week of betrayals.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's the second time, member from Renfrew.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, the recommendations that have been put in place by the panel will ensure that there's a sustainable horse racing industry in the province of Ontario, an industry that has a long heritage in this province, an industry that has contributed significantly to rural Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say what John Snobelen said about the Slots at Racetracks Program, when he said it was neither transparent nor accountable. The program in place for the future will be accountable, will be transparent and will sustain an industry important in rural Ontario—

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

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. This government hobbled the horse racing industry and threw family farms into chaos when it put down the slots-at-racetracks partnership. Even communities like London that were spared outright track closures are now dealing with the fallout.

Can the Premier please explain to the 20 workers who are about to lose their jobs at the Western Fair Raceway what's so modern and sustainable about unemployment?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: The leader of the third party raises a very important question. We have put a panel in place. The honourable Elmer Buchanan, a former Minister of Agriculture—seems to me he served in the government from 1990 to 1995, which was the NDP government—a man of impeccable integrity, has been going around the province. He has been working with people in the horse racing industry. We've got six agreements in place, and we anticipate more agreements in the future because we believe, on this side of the House, a sustainable horse racing industry is important to the future health of rural Ontario, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, this government is gambling with the future of the horse racing industry, and families across Ontario are losing their shirts. Western Fair Raceway made the government's cut, but that's cold comfort for the families of 20 workers who have been put out to pasture.

Since when does modernization entail limping along without a steady paycheque?

Hon. Jeff Leal: As I said in the answer to the first part of the question, we believe in a strong, sustainable horse racing industry in the province of Ontario. We have three impeccable people: John Snobelen, Elmer Buchanan and John Wilkinson. They put the panel together. People in the industry are supporting what the panel is doing. In fact, John Snobelen, who was at the cabinet table when

the SAR program was put in place, has said publicly that that program “was neither transparent nor accountable.”

We want to put in place a program that is sustainable and that is transparent to the taxpayers of the province of Ontario, and retain an industry that's important to the future of rural Ontario.

AFFAIRES FRANCOPHONES

M. Shafiq Qadri: J'ai le plaisir de poser ma question à l'honorable Madeleine Meilleur, la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones. La semaine dernière a été une bonne semaine pour les francophones de l'Ontario. Nous avons célébré la Semaine de la Francophonie et j'ai aussi appris que la ministre Meilleur a annoncé, durant la fin de semaine dernière, que les francophones de l'Ontario avaient atteint un nouveau sommet démographique.

J'aimerais savoir, de la part de la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones, ce que cela signifie pour notre province.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je veux remercier le député d'Etobicoke-Nord pour sa question et son intérêt pour la communauté francophone. Oui, en fin de semaine dernière, j'ai eu le plaisir d'annoncer que la population francophone de notre province a augmenté de presque 5 % depuis 2006. Nous sommes maintenant plus de 600 000 francophones en Ontario. Depuis que nous sommes au pouvoir, c'est une augmentation de 33 000 personnes. Alors, je suis heureuse de voir que nos politiques et notre engagement ferme à notre communauté portent fruit. Je sais qu'avec notre système scolaire en français, notre nouvelle cible pour l'immigration francophone de 5 % et l'amélioration de l'accès à la justice en français, ce chiffre n'ira qu'en augmentant, et j'en suis très fière. Merci.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

M. Shafiq Qadri: Merci, madame la Ministre, pour votre réponse. Moi aussi, je suis très heureux d'apprendre cette bonne nouvelle et de voir les résultats concrets de notre engagement. Dans ma circonscription d'Etobicoke-Nord, je remarque que j'ai de plus en plus de jeunes commettants francophones. La plupart viennent s'installer ici avec leurs parents, provenant souvent de l'immigration.

La ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones pourrait-elle m'éclaircir sur ce que le gouvernement compte faire pour ces jeunes francophones de ma région?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Une très bonne question; une question d'actualité et bien importante. La région du centre de l'Ontario a d'ailleurs vu l'augmentation démographique la plus importante : une augmentation de 10 % depuis 2006. C'est d'ailleurs pour cela que la première ministre elle-même a fait un engagement ferme pour accroître l'accès aux programmes postsecondaires en français dans les régions du centre et du sud-ouest de l'Ontario pour nos jeunes francophones, pour qu'ils puissent y rester et étudier. Je veux vous dire que le gouvernement travaille fort sur ce dossier.

De plus, plusieurs de nos ministères lancent des programmes pour aider les jeunes francophones à trouver de l'emploi dans leur région, une fois gradués, à travers le ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités et l'Emploi Ontario.

J'étais très heureuse de faire cette annonce-là, à Rockland, samedi soir dernier, et je veux féliciter les quatre récipiendaires du prix de l'ACFO. Merci.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is for the Premier. The McGuinty-Wynne team has created havoc in our education system because they simply don't know how to say no. Just when it seemed like the Liberals finally realized that the spiraling cost of government was unsustainable and the public sector wage freeze could fix it, they chose to kowtow to their union friends instead. Meanwhile, Ontario's public sector continued to swell and the economy has continued to decline.

Now another opportunity to rein in spending has emerged with the proposed wage freeze at the LCBO, but OPSEU is already planning an April strike vote. Premier, will you stop missing opportunities to rein in spending and implement an across-the-board wage freeze before another industry is left in shambles?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

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Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question, because it gives us an opportunity to talk about the outstanding work that we have been doing. You know, the government has now beat its targets for the last three to four years consistently—our wage negotiations, which is important, because that is in the end what matters, and what matters are results. We've achieved almost 0% increase over the last two years and we've maintained some degree of stability and harmony in the system, and we're working closely with our stakeholders and our broader public sector. They appreciate, too, we all had to do our part to keep our expense controls in play.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Speaker, we have here another opportunity to rein in spending with the LCBO, and even the industry's own managers realize it's time. The only ones left in Ontario who don't seem to realize that the gravity of our economic situation is dire are the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals. By the way, here's a sample of your results: Our new Premier has referred to Ontario's debt only once over the past decade in this Legislature in Hansard. Her idea of reining in spending has actually created five new ministries, at a cost to the Ontario taxpayer, and Ontario's economic performance is still below the national average for the 74th consecutive month.

If we're to rely on the new Premier to set the tone, I'm seriously concerned for the future of Ontario. Premier, when will you get serious about the debt and deficit that this government is responsible for and implement an across-the-board wage freeze for Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, negotiations are under way with LCBO. Let them do their job and let's find common ground, and they recognize that we are going for a zero-zero going forward. Everyone seems to understand that except the members opposite, who want to legislate something that now is not required because we're getting the results necessary. That is what is important, Mr. Speaker.

We'll continue to work closely. We're going to continue to be positive, and we look to you to help us put forward a budget that's going to meet the needs of all concerned. It's not about any partisan politics, but the public good and about the people of Ontario. Work with us. Make this budget pass.

DARLINGTON NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, to the Premier: The recent gas plant scandal shows that bad energy decisions can cost Ontarians hundreds of millions of dollars. Given that every nuclear energy project in Ontario has incurred massive cost overruns and that Quebec has decided not to refurbish its only nuclear plant because of its high cost, will the government require an Ontario Energy Board review of the cost-effectiveness of refurbishing Darlington before proceeding with this multi-billion-dollar project?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, we have a long-term energy plan, and we are meeting or exceeding all of our targets in that plan, whether that's generation, whether that's transmissions, whether it's green energy, whether it's nuclear, as everyone knows, and I think the opposition supports nuclear as being a very significant part of our long-term energy plan. We're continuing on that. But we're doing it in a safe, responsible way. We are always examining the costs. We're always examining the safety, and the safety and the costs are paramount in our policy moving forward, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The government says that it is carefully considering the Darlington refurbishment. Meanwhile, it has suspended Ontario's power planning process, the IPSP, since 2007. It is ignoring its requirement to actually have a public review of power planning. Now the government is recklessly signing contracts for hundreds of millions of dollars for the Darlington refurbishment before knowing what that project is going to cost. Why won't the government protect Ontarians by requiring an independent review of the cost-effectiveness of that refurbishment before spending any more money?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, we have a long-term energy plan. That long-term energy plan is going to be reviewed as we move forward. There are different elements of it that will be tweaked. We will be making some changes in course. We will be talking to the opposition critics on those. We will be bringing initiatives forward, and they will be responsible in terms

of safety, in terms of costs and, most importantly, in terms of reliability. We experienced a system that had no reliability in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003. We have made a reliable system. We've included—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Bob Chiarelli:—we will continue to be part of a reliable system moving forward.

INVASIVE SPECIES

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Natural Resources. Invasive species like the zebra mussel cost our economy millions of dollars, they pose a real threat to ecological well-being, damaging our ecosystems, and they harm native species.

Minister, I know our government is committed to fighting all invasive species all across this province, and I know your ministry has made significant strides over the past decade. Could the minister please elaborate to the members of this House on the measures that our government is taking to combat the impact of invasive species on Ontario's ecosystems?

Hon. David Oraziatti: I'm pleased to respond to the question. The member has raised a very important issue, and I want to thank the member from Oakville for raising this issue.

Our government is certainly very concerned about the threat of invasive species and remains committed to limiting their impacts on Ontario's ecosystems. In 2011, our government opened the invasive species research centre in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie. This innovative facility is the first of its kind in Canada and a key step in helping to address these issues.

The facility will serve our government and the federal government's collaborative efforts on the management and research of invasive species and plants and aquatic species. Our government also is working very closely with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters to educate Ontarians about where invasive species live and the impact on the surrounding environment.

In addition, we've helped to fund the operation of a hotline which allows Ontarians the opportunity to report their concerns and obtain information.

More in the supplementary, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Minister, for sharing with us those important steps you've taken to fight invasive species; really good news on the strategic plan, on the steps that are being taken to protect the Great Lakes ecosystem, which borders my riding.

I know that aquatic invasive species can have a devastating effect on native species, especially those enjoyed by anglers in Ontario, so I'm glad that you've mentioned some of the species. Specifically, the Asian carp is a concern to me. I know it's a complex issue and one that requires us to work across permeable borders.

Would the minister please update the members of this House about steps the ministry has taken to keep Asian carp, specifically, out of Ontario waters?

Hon. David Oraziatti: Again, thanks to the member from Oakville for raising this important issue. In fact, we view the Asian carp as such a significant threat, we've certainly made them illegal to possess in the province of Ontario. I recognize that this is a complex issue which requires the collaboration of many partners. That's why we've been working closely with our colleagues at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to ensure that we identify the implementation and prevention methods for all possible entry points through our waterways.

We've also been working with our US counterparts through the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee. In fact, they met last fall in Chicago to discuss this issue. This organization will enhance communications between our government, the federal government, the Great Lakes states and the US federal government.

In addition, since 2010, we've been working with the Canada Border Services Agency and we've been able to intercept almost 39,000 pounds of Asian carp destined for Ontario, resulting in \$270,000 in fines.

We'll continue to keep this issue top of mind, Speaker, and address these concerns.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On Thursday, I took the liberty of introducing a piece of information that has set a record. That person wasn't in the House; he now is, so I would like to bring to our attention that on the weekend, again, Monte Kwinter from York Centre reached his 82nd birthday.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Making him one more time the oldest member in the Ontario Legislature.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Grant Crack: It's certainly a pleasure today, as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture and Food, to welcome a number of guests here this afternoon. We have Mark Wales, from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture; Burkhard Mausberg, of the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation; Robert Chorney, Farmers' Markets Ontario; Debbie Field, FoodShare Toronto; Jamie Reaume, Holland Marsh Growers' Association; Bryan Gilvesy, Alternative Land Use Services; Alison Robertson, Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association; Karen Hutchinson, Sustain Ontario; Michael Brownbridge, Vineland Research and Innovation Centre; and Don Mills, Local Food Plus. Welcome. Have a great day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our guests.

Mr. Grant Crack: Can I do one more, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member can just carry on.

Mr. Grant Crack: I have late notice: Hillary Dawson, Wine Council of Ontario and the Alliance of Ontario Food Processors. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? I hope you don't mind—I have one: My other other brother, Mr. Steve Peters from Elgin–Middlesex–London, from the 37th, 38th, 39th, and Speaker in the 39th Parliament. Steve Peters, welcome.

As a reminder, you're not allowed to take notes.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I rise here this afternoon to draw attention that for Ontario's horse racing industry and the 60,000 hard-working men and women who are part of it, sadly, the end is near.

In six days, the provincial partnership that gave the horse racing industry a cut of slots revenue will end—killed by the Liberals and passed by the NDP. While the Liberals have already helped to close tracks in Kawartha and Windsor, the NDP has offered nothing better and has instead tried to play both sides, supporting the horse racing industry at home but passing the Liberal budget that killed the Slots at Racetracks Program here at Queen's Park.

While leading tracks like the Western Fair and Woodbine raceway are racing to slash jobs, smaller tracks like Dresden wait for another round of secret deals being put forward by the Liberals and supported by the NDP.

Truly, Tim Hudak and the Ontario PCs are the only party to have put forward a solid and comprehensive plan to grow and develop Ontario's horse racing industry. It's simple, really: Horse racing must be a key component of Ontario's gaming strategy. The government should cancel the OLG's plan to abandon racetrack slots, and abandon their plan to build 29 new casinos. Instead, Tim Hudak and the Ontario PCs will build partnerships with the horse racing industry, allowing it to survive.

Speaker, we're proud to stand on this side of the House and support Ontario's horse racing industry.

HAMILTON REGIONAL INDIAN CENTRE

Mr. Paul Miller: During constituency week, I had the opportunity to visit a wonderful facility in my riding, the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre. Home to 25 full-time staffers, the HRIC is a non-profit organization that offers a comprehensive spectrum of services to the aboriginal community in Hamilton—all under one roof.

With programs ranging from prenatal care to employment, the dedicated roster of counsellors work one on one with members of the community to overcome whatever challenges they may be facing. The centre also places a specific focus on youth, both in promoting their culture and in providing a location for them to learn, to grow, to interact and to feel welcome.

First opened in 1972, the HRIC has recently undergone a massive expansion, moving from a single home in downtown Hamilton to their new complex in my riding, a 17,000-square-foot facility, just last year. This serves as a further testament to the need for the services they offer and the impact they have had in the greater Hamilton area. I would like to thank the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre for allowing me to tour their facility and for the dedication and commitment they show our community. I look forward to their continuing growth and positive impact in our community in the years to come.

Congratulations, and keep up the good work.

NATIONAL AUTOMOTIVE TECHNOLOGY COMPETITION

Ms. Soo Wong: Today, I would like to take a moment to recognize two students from Agincourt Collegiate Institute in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, who will be representing Canada, their school and our community at the National Automotive Technology Competition in New York City.

The National Automotive Technology Competition challenges high school students in a test of both skills and knowledge. Teams of two students race to identify and repair pre-assigned problems on a vehicle, with each correctly repaired component scoring points for the team. This year, over \$3 million in prizes and scholarships will be awarded to the students at this competition.

Grade 12 students Hansen Cao and Huzaifa Misbah, who are representing Agincourt Collegiate in this prestigious competition, also recently finished the 14th annual Toronto Automotive Technology Competition. They defeated 16 other teams from the GTA to win this competition. In April, they will be the only Canadian team representing Canada and the city of Toronto.

I want to congratulate Hansen Cao and Huzaifa Misbah for their accomplishments. I know that every member of this House will be wishing them the best of luck in that competition.

AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS

Mr. John O'Toole: First, I'd like to pay special recognition to the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex for his remarks this afternoon on horse-racing in Ontario.

I'm pleased to rise today in this House to recognize the courage of an individual and members of the families of those facing ALS. I'd like to pay special tribute to my constituent Gerry Johnston, who has recently been diagnosed with ALS. Gerry Johnston is a friend, a leader in the community and more recently served as chair of the Memorial Hospital Foundation for Bowmanville.

Gerry has been involved at every foundation and community fundraising event I can recall. He is among an estimated 2,500 to 3,000 Canadians currently living with ALS. Sometimes called Lou Gehrig's disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis has no known cure or effective treatment as of yet.

Through research, awareness and supportive services, we can all help our neighbours who have ALS, and in doing so we help their family and indeed the wider community by just telling them we care. Keep in mind that little things like a card, a phone call, a visit or running an errand for a caregiver means a lot.

June is ALS Awareness Month, and I'm confident more opportunities for learning and support will be available in the weeks ahead. I ask all members to support the individuals, families, health care professionals, researchers, volunteers and all those persons, individuals and families. We all need to be concerned about ALS. It's a right to live.

ALAN REDWAY

Mr. Michael Prue: Yesterday was Agnes Macphail Day in the borough of East York. It was the 20th anniversary of the Agnes Macphail Award being given out in East York. It was a wonderful, wonderful day.

Yesterday the award winner was the Honourable Alan Redway. Some of you may have heard that name before. He was Minister of Housing in the Mulroney cabinet, an MP, and an alderman and mayor in East York. But more recently, he has distinguished himself as a private citizen after being out of politics.

He was nominated by a group of people. One of them was Gail Nyberg, with the Daily Bread Food Bank, for the wonderful work he has done with that organization in the last number of years. He was nominated as well by Flemingdon Legal Services because he served on the board of directors. That nomination came from Marjorie Hiley. He was nominated in the Leaside community, for all the work he does in and around the place he calls home, by Carol Burtin Fripp, the vice-president. And he was nominated by the city of Toronto for the work he did in housing, trying to save homes in Toronto, by Councilor Ana Bailão.

He gave a speech, and he was self-deprecating in an inimitable style. He gave credit to his wife, Louise, for everything wonderful he has done in his life, but also to the many volunteers, past and present, who were not so honoured as he was. He said that they probably deserved the award more than he did, but he was wrong. He deserved it, and everybody in East York is very proud of him.

Congratulations, Alan Redway.

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ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Bill Mauro: About six weeks ago in Thunder Bay, I had an opportunity to be part of another wonderful

announcement in my home community. As most people will know, we're currently undergoing a transformation in health care where we are very much trying to focus our resources on community supports to be able to provide people with the right care at the right time in the right place.

In that vein, on February 14 I was very happy to be part of an announcement in Thunder Bay where we announced \$1 million for crisis withdrawal and stabilization services at the Balmoral Withdrawal Management Centre—a detox centre, basically. I was very pleased to be there. What this means is, we will be creating, with about \$1 million in funding, 22 level-3 crisis management beds with 24-hour nursing care.

Speaker, it is hoped that by the second year of this program we'll see a 20% reduction in mental health and addiction visits to the emergency department at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre. Coupled with the recently opened 132-bed supportive housing unit in Thunder Bay dealing with the alternate-level-of-care patient situation in our community, with these 22 detox beds and 132 supportive housing units, partnering with St. Joe's, it's my belief that we are really having an impact on the ALC population in our hospital, relieving pressure on that acute care facility and providing care for people where they really need it.

ROTARY CLUB OF SHELBURNE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to recognize the Rotary Club of Shelburne on their 70th anniversary. This organization continues to make significant contributions to key projects benefiting our community and is a great asset to the town of Shelburne.

The Shelburne Rotarians were instrumental in beginning the Canadian Open Old Time Fiddle contest. This is a premier event in Shelburne and showcases some of Canada's best musical talent. The Rotarians continue to play a key role in organizing, fundraising and promoting Fiddlefest, which is now in its 63rd year.

Rotarians are keen to roll up their sleeves and get things done, often working with other organizations and helping local charities that support local youth programs. As a major project last year, the club opened Shelburne's first BMX park.

Shelburne Rotarians continue to support many other local projects, including the recent renovation at the Centre Dufferin District Recreation Centre. They also play an important role in Rotary International, sponsoring projects like its campaign to eradicate polio and supporting a clean water project in Guatemala.

I applaud every Rotary Club of Shelburne member for their service above self, for their numerous contributions and their incredible community outreach. They certainly have had an impressive record of achievement throughout their amazing 75 years. So, on behalf of the Dufferin-Caledon residents and the Ontario Legislature, I'd like to wish the Rotary Club of Shelburne: Congratulations; keep up the fantastic work.

CITY OF VAUGHAN

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Today, I am extremely proud to do one of the things that I like to do most here in this chamber, which is to speak about my great community of Vaughan.

Vaughan is, as most will know, a truly wonderful city, not only here in Ontario but as compared to others across Canada. I'm extremely proud to say that it has recently received some very positive recognition in MoneySense magazine.

MoneySense magazine recently published its eighth annual list of the best places to live in Canada, which determines which cities have the highest quality of life here in our country. I'm extremely proud to say that my city of Vaughan is ranked in the top 10 best mid-sized cities in Canada, placing eighth out of 46. Vaughan also ranked 23rd overall when it was compared with all large, mid-sized and small cities across Canada, but the honours do not stop there.

Vaughan also placed second in the nation in rankings that listed the best places for new immigrants to live. This is certainly not a surprising figure, given that the residents of Vaughan speak almost 100 different languages. It speaks to how welcoming my community is for newcomers to Canada.

Although these honours are remarkable, they are certainly not surprising. Through the sustained efforts of individuals like Mayor Maurizio Bevilacqua and the members of our city council, Vaughan is and continues to be a world-class city, a wonderful place in which to live, work and raise a family.

I am, and continue to be, extremely proud to represent this great community here in this chamber.

CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to share how a carbon monoxide detector recently prevented a tragedy in my riding of Oxford.

A few weeks ago, a group of nine Girl Guides from Ingersoll went to a winter camp near Princeton. When they arrived, they tested the carbon monoxide detector to make sure it was working.

The next morning at about 9 a.m., the alarm went off. When the fire department arrived, they found the carbon monoxide levels at 61.8% at the door. A wood stove hadn't been properly ventilated and was filling the lodge with carbon monoxide. If they hadn't had a working carbon monoxide alarm, the camping trip would have become a tragedy.

I want to commend the Girl Guide leaders—Amy Boddy, Kelly Biers and Rebecca Moore—on their calm reaction and ensuring the girls' safety.

I also want to commend the Blandford-Blenheim Fire Station No. 1 for their quick response, their thorough inspection of the camp and for coming back twice to check to ensure the Guides were safe.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, four times I've introduced the Hawkins Gignac Act, which would make carbon monoxide detectors mandatory in all homes in Ontario. I hope that we can soon pass it to keep more families safe, but in the meantime I want to encourage people to follow the example set by these Girl Guides and their leaders: Check your detector and make sure it works. If you don't have a carbon monoxide alarm in your home, please protect your family by getting one as soon as possible.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LOCAL FOOD ACT, 2013
LOI DE 2013 SUR
LES ALIMENTS LOCAUX

Ms. Wynne moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013 /
Projet de loi 36, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur les aliments locaux.

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?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I defer to ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSESAGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY
INDUSTRIE AGROALIMENTAIRE

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's a great honour and pleasure to be here in my role as Minister of Agriculture and Food to introduce the Local Food Act, and I welcome all of our guests. Thank you very much for being here to witness this. Thank you so much.

This bill supports, promotes and celebrates the good things that are grown, harvested and made in Ontario.

J'ai le plaisir et l'honneur d'être ici, à titre de ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation, pour présenter la Loi de 2013 sur les aliments locaux. Ce projet de loi donne son soutien aux bonnes choses qui poussent, qui sont récoltées et qui sont produites en Ontario. Il en fait également la promotion.

I'm committed to reintroducing this important piece of legislation. I committed to that because, if passed, it will form part of a comprehensive local food strategy that will strengthen our agri-food sector and will help more people find, buy and eat food that's made and grown in Ontario, which is very important to our government.

The legislation would do this by allowing the minister to consult with stakeholders and industry to establish goals and targets to help increase local food awareness,

access and sales. It will allow the minister to work with public sector organizations to share information on their progress and their results towards these goals. It would also proclaim a Celebrate Ontario Local Food Week, and it would require the minister to produce a local food report on its activities to support local food.

As I mentioned, this bill is just one part of a broader strategy to promote local food. So, outside of this legislation, beyond the legislation, we're also proposing more education about the benefits of local food; more support, including financial support, for communities and regions working on local food innovation and initiatives; and a commitment to consult with stakeholders on the best ways to promote local food.

We'll lead by example, through an Ontario government policy requiring ministries to consider local food for procurements under \$25,000.

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Mr. Speaker, as we all know, although we won't sing right now, good things grow in Ontario.

Interjection: Sing it.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We could sing it. I don't know if that breaks a protocol in the Legislature.

We want the people of Ontario to reach for local food at home, in restaurants, at work or in schools. I actually believe that the people of Ontario are eager to do this, that they are actually ahead of us on this. They want to buy locally grown food.

Nous voulons que la population de l'Ontario puisse obtenir des aliments locaux à la maison, dans les restaurants, au travail et dans les écoles.

We want to strengthen the connections between rural and urban Ontario; we want to create jobs and economic growth, and this bill will contribute to that. By building a strong local food industry, we also increase Ontario's export potential, delivering the good things grown and processed here in Ontario to the world.

There are consumers who understand and appreciate the benefits of locally grown food, and there's more retail interest than ever. And I would just say that I think there is probably a better understanding about locally grown food than there is about locally processed food. So I'm glad that the processes are here, because it is definitely part of the conversation about how we raise awareness about processing as an important part of the agri-food business.

With countless skilled farmers and food processors here in Ontario, the time is right for this legislation. That's why I'm calling on every member of this Legislature to support this legislation and, by doing so, to support local food. We want everyone to know that good things grow in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: The Ontario PC caucus are strong supporters of local food. Many of us come from rural ridings that have a significant agriculture sector. We know the farmers; we know how great the food they produce is and the challenges that they face. That's why we were so disappointed in the Local Food Act that was

introduced last fall and the version introduced today, which seems, after a quick look, virtually the same.

Last fall, when this government introduced the Local Food Act, agricultural organizations and local food groups were hoping for a bill that would address some of those challenges and make a real impact on our food system. Although the preamble laid out great goals, there was nothing in the bill to achieve them. Local food group Food Forward said that the Local Food Act "must be strengthened." Sustain Ontario said that it had "missed many opportunities." Even our now Premier acknowledged the act's shortcomings when she promised to re-introduce a strengthened food act, and yet the bill introduced today is almost the same as the one introduced six months ago.

There is one change, Mr. Speaker, in that Local Food Week is moved to the week before Thanksgiving. Premier, everyone involved in agriculture knows that's Agriculture Week, and has been for 15 years. It's great to celebrate local food, but you seem to have forgotten where it comes from. Replacing Ontario Agriculture Week is insulting to our agriculture community.

We believe that for a food act to have impact, it must address the entire food system from field to fork and have real, meaningful changes. That's why in our recent white paper, Respect for Rural Ontario, we proposed a comprehensive food act which would support local procurement and help our farmers, food processors and agri-businesses by reducing red tape and supporting Ontario's food system. Our Ontario food act would include a dedicated fund for risk-management programs and one-window access to government for farmers and agri-businesses.

Four months after our leader, Tim Hudak, announced that we would reduce red tape for our farmers by implementing one-window access to the government, the party opposite copied our commitment. We appreciate the acknowledgement that it was needed, but a year and a half later, they have taken no action to implement it. I had hoped to see that in this bill.

Our white paper laid out a number of other actions that would strengthen the food system and promote local food, and I had hoped to see them in this bill as well. It's not enough for government to simply set targets for local food procurement; they must ensure that they have conditions for procurement to succeed, such as our proposal to create a regional food terminal to build on the success of the Ontario Food Terminal.

In their recent green papers, the Greenbelt Fund stated that "lack of access to products from Ontario farms is a fundamental barrier to increase the amount of Ontario food in public institutions." They identified that one of the barriers to government procurement of local food was that the supply needed to be aggregated. This mirrors what we heard from Michigan about their experience with Buy Michigan First.

Two locations we would consider for a regional food terminal would be in southwestern Ontario in London or in eastern Ontario near Ottawa. In both areas, they have

locally grown food that is being loaded on trucks and shipped to Toronto, only to have some of it trucked right back to the region it came from. By creating a regional food terminal, we would reduce our carbon footprint, create jobs, improve market access for farmers and have a reliable supply for restaurants, retailers and food processors.

However, Mr. Speaker, the most significant challenge in our food system is excessive paperwork and government red tape. This government claims they have cut red tape, but 77.2% of farmers tell us it is increasing. That is similar to the results from last year's OFA survey. The problem is not just on farms; 76% of food processors and 86% of agri-businesses also said that red tape was increasing.

This government continues to implement policies without any regard to impact on farmers. The most recent example is the outrageous increase in Ontario Tire Stewardship fees for agricultural tires. For instance, the cost of a tire for a John Deere 9300 has increased from \$61.16 to \$729.12. For a John Deere 9770, the tire fees increased from \$91.74 to \$1,644. It's not enough for government to hold photo ops and introduce a bill with a great name; we need to take real steps to decrease the challenges faced by our agriculture industry.

I'm very disappointed that in six months we have not made progress toward a real food act that would make significant improvements to our agriculture industry and our food system, and that our agriculture industry now gets so little respect that it has been demoted to a part-time minister who is replacing Ontario Agriculture Week with the food act week.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour for me to stand in this place and speak on behalf of my New Democratic colleagues on a subject that is very near and dear to all of us: food—proudly grown, processed, sold and enjoyed right here in Ontario. I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome all our agri-food guests this afternoon. Specifically, the topic is the reintroduction of the Local Food Act.

The Ontario agri-food sector contributes more than \$34 billion to the provincial economy and employs more than 700,000 people. It's the cornerstone of our provincial economy. The agri-food sector is incredibly diverse, from large commercial vegetable growers in the Holland Marsh to community gardens in Davenport; from Maple Leaf Foods to Creative Meats in Warren; from Kraft to Thornloe Cheese; from Loblaws to the local farmers' market; and from McDonalds to the local breakfast restaurant. Agri-food business comes in all shapes and sizes. The one thing that unites all in this sector is the goal to provide families in Ontario with tasty, healthy food. This sector has proven to be incredibly stable, actually growing through Ontario's recent economic downturn.

The New Democratic Party has long supported the concept of local food. That's why our leader, Andrea Horwath, has proposed a private member's bill which

called for hard targets on the amount of Ontario-grown food purchased by provincial government bodies. Not only did we want to set an example for the private sector, but our initiative would have kick-started many local food initiatives by providing at least one solid anchor customer: the Ontario government.

The reintroduced Local Food Act appears to have some of the same intentions, although it lacks any hard targets or achievable objectives. It appears to be a plan to make a plan, a conversation about food, a great press release about motherhood and apple pie, but maybe not much else.

Mr. Mike Colle: What have you got against apple pie?

Mr. John Vanthof: And I like apple pie.

Some would accuse the bill of being a paper tiger, but, if passed as written, its vagueness and lack of detail will actually give the government wide powers to do whatever it wants in this sector, and that should cause widespread concern in the rural community.

Farmers across the province have all had to deal with solutions created by Queen's Park. There is widespread distrust in the rural agricultural community regarding their urban neighbours pushing issues of which they have little understanding or misconceived perceptions of how food is produced.

The New Democratic Party welcomes the introduction of the Local Food Act, not because we believe that the act, as drafted, will be of much benefit to growers or consumers but because it will bring the issues faced by all levels of the food chain to this floor for debate and to committee, if it passes second reading.

1330

These issues need to be addressed. For example, small abattoirs are being forced to close because the regulations imposed on them have little to do with the level of risk. Food safety should never be compromised, but many of the regulation changes that mom-and-pop shops face every day have more to do with the government creating rules to solve problems instead of actually looking at what caused the problems in the first place. There are lots of examples, and I'm looking forward to the debate.

Over time, a rift has grown between urban and rural Ontario. It has been intensified by government actions like the Green Energy Act and the recent decisions regarding the horse racing industry. The reason that rift is so big is because people in the country didn't have a voice before those decisions were taken, and that has got to change.

If the Local Food Act continues on this path of dictating to the countryside what the city thinks is best, it will be a failure, an ultimate failure. It will be up to the government to prove that it really wants to listen to the farm community.

The reintroduced food act does have one change. It's one action item: the creation of a Celebrate Local Food week, and the day has been changed from May to the week before Thanksgiving. That does overlap Agriculture Week, and that is maybe a problem, but agriculture and food are the same thing.

But once again, who asked? Who asked? Agriculture Week has been here a long time. Did anyone who drafted this act call anybody up and say, "Would you like to have it the same week as Agriculture Week?" You see? So, again, please—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. John Vanthof: Hopefully, urban and rural Ontario can start to work together, but we have to stop dictating to the people in the country. We've had enough. Thank you.

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

It's now time for petitions, and I will not go to the member from Durham.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, I'm not going to the member from Durham. I'm just telling you that.

PETITIONS

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Agincourt is historically recognized as north Scarborough's oldest and most well-established community; and

"Whereas the residents of the community of Scarborough–Agincourt share unique interests; and

"Whereas historically Agincourt's electoral voice has always been found in the electoral district north of Ontario Highway 401; and

"Whereas communities, such as Scarborough–Agincourt, with historical significance should be protected and not divided; and

"Whereas the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario has recently released proposals to redraw the federal riding map of Scarborough–Agincourt; and

"Whereas 'community of interest' is a mandated consideration of the federal Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act; and

"Whereas the original proposal from the commission included a unified Scarborough–Agincourt riding; and

"Whereas the commission's report inexplicably divided the Scarborough–Agincourt community; and

"Whereas the residents of Scarborough–Agincourt should not be divided and the electoral riding should remain, in its entirety;

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

"To call upon the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario to recognize the historical and demographic context of the Scarborough–Agincourt community and to preserve riding boundaries that include

a protected Scarborough–Agincourt community north of Ontario Highway 401."

I fully support this petition and I will give it to page Andrew to take it to the Clerk.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Robert Bailey: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas local citizens' wishes regarding the development of wind turbines in their vicinity are not being properly consulted or informed;

"Whereas local government decision-making in regard to wind turbines has been rendered powerless;

"Whereas wind turbines have been divisive in other Ontario communities;

"Whereas electricity costs in Ontario have escalated since the introduction of the Green Energy Act;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that no further development of industrial wind turbines take place until citizens are properly consulted and informed, and local government processes are respected."

These are from WAIT—wait until you've heard about them—industrial turbine petitions from Plympton-Wyoming. I agree with this petition and affix my name to it.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Miss Monique Taylor: I have 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 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. I will affix my name to it and send it with page Fae to the Clerk's table.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Ontario, mayors and councillors from more than 80 municipalities and Ontario's largest farm organizations and rural stakeholders, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, seek an immediate moratorium on new wind development until an independent and

comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health; and

“Whereas the provincial Liberal government’s study back in 2011 failed to conclude anything more than that it needed to continue to study the turbine sound impacts; and

“Whereas the federal government is launching, through Health Canada, the first comprehensive study of the health impacts of wind turbines;

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

“That the Liberal government follow the federal lead, accept the objective of the federal wind study, agree and accept that until the study is finished it will not approve any new wind turbine projects in Ontario, effective immediately.”

I support this and will affix my name and send it with page Kyara to the Clerks’ desk.

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

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

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

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

“Whereas the economy of Ontario is struggling and government must assist businesses in every way possible;

“We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to repeal the statutory obligations created by Bill 119.”

I affix my signature in full support.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a “Stop the Trades Tax” petition. I shall read it.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the newly created Ontario College of Trades is planning to hit hard-working tradespeople with new membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year;

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

“That the Liberal government stop their job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately.”

I support this petition and have affixed my signature to it.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

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

“Whereas families are concerned about proposed changes to the Special Services at Home Program ... and

the Passport Program under the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act...; and

“Whereas the system should allow for the seamless transfer of benefits to the Passport Program when the person turns 18 years of age, and not the current unacceptable cancellation of benefits and reapplication process that puts the person with an intellectual disability on a huge waiting list for months” waiting “for the re-establishment of their benefits; and

“Whereas, on September 20, 2012, the Legislature passed a motion by Progressive Conservative MPP Christine Elliott to immediately strike a select committee to develop a comprehensive developmental services strategy for Ontarians that addresses the needs of children, youth and adults in Ontario....;

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

“The government immediately strike a select committee to develop a comprehensive developmental services strategy for Ontarians that addresses the needs of children, youth and adults in Ontario with an intellectual disability or who are dually diagnosed with an intellectual disability and a mental illness and coordinates the delivery of developmental programs and services across many provincial ministries;

“To declare a moratorium on any changes until the select committee reports back to the Legislature and its recommendations are acted upon.”

I will be signing this.

1340

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario’s newly created Ontario College of Trades is taxing hard-working tradespeople with membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year; and

“Whereas the Ontario College of Trades has no clear benefit and no accountability as tradespeople already pay for licences and countless other fees to government; and

“Whereas Ontario has struggled for years to attract people to skilled trades and the planned tax grab will kill jobs, and drive people out of trades;

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

“To stop the job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately.”

I affix my name to the petition and support it, and I’ll send it—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnett): Petitions?

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Robert Bailey: I rise today in the Legislature to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario’s newly created Ontario College of Trades is taxing hard-working tradespeople with membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year; and

“Whereas the Ontario College of Trades has no clear benefit and no accountability as tradespeople already pay for licences and countless other fees to government; and

“Whereas Ontario has struggled for years to attract people to skilled trades and the planned tax grab will kill jobs, and drive people out of trades;

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

“To stop the job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately.”

I agree with this and affix my name to it as well and send it down with John.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents of Ontario, mayors and councillors from more than 80 municipalities and Ontario’s largest farm organizations and rural stakeholders, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, seek an immediate moratorium on new wind development until an independent and comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health; and

“Whereas the provincial Liberal government’s study back in 2011 failed to conclude anything more than that it needed to continue to study the turbine sound impacts; and

“Whereas the federal government is launching, through Health Canada, the first comprehensive study of health impacts of wind turbines;

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

“That the Liberal government follow the federal lead, accept the objective of the federal wind study, agree and accept that until the study is finished it will not approve any new wind turbine projects in Ontario, effective immediately.”

I support this petition, I’ll sign my name to it and send it with Dasha to the Clerks’ desk.

LONG-TERM CARE

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

“Whereas the Auditor General confirmed in his December 2012 report that the Champlain CCAC had the longest wait time in Ontario in which 90% of their clients were placed; and

“Whereas the region requires a comprehensive plan assessing the future long-term-care bed needs of the region, as well as the provision of community care for independent and semi-independent seniors; and

“Whereas the number of Ontarians over 75 years of age is projected to increase by 30% by the year 2021, the

year the baby boomers start to turn 75, putting even more demand on the number of available LTC beds;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care immediately conduct a study to identify the current and future requirements for long-term-care beds and community care for independent and semi-independent seniors in our region of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, including the city of Cornwall;

“That such a study also identify future solutions for the current and future demand and the possible short- and long-term role the Cornwall General Hospital could play in fulfilling these requirements;

“That the Cornwall Community Hospital be funded to retain the Cornwall General Hospital until such a study is conducted and the role of this building is assessed as a solution of the LTC bed crisis.”

I agree with this petition and will be sending it off with page Ali.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. John Yakabuski: Just received a fresh batch. A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario’s newly created Ontario College of Trades is taxing hard-working tradespeople with membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year; and

“Whereas the Ontario College of Trades has no clear benefit and no accountability as tradespeople already pay for licences and countless other fees to government; and

“Whereas Ontario has struggled for years to attract people to skilled trades and the planned tax grab will kill jobs, and drive people out of trades;

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

“To stop the job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the table with Jacob.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents of Ontario, mayors and councillors from more than 80 municipalities and Ontario’s largest farm organizations and rural stakeholders, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, seek an immediate moratorium on new wind development until an independent and comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health; and

“Whereas the provincial Liberal government’s study back in 2011 failed to conclude anything more than that it needed to continue to study the turbine sound impacts; and

“Whereas the federal government is launching, through Health Canada, the first comprehensive study of health impacts of wind turbines;

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

"That the Liberal government follow the federal lead, accept the objective of the federal wind study, agree and accept that until the study is finished it will not approve any new wind turbine projects in Ontario, effective immediately."

I support this petition, will affix my name and send it with page Ellen to the Clerks' desk.

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: "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...;

"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 the headwaters of multiple highly vulnerable aquifers is 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."

I thank you very much for this opportunity, and I affix my signature to this petition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time available for petitions this afternoon.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AMBULANCE AMENDMENT ACT
(AIR AMBULANCES), 2013

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 21, 2013, on the motion for 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 Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It is a privilege to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 11, the Ambulance Act with respect to the provision of air ambulance services. It is particularly important, Mr. Speaker, because it does pertain to the Ornge air ambulance operation.

Before I go any further, I would like to thank the front-line service providers who have done an exemplary job over this last while, despite the recent scandals that have plagued both this agency and this government. From the pilots to the paramedics and all the front-line service personnel, it is you who deliver the health care services that keep all of us in this province healthy and safe. Thank you. We are grateful to you for your commitment and professionalism.

It's the government's obligation to these front-line workers, as well as to all Ontarians, to ensure the Ornge air ambulance service is delivering world-class care. But Ornge cannot deliver proper health care and treatment when it's plagued by scandals and mismanagement, and Ontarians can't have faith in this service so long as the government fails in its duty to enforce standards of care. In short, in order to safeguard patient care and effectively deliver patient and health care services, we need to ensure that Ornge is subject to proper oversight, accountability and transparency provisions.

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I'm very troubled by the fact that the changes proposed by Bill 11 by the government are woefully inadequate. This bill fails to make changes to a dysfunctional organizational structure. At best, it leaves weak accountability measures untouched. At worst, it makes them even weaker. The government's paltry proposals fall short of the substantive overhaul needed to ensure that Ornge does the work that it's meant to do: to keep Ontarians healthy and safe and to respond quickly when their health and well-being are being threatened.

It's deeply concerning to see that this government cobbled together this piece of legislation in haste in order to provide cover for the ministry's and the minister's failure to do their job and to provide the appropriate oversight of the air ambulance service here in Ontario. Specifically, the legislation was put together before the public accounts committee heard from all of the relevant witnesses and before we understood what the conditions were that led to this air ambulance mess in Ontario in the first place.

How can you possibly expect to develop a piece of legislation when you don't fully know what the problem is yet? Yet that's what this amended bill is purporting to do. To this day, we still don't know what fully happened at Ornge because the government refused to strike a select committee and because they were unwilling to retrieve all of the pertinent documents from Ornge. Even

the Auditor General himself noted in 2012 that Ornge wouldn't willingly provide his investigators with documents.

The fact is, since the McGuinty government created Ornge, the operation has been riddled by mismanagement and scandal, as documented by numerous Auditor General reports dating back to 2005. For instance, in his 2005 audit of land ambulance services, the Auditor General recommended that the ministry conduct unannounced reviews to ensure consistent quality of service. The report notes that although the act allows the ministry to conduct unannounced reviews, the ministry continued to provide advance notice of at least 90 days. Here I'm quoting from the report: "Despite the advance notice, about one third, including Ornge, did not pass their scheduled review the first time."

The ministry's failure to listen and take action following the good advice from the Auditor General in 2005 demonstrates that the ministry has failed to provide appropriate service to Ontarians for years. The warning signs were there, and this failure in oversight and management has only worsened in recent years. In the Auditor General's 2012 special report on Ornge air ambulance, he admonishes the government for failing to meet its oversight commitment.

These management failures have had appalling consequences. Millions of dollars are unaccounted for, and millions of dollars were spent on helicopters that were so flawed that paramedics weren't able to perform even basic medical care like CPR. Then again, there were millions of dollars spent on questionable things like speedboats and motorcycles, wining and dining Liberal cabinet ministers, and let's not forget Dr. Mazza's \$15,000 trip to Whistler. Then, of course, there was Dr. Mazza's compensation of \$1.4 million-plus-plus a year, while he somehow escaped the government's sunshine list. The total cost of the Ornge scandal has yet to be tallied, but it's safe to say, Mr. Speaker, that this scandal has cost taxpayers at least \$300 million.

The financial cost pales in comparison to the human cost. A leaked secret cabinet document entitled *Investigations Concerning Air Ambulance and Related Services*, which was circulated among the Liberals' top brass, confirms that the Minister of Health was warned of numerous problems. The leaked document shows that cabinet ministers knew that patients in respiratory distress could not be provided appropriate care due to the interior design of the Ornge helicopters, and yet the government took no action for more than a year. Despite this, Mr. Speaker, the government was inactive for more than a year, as I said, resulting in deaths and endangering patients' lives.

The first incident occurred on July 15, 2011. The document states, "While en route to an on-scene rotary-wing request, the" critical care paramedic "notified Sudbury CCAC he was unable to perform CPR on the AW139 and would have to accompany the patient in the land ambulance. The patient subsequently was declared dead."

The emergency health branch investigation report of this incident, dated October 4, 2011, states, "It was found that due to the interior of the AW139, which was designed by Ornge staff, continuous quality CPR could not be performed in accordance with ... [basic life support] standards per s. 11(a) under the Ambulance Act. It was also found that patients in respiratory distress could not be provided with appropriate patient care...."

On and on, the leaked document goes, warning the Liberal cabinet that Ornge services could be endangering patient lives.

What is perhaps even more disturbing than how very wrong things have gone at Ornge is that the Liberal government failed to step in even when it became clear that things were headed towards disaster. It's important to note that the minister had the power to hold Ornge and its board accountable for their mistakes from the very beginning of the Ornge saga. In introducing Bill 11, the minister would have Ontarians believe that the minister did not previously have the powers to intervene at Ornge. *Au contraire*, Mr. Speaker: In reality, the minister had the power to intervene at Ornge from the start, under the powers granted to her in the original Ornge performance agreement, as well as under the Independent Health Facilities Act.

With such oversight powers already in place, the minister cannot blame failure to address the problems at Ornge on the absence of legislative authority to intervene.

In fact, the Auditor General reported on several occasions that the minister failed to exercise her authority to respond to the problems at Ornge. For instance, the Auditor General points to funding at Ornge, which increased by more than 20% between 2006-07 and 2010-11, while over the same time period, the number of patients transported by air decreased by 6%. The Auditor General reports that the ministry failed to investigate this problematic activity by neglecting to obtain information on the number of patients being transferred and by neglecting to assess the reasonableness of the cost of the services being provided on a per patient basis.

Mr. Speaker, considering that the ministry failed to exercise its authority as problems plagued Ornge, I'm concerned about the possibility that the passing of Bill 11 will merely assist the government in covering up future scandals and mismanagement. Under Bill 11, cabinet can appoint special investigators to investigate a designated air ambulance service. The bill would also allow the minister to appoint a supervisor to oversee a designated service provider. What's more, these appointed investigators would report directly to the ministry, so instead of providing independent, transparent oversight of Ornge's operation, the government is now going to hand-pick a group of individuals to provide oversight and report directly to those who appointed them. It makes absolutely no sense. These new positions proposed under Bill 11 only facilitate the government's ability to cover up future scandals.

But don't take my word for it. What does the Ombudsman say about the proposed special investigators? He

wrote quite a lengthy letter to the minister, to myself and to the NDP critic, the member for Nickel Belt, on March 1 of this year to express his concerns. I would like to quote from parts of the letter. The Ombudsman states, "Far from being watchdogs, they would operate on a ministerial ... leash."

Mr. Speaker, other proposed measures in Bill 11 may further exacerbate Ornge's dysfunctional operations. For example, in reality, the newly created patient advocate, which the government has positioned as an additional oversight body, is just another Liberal gimmick. As the Ombudsman points out, quoting again from the letter, "He or she resides within the bowels of the organization and cannot be expected to investigate any issue with institutional credibility." I would like to highlight, as the Ombudsman said, that nowhere in the Auditor General's special report did he recommend a new bureaucracy of "special investigators."

Clearly, the recommendations in Bill 11 are not what's needed to provide and improve or oversight at Ornge. The only thing these measures accomplish is to allow the government the ability to cover up any future wrongdoings.

So what can we do to improve oversight at Ornge? First of all, we need to strengthen accountability measures. We need to create targeted accountability measures to address areas where there have been oversight failures. Drawing from the Auditor General's recommendations, we need changes in place to ensure that the amount paid for air ambulance and related services is reasonable for the level of service provided. To do this, the Auditor General recommends that the government renegotiate its performance agreement with Ornge in order to have access to Ornge's subsidiary organizations, of which we now know there were many. The government should also obtain more frequent and informative reports from the Auditor General on the extent to which Ornge's performance expectations are being met. This comes from page 24 of the auditor's report.

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Secondly, we absolutely need to give the Ombudsman the authority to investigate. In order to improve accountability, we need to look beyond government to independent institutions like the Ombudsman to provide this level of oversight. Simply creating new internal oversight mechanisms that report directly to the ministry only reinforces the powers of the very people who failed to act in the first place. We need independent and transparent accountability.

In this province, the Office of the Ombudsman exists to support the Legislative Assembly in holding government accountable. It is there to allow the provincial Parliament to scrutinize government bodies. The government's proposal to create a special investigator on a ministerial leash is a far cry from the independent oversight that's so badly needed. Yet the minister has rejected calls for Ombudsman oversight at Ornge. I question why the minister wouldn't want to bring the highest levels of transparency and accountability to overseeing Ornge

after it has clearly been unable to provide the oversight required.

Thirdly, we need to strengthen whistle-blower protection. Bill 11 is entirely inadequate when it comes to providing the level of whistle-blower protection that's needed. To complement and reinforce better oversight and accountability, there must be a culture where people can report on any misconduct or dishonest or illegal activities without fear of suffering consequences.

At public accounts, we heard that the opposite was true at Ornge. We heard that people were intimidated. People were afraid to say anything for fear of getting punished or fired. And we know that even after this scandal broke, the culture at Ornge went unchanged. For example, shortly after Mr. Bruce Wade, who was a helicopter pilot from Thunder Bay, came and gave evidence before the public accounts committee, he was suspended, and this was by the new regime. This isn't by the old board; this is the new group of people who were directly appointed by the Minister of Health.

To repair such a dysfunctional environment, there needs to be strong whistle-blower protection so that people will come forward without fear of suffering retaliation. Unfortunately, Bill 11 falls short in creating strong or even adequate whistle-blower protection. Bill 11 imposes limits on which individuals are protected and who they can approach with information, rather than providing across-the-board protection for whistle-blowers. And Bill 11 doesn't provide any deterrent against intimidating whistle-blowers by outlining penalties or ramifications. That is clearly inadequate to deal with the kinds of problems that we've seen at Ornge, Mr. Speaker.

I'm disappointed to see the government's failure to recognize this in Bill 11. The legislation ought to provide a formal process through which individuals can go directly to independent institutions like the Ombudsman in order to ensure proper protection and follow-up. We need to create an environment where employees feel comfortable reporting wrongdoings in a way that's safe and confidential.

I've put these three points forward—strengthening accountability measures, giving the Ombudsman the authority to investigate, and strengthening whistle-blower protection—in concert with Ontario's oversight authorities, who are calling for substantial improvements to the Ambulance Act. This is far more than an issue of legislative authority or adequate accountability; this is a matter of providing air ambulance services to the people of Ontario when they are critically ill.

While I do have a few more minutes, Mr. Speaker, I think it would be helpful to read the letter that we received from the Ombudsman, Mr. Marin, in its entirety, because it really shows how strongly he believes that his office should be given the authority to investigate issues at Ornge and to be the place where people can come forward with their complaints.

"Dear Minister Matthews, Ms. Elliott and Mme. Gélinas,

"I am writing further to the first reading of Bill 11, Ambulance Amendment Act (Air Ambulances).

“There is no doubt that any steps to increase the accountability of the air ambulance service is welcomed. Indeed, in the wake of the many stories of maladministration horrors that have plagued Ornge, sound public policy to bring proper oversight to this organization is still sorely needed.

“While moving in the right direction, measures such as the establishment of an Ornge patient advocate and Bill 11’s creation of a new bureaucracy of ‘special investigators’ are insufficient to provide much-needed scrutiny, and continue to shield Ornge from Ombudsman oversight. My office remains unable to address any individual or systemic issues involving Ornge.

“The Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario is a unique resource to support the Legislative Assembly in holding government accountable. It is there to allow the provincial Parliament to scrutinize government bodies. I cannot think of a more persuasive case for this than Ornge.

“‘Special investigators,’ under Bill 11, would enjoy authority similar to that of my office when it investigates the more than 500 ministries, agencies, boards, commissions, tribunals and corporations that fall under our jurisdiction. But there is an important difference: The ‘special investigators’ would report to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. They would not be independent of government. Far from being watchdogs, they would operate on a ministerial dog leash.

“The newly created office of patient advocate has been positioned by the government as an additional oversight body that alleviates the need to extend Ombudsman oversight to Ornge. The Ombudsman is a fully independent officer of Parliament, established by statute with a mandate to investigate individual and systemic issues. By contrast, the patient advocate reports to an Ornge vice-president, not even to the board of directors. He or she resides within the bowels of the organization and cannot be expected to investigate any issue with institutional credibility. When this position was publicly advertised, the first line of the ‘duties and responsibilities’ in the job description noted that the incumbent would be required to ‘[I]nvestigate, resolve, document and report organization-specific patient and visitor compliments and complaints.’ Needless to say, a position that involves reporting compliments back to management ought not be confused with the role of the Ombudsman.

“The recent and proposed changes to Ornge are often put forward as responses to the Auditor General’s March 2012 special report, Ornge Air Ambulance and Related Services. Yet nowhere in his report did he recommend (a) a new bureaucracy of ‘special investigators’; (b) the creation of a patient advocate residing deep within Ornge whose partial responsibilities include being a clearing house for ‘compliments’; or (c) the maintenance of the status quo with respect to the exclusion of any role for the Ombudsman.

“Every year, our office responds to tens of thousands of complaints, consistently demonstrating its value to elected representatives and the public. As ‘Ontario’s watchdog,’ we are the gold standard in keeping govern-

ment maladministration at bay. It simply does not make sense to perpetuate our exclusion in a bill that purports to bring credible accountability to Ornge. I would respectfully request your support in bringing the necessary amendments to Bill 11 to ensure that it meets the purpose for which it was presented to the Legislative Assembly.”

In short, Mr. Speaker, I totally agree with the comments made by the Ombudsman and would urge the government to heed his words and to do all that they can to bring proper oversight and accountability to Ornge, for the benefit of all Ontarians.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Whitby–Oshawa, and I want to commend her, because not only did she speak in a measured and balanced way; she actually offered the government some very real suggestions. She talked about the intimidation and fear that staff from Ornge had, and even about one poor fellow who found himself out of a job after he came to testify before a committee of the Legislature. Quite frankly, we cannot expect that a government—any government—is going to police itself. This bill is a very pale imitation of what is actually needed. She hit upon exactly the right solution, and that is to have Ombudsman oversight and investigatory powers into an organization like Ornge.

And yet, many times in this Legislature, in enormous circumstances, this government seems terrified of the possibility that somebody of Mr. Marin’s credentials, or anybody who occupies that seat as Ombudsman in Ontario—they seem terrified of it. They’re terrified when it comes to what is going to be uncovered at the children’s aid society, they’re terrified of what an Ombudsman might be able to do in terms of Ornge, and they are terrified literally in any place where we think that the Ombudsman could do a good job in the entire MUSH sector; that is, municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals.

1410

Other provinces have utilized their ombudsmen to do a good job, and that is where government truly becomes transparent. This government, though, appears to not want to go down that road. But I do commend the member from Whitby–Oshawa for understanding that it’s having Ombudsman oversight that will truly make government transparent and for the people.

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: I’m pleased to offer my comments on the presentation by the member from Whitby–Oshawa. Having been a member of the public accounts committee in the last couple of years, we’ve heard from many witnesses and we have been reviewing what was Bill 50 before. I believe that now we’re on to Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services.

We’ve certainly had a lot of discussion in this place, and I’m pleased that we have Dr. Andrew McCallum as

the new CEO. He came to the committee, I think, last week. I was looking to get part of the Hansard from that, but I didn't get it in time. But he gave me a lot of confidence. He gave the committee, I think, a lot of confidence that they knew what they were doing. He's been in the medical system for probably 20 years and has a varied background. He's an excellent person to run this. He was very confident at the stage that they were at with things. They've appointed a new patient advocate. They have installed new medical interiors, which was a problem, of course. They have expanded service in Thunder Bay, established a dedicated patient flight service in northern Ontario, and created a whistle-blower policy.

To keep saying that our whistle-blower policy is not strong enough—it's well laid out in the act and it's a very important part of it. It certainly is standard wording, and it's stronger language than we've seen before. The legislation will enable the air ambulance system to have that oversight; we will have that oversight. It's the proper way to go, and we've discussed it a long time. I think it's a good bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. We continue with questions and comments.

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's an honour to stand up and respond to my colleague from Whitby–Oshawa and her quest to get at what's going on here at Ornge.

I'm fairly new in this Legislature, but since I've gotten here, really, this is one of the issues that has dominated this House. We've seen a so-called committee—the resistance to putting a committee together, and, when it finally did come about, delays, recesses: a party that talked about trying to get to the bottom of something, but in actual fact, more than half of the committee time was adjourned just due to, I guess, political tricks, and then trying to tell the public who aren't here and aren't in the committee room that they are actually trying to get to the bottom.

Just after the election, the Auditor General came back and said that he was being blocked from getting information. We had a few opportunities. The leader of the third party had gotten up a year before, had asked questions and was guaranteed there were no issues. Our member Mr. Klees had asked numerous questions; again, he was reassured there were no issues.

But when the Toronto Star broke the story, that's really when the interest came up. We show that there is no interest for oversight. The witnesses we've heard have said that, like all departments—and I guess the people of Ontario would expect this and really hope this is a fact—ministers do have the ability to question and look after their ministries. Is that not an embarrassment, to sit here and say, "I didn't have the power to review"? We wouldn't want to go back to people and let on that we didn't have the power to look after our ministries.

So I think it's just time to get down and put some attention to this. This bill was prorogued as part of their strategy for getting out of information being let loose. I'm waiting to see further.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question and comment, and I look to the member for Davenport.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm happy to join the debate today, of course. I think the comments of the member from Whitby–Oshawa were fair, as all members have been this afternoon. But I've been listening to this debate now for—it feels like—over a year. This is the second time this has been introduced. I have stood up in this House and made comments on this before.

I think members of the opposition have been quite clear about this. Ornge has created a gross issue of trust in the public of Ontario about the way the government runs this province, and it has called into question every agency in this province. Unfortunately, this bill is only going to look at Ornge. I think we've all made it clear that we have fewer concerns about Ornge in the future because it's under such immense scrutiny, but we do have real concerns about this government's track record in the past and how it moves on in the future in terms of transparency and oversight, and the least they could do would be to include Ombudsman oversight of this particular agency.

I think there's an incredible amount of frustration in the general public right now about how government is working in Ontario. I'm proud to be working with members here in the third party, who are committed to actually getting results in this Legislature. I think the public is growing restless, though, and they see a lack of action when it comes to the most pressing issues facing folks.

I was at the Premier's announcement on food earlier this morning. We've been pushing for a food strategy—a strategy that would actually address poverty in this province—for years and years. There's growing unrest over our transit crisis in this province, and yet the public must know that it's up to the government to introduce meaningful legislation, to use their time here wisely. It's their job to bring legislation that we can support, and we would like to see something much more substantial going forward. I think that's not too much to ask.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments, and I return to the member from Whitby–Oshawa for her two-minute reply.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate the comments that were made by the members from Beaches–East York, Ottawa–Orléans, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and Davenport.

When it comes to Bill 11, the overall concern for me is the fact that we're still undergoing testimony in public accounts. We're still hearing from witnesses. We don't really know exactly what happened at the Ornge air ambulance service, so it's very difficult to deal with legislation in front of us now that purports to deal with all of it. When you don't know what the problem is, how can you craft legislation appropriately?

Even the Ombudsman alludes to that when he talks about the recent proposed changes to Ornge that are often

put forward as responses to the Auditor General's report. Well, the Ombudsman doesn't think very much of these proposed changes, and I agree with him. There is a need for independent Ombudsman oversight at Ornge and in other sectors as well. I would certainly agree with the expansion of it.

I had the opportunity to work with the Ombudsman office for several years during the 1980s, so I know that organization reasonably well. I can assure you that there's a rigorous investigation process that one goes through when investigating subjects pertaining to government operations.

I think that any government should want to have scrutiny by the Ombudsman office because everyone does make mistakes from time to time, and it's important to make sure that those mistakes are brought forward, clarified and resolved. So I think it's important to have the Ombudsman involved in this and in other circumstances.

Secondly, with respect to whistle-blower protection, I have had the opportunity to sit in on some of the hearings at public accounts, and I can tell you that certainly from some of the witnesses we've heard from, people who are involved on the front line, there's no question that there's still a lot of intimidation, still a lot of concern about coming forward with any issues or concerns. We absolutely need to make sure that people are protected by strong, effective whistle-blower protection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate on Bill 11?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm quite proud to once again be able to have the opportunity to stand in this House and add my voice to a very concerning debate. We've been talking about this for quite some time. The new bill now is Bill 11, but previously I believe it was Bill 50. It's almost identical to the first time it was introduced over a year ago. It could have already been passed and been dealt with by now, but for four months this Legislature was prorogued so that the government could get its house in order. It's really unfortunate and quite a shame that they felt compelled to take care of their own business but that they didn't spend any time making sure that this bill went further and that this bill did better.

1420

Yes, we're happy that they're moving to bring Ornge under FIPPA and also under FOI, freedom of information. We called for it the first time around, and we're happy that it's there because it's an essential tool for transparency and accountability that will apply to Ornge.

Some of the criticisms of the bill: Has there been a movement forward by bringing other accountability tools to it, such as the Ombudsman oversight, as has been said numerous times already in this House today alone on this debate; making Ornge accessible to committees? It's quite important that we have as many tools as necessary to make sure the government feels that they have the tools necessary, because we've heard too often that they feel that they didn't have those tools.

Most importantly, the government admitted that they dropped the ball and that they could have done more to

prevent this but they failed, and we have seen measures put in place to prevent further Ornges from happening—no, we have not, other than the FOI and FIPPA. We would, of course, like to see the Ombudsman and the accessibility to government agencies.

When I was listening to our critic speak in her opening on this last week, she was stating that she had been subbed into agencies, and they were asking questions and questions and questions on what was happening with Ornge, and they were asking for information to come back. This goes back to 2008, and she said that to this date they still have not received answers back. She has been here for five years, and any time that they asked for information through agencies, that information always came back to agencies. It's questionable as to why not one Ornge question was answered.

We definitely need to see a lot more oversight being proposed for this agency that has been ripped apart and needs to be put back together. Does the government actually think this same kind of disaster is only going to happen at Ornge again? It's doubtful that it will happen at Ornge. There are a lot of people who will definitely be on their toes when it comes to Ornge, but it's not the only place in our health care system where this could be happening. How many Ornges are actually happening in our health care system?

After months of committee hearings, dozens of witnesses and boxes of paper, we're still no closer to understanding how this all could have gone so wrong. The Minister of Health and the Premier would like us to believe that they had no part in creating the disaster that was at Ornge. They blame a faulty accountability agreement, yet they did not even provide the oversight that was prescribed in this agreement. They blamed the fact that Ornge was a federally incorporated entity and that this somehow prevented them from providing the necessary oversight, in spite of the fact that many Ontario hospitals are federally incorporated and this has no impact on their oversight. They blame Ornge, yet Ornge officials have told us that the government was briefed every step of the way. They blame the bureaucracy in spite of the fact that it's clear that MPPs were intentionally shielding themselves from information and there are fingerprints of elected representatives all over this. The government has even tried to blame this on the opposition—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, standing order 23(h) prohibits a member from making an allegation. This member has made a very direct allegation against members of this assembly. That comment should be withdrawn.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would just caution the member for Hamilton Mountain to ensure that her language is within the standing orders and with the standards of Parliament. Thank you.

I return to the member for Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Absolutely. Thank you, Speaker.

They blame Ornge, yet Ornge officials have told us that the government was briefed every step of the way. The government even tried to blame this on the opposition. I've gone there already, but other members decided to involve themselves at this point. This is in spite of the fact that we asked dozens of estimates questions about Ornge in 2010, and these were never answered. Once again, I'll remind the House that our MPPs were asking questions all along the way, and never, ever did we receive answers.

This ignores the fact that the freedom-of-information requests were denied and information such as Chris Mazza's salary was hidden from us. This ignores the fact that the NDP was stonewalled by this government, and then the Liberals have the audacity to turn around and blame the NDP and the PCs.

The minister's story has changed all along the way. First, she told us there were alarm bells raised in January 2011. Then she revised the story and said there were not. First, she told us that she had fired the board at Ornge, and then she told us that she did not have the power to do this and they resigned voluntarily.

What we have seen at Ornge is not just incompetence or mismanagement. Instead, we see an organization that is fleecing the Ontario public, an organization that built a complex web of corporate schemes to benefit the few at the top of the organization.

There was spending going on at Ornge that wasted our precious, precious, precious health care dollars to be buying speedboats for water-skiing, helicopters that could not transport patients. What were these things used for? Did they benefit our patients in northern Ontario who have no other ambulance services other than air ambulance? Did they benefit patients anywhere in this province? I don't think so.

But we also see a government that was, at best, complacent in allowing these self-interested transactions to occur, and at worst, purposely hiding the growing corruption that was allowed to take over Ontario's air ambulance provider because it was benefiting those at the top. In fact, we now know that the government fully knew that Ornge was privatizing some of their services and that this was part of their purpose.

The bill before us was introduced on the same day that the Auditor General released his damning report on Ornge—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize. I missed it initially, but I'm going to have to ask the member to withdraw her unparliamentary comment. She used the word "corruption."

Miss Monique Taylor: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I return to the member for Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: In fact, we now know that the government fully knew that Ornge was privatizing some of their very own services for their very own purposes.

This bill was an attempt to change the channel on the same day that the Auditor General—but this bill falls short of being able to do that. The NDP is very concerned

about the basic transparency measures that are still not being provided. Ornge will not be subjected to the Ombudsman's oversight, and this is really quite a shame because, as we know, there are many, many agencies that really do need the Ombudsman's oversight, including the children's aid society, which I will be bringing forward later this week.

Air ambulances often deal with life and death situations, but sometimes things go wrong. For those families to know that they can rely on the excellent services of the Ombudsman for impartial third-party answers often helps bring closure.

1430

You would think that this new-found desire for transparency and accountability would bring us Ombudsman oversight, but no: Ornge remains outside of the mandate of the Ombudsman. Ornge will also still not be able to be called to public accounts. Why? What reasons can the government give for their reluctance to take these easy and cost-free steps? At this point, we have been given no reasons.

Apart from the matter of the sunshine list, there are many outstanding questions of whether the ministry did their job in providing adequate oversight of Ornge. In fact, in the Auditor General's report on Ornge, he said, "In February 2006 ... the Ministry"—of Health—"committed to set standards and monitor performance against those standards to ensure that the 'end result will be improved care, improved access to service, increasing effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of service, and the assurance of greater fiscal and medical accountability.'"

But the ministry never fulfilled their end of the deal. As the auditor said in his report, "However, the ministry has not been obtaining the information it needs to meet these oversight commitments." The fact is that the performance agreement included so many tools of oversight, but the ministry failed to do its job.

The Minister of Health's main line of defence is that this original performance agreement tied the government's hands; although the ministry wanted to keep Ornge in line, they were first prevented by this inadequate agreement and were lied to by Ornge executives. However, in the public accounts committee on April 25, this issue was explored when Lynne Golding, a former lawyer for Ornge, was called as a witness. The interchange between NDP MPP and member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton Jagmeet Singh and Ms. Golding provides important insight:

"Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The minister has indicated a number of times—and I think you've already answered this, but let's make it clear: The minister indicated that the existing performance agreement was not strong, didn't give her the ability to do the proper oversight. I just want you to respond, given the fact that you've indicated a number of tools that the minister did have, including the ability to issue the notice of default or at least threaten to do so, including the right to terminate the agreement based on the 15 pages of covenants. What's your response to that?"

“Ms. Lynne Golding: Those were all of their rights. In addition, the ministry, as the chief funder of Ornge, had great powers of moral suasion. I can tell you, all of my broader public sector clients work very hard to make sure that the ministry is kept happy with them.”

If the performance agreement did in fact provide the necessary tools of oversight, what does that mean about the government’s role?

Another fond excuse of the government has been that the federal incorporation of Ornge prevented adequate government oversight, but this too appears to be a red herring. It was first contradicted by Peter Wallace, secretary of the cabinet and head of the public service. Then it was contradicted by Lynne Golding, from the law firm who advised Ornge. Here is an exchange between the NDP health critic and Ms. Golding at public accounts on April 25:

“Mme France Gélinas: In layman’s terms, whether you incorporate at the federal level or at the provincial level, like many hospitals do, it changes in nothing the responsibility or the oversight of the government of Ontario, more specifically the Ministry of Health.

“Ms. Lynne Golding: That is correct. There are at least half a dozen hospitals incorporated federally. I think they would all take the view that they are subject to the laws of Ontario and the dictates of the Ministry of Health.”

It seems that the minister uses that they’re incorporated by the feds when it’s convenient for her and when she feels it benefits the needs, which—you either have it one way or the other.

The other argument that the Minister of Health is fond of employing is the idea that her office was deceived and kept in the dark about the goings-on of Ornge. Well, if you don’t turn the lights on, then you are going to be in the dark, because it has been said previous times that she was notified. She was sitting in on the meetings. So there was absolutely no idea she could have been kept in the dark.

But here again, the story doesn’t add up. Mr. Alfred Apps was called—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, a point of order again.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, on a point of order: Perhaps the member from Hamilton Mountain ought to read this stuff that her people send her. Standing orders (h), (i) and (j) prevent her, in her remarks, from making an allegation against another member, from imputing false or unavowed motives to another member, and from charging another member with uttering a falsehood, all of which she has done in her last set of remarks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I don’t find that there’s a valid point of order.

I return to the member for Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker.

I’ll talk about the following interchange between Mr. Jagmeet Singh—

Ms. Soo Wong: What riding?

Miss Monique Taylor: —the MPP for Bramalea–Gore–Malton, and Mr. Alfred Apps.

I’ll quote from Bramalea–Gore–Malton: “You indicated that the government was thoroughly briefed on every aspect of Ornge before any step was taken.”

Mr. Alfred Apps stated, “Correct.”

The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton then stated, “How do you know that?”

Mr. Apps answered, “Because I participated in those briefings as a lawyer, reporting on the structure, how Ornge was insulated, what the rating agency thought of the structure.”

Mr. Apps went on to say that “the government was thoroughly, painstakingly and, in all cases, truthfully briefed in advance of Ornge taking any of these actions.” Once again, convenient.

We know that the chief of staff in the Ministry of Finance received a half-hour briefing from Ornge. We know of multiple conversations and meetings. And if we are going to take the minister’s first story, the alarm bells were raised in 2011. It’s unfortunately evident that no action was taken to address these concerns.

The infamous letter that was copied to 14 senior public servants in January 2011 seemed to have been ignored or not seen by virtually all 14 people. In all of our days at public accounts hearings, we have not heard of any concrete action taken following this letter.

I really don’t have a lot of time, Speaker. The member opposite seems to have run my clock, as I’m sure was his choice—

Mr. Michael Prue: Intent.

Miss Monique Taylor: —and intent to do so. But—
Interjections.

Mr. Michael Prue: Keep going.

Miss Monique Taylor: The whole matter is, this bill just certainly doesn’t go far enough. We’re happy that the FOI is there, that FIPPA is there, but we really need to see the Ombudsman oversight. We need to make sure that he has the powers to be able to look at this agency, and this agency has to come before government agencies so that we can make sure that we have the ability to ask questions on a regular basis and to stop the Ornges from multiplying.

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: I’m pleased to stand and respond to the member for Hamilton Mountain.

The public accounts committee, of course, is continuing its hearings. We’re getting prepared to write the report, and the information will all come out. I don’t think we’re talking about the history of Ornge. The Ontario Provincial Police is involved in a criminal investigation. So I think we have to look at where Ornge is today:

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—hired Dr. Andrew McCallum as president and CEO;

—from October to December 2012, Ornge air crews and aircraft were available to respond to calls 97% and 97.3% of the time;

—93% of the calls Ornge received are for transport between facilities. Currently, 96% of these were confirmed within 20 minutes;

—7% of Ornge calls are scene calls, usually emergency cases. Currently, 90% of these were confirmed within 10 minutes;

—there's a new performance agreement in place;

—significant improvement of accountability and transparency is there by posting executive expenses and salary ranges;

—introduced new policies and procedures on conflicts of interest;

—whistle-blower protection has been a big discussion here. Whistle-blower protection is significant in this new bill;

—appointed an independent ethics officer to receive, investigate and track employee disclosures as part of the new whistle-blower protection policy;

—hired a patient advocate to work with patients and their families to address concerns and advocate for operational improvements;

—installed new, improved interim medical interiors in the helicopters;

—created a dedicated flight service for the Sault-Ste.-Marie-to-Sudbury corridor, increasing patient access to out-of-town treatments; and

—launched a pilot project in Ottawa.

Many things are happening at Ornge. It's all good news—we just heard from Dr. McCallum last week—and this bill is required in order to finish that.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: We've been hearing some important details today, and shocking—I guess we see some more of what some people might perceive as—delay tactics. We're really trying to get to the bottom, and I know Ornge has made some changes. But we hear the changes they've made to the helicopters actually didn't work and put patients in harm's way, to the point that CPR wasn't possible.

Really, what we want to do is see a government that's actually trying to get to the bottom of it, not a government that is taking every opportunity it can to make sure the word doesn't get out. Whether we see the Auditor General, whom I guess the people of Ontario would consider an impartial judge, being stonewalled, trying to get information—interestingly enough, it was only after the election that steps were taken to get that information out, after the urging of the Toronto Star, which broke the story that talked about the issues. The people of Ontario found it quite hard to believe that salaries of \$1.4 million-plus-plus, as our member from Whitby–Oshawa mentioned, went on unknown.

We had some of these people drop off the sunshine list, and we see a government that has no interest in pursuing it, even though we're being asked by a member of the third party and a member of the second party about what the issue was and why, all of a sudden, they took a

huge pay cut, as one might expect when you fall off the sunshine list.

It all goes to the many warnings and the many issues that came up here time and time again. But there was no oversight. Witnesses have said there were all kinds of opportunities. The simple one is, just don't write the cheque. That gets people's attention pretty quick, especially when they're making \$1.4 million.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain for her comments. I'd also like to bring to the attention of this House that from what I've seen in the last five years, this place wastes billions of dollars a year. You want money for health? You want money for education? You want money for all the other programs we could put in? We could easily fund them with the waste this government has done in the last eight years.

I'll give you one perfect example. They wanted to have an electronic health care system for Ontario. I happened to sit on the committee that day. They made their presentation, and I asked them some questions. I asked them what the cost to the taxpayer was, to that point. It was \$288 million in five years, and they still didn't have an electronic health care system for Ontario.

And I said to them, "Okay, how much went for hardware, software, consultants—all the things that are involved in doing this work?" They wouldn't answer me. So my party had to pay freedom of information. I'm a sitting member on that committee, and our party had to pay freedom of information to find out the details.

They came back a month later later, Speaker, and begrudgingly said, "\$100 million we got out of it for the taxpayers." I said, "What happened to the other \$188 million?" Well, guess what? In five years, \$188 million went to Liberal-friendly consulting firms. So I said, "\$188 million? With the technology we've got today?"

Speaker, that's one ministry. There are 22 ministries. There are another 150 agencies, committees and tribunals in this province that are governed by that body over there. I'm telling you right now, they waste billions of dollars.

You want health? You want education? You should have Ombudsman oversight on everything that this place does. You'd save billions.

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

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me say that the administration of Ornge, the board of directors, failed every Ontarian. They failed every Ontarian, and it was embarrassing.

Today I'm standing up to congratulate our Minister of Health for everything she did to correct this situation. I'm very impressed to see, in a short period, everything she did to put this much-needed organization on the right track by changing not just the structure there but the objectives and the mandate of that organization.

I look at that as a former nurse, and I'm very impressed. Everything is centred around the patient—pa-

tient care. For example, we have hired a patient advocate. A patient advocate, for me, is like the Ombudsman, because when something goes wrong, you talk to the management—the first thing to do—but when it doesn't work, then you have the patient advocate. The patient advocate's responsibility is to work on behalf of the patient to make sure that if there is a bad situation, or no proper care—this patient advocate would be there to advocate on behalf of the patient.

The board has also appointed a new CEO, Dr. McCallum. He was the chief coroner until recently—a very dedicated and very fine person who has patient care as his priority.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I now return to the member for Hamilton Mountain for her reply.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you for the comments that came from other members of this House—

Mr. Bill Walker: Mississauga–Streetsville—special commendation.

Miss Monique Taylor: Yes—especially to Mississauga–Streetsville for delaying my debate time.

Mr. Speaker, the bottom line, as the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has said, is, the government has wasted billions of dollars—billions of dollars—on scandals in the last how many years? In the last 10 years since they've been sitting in that seat, we've had eHealth, we've had Ornge, we've had gas plants. Billions of precious dollars that are needed for services in this province have been wasted.

We've talked about poverty in this House. We've talked about the lack of housing in this House. We've talked about the tremendous amount of food banks that are being used across this province and that we have a government that just wastes on a regular basis and then wants to blame everybody else. There's something wrong with that. There needs to be a change.

New Democrats have put forward proposals and priorities to get results for the people of this province. We hope that you will be looking at these come the budget, making sure that we're closing tax loopholes, that we're not giving away more dollars that we certainly don't have. We need to make sure that we keep every single dollar precious and use it to its full ability, and make sure that people aren't falling behind.

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Like I said, Ombudsman oversight of another agency: It couldn't hurt to have him overlooking every single agency in this government.

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

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's a real privilege for me to have a chance to stand in the House today and speak to Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services, a bill that's now at second reading and a bill that I believe and sincerely know has a great deal of merit.

I want to begin, as several of my caucus colleagues and members opposite did in the course of their deliberations and remarks today, by thanking and paying tribute

to the more than 600 front-line employees, the women and men who do the phenomenal work at Ornge. I believe it was the member from Ottawa–Orléans who mentioned earlier that those individuals meet the targets for the quality-of-care metric of 90%. They exceed the aviation safety target. From October to December 2012, Ornge air crews and aircraft were available to respond to calls 97% of the time.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Great story.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's a great story. And I think it's worth noting as well that 93% of the calls Ornge receives are for transports between facilities. Currently, 96% of these were confirmed within 20 minutes. Lastly, on this score, 7% of Ornge's calls are what they call "scene calls," usually emergency cases, and currently 90% of those were confirmed within 10 minutes. So from that perspective, as I begin my remarks today, I just want to say that those individuals who work on the front line of this organization, those women and men, the 600 of them, deserve the gratitude and the appreciation not only of the men and women here in this chamber, but of people right across the province of Ontario because of the outstanding work that they do. I know that they have that support and that gratitude from our minister, from our Premier and from our government.

It struck me, as I listened to the members opposite speak about this particular act, that—as people will know from my maiden speech just last week, I have relatively recently come off the campaign trail, and like all of us, I'm in regular conversation with the people of my community. But I had the chance to go through that formal conversation, or dialogue, known as a by-election, not that many months ago. The one thing that struck me over and over again throughout that—I'm going to be honest with everyone here in the House. This issue, the issue of Ornge—I guess not surprisingly, given some of the media that we've seen on this issue—did come up from time to time. But what I heard over and over again from the people of my community of Vaughan is that, while they had questions about what had happened at this particular organization over a period of time and what they were reading about, what they stressed to me was that it's extremely important for government, regardless of partisan strife, to find a way forward, to find reasonable solutions, practical solutions, that make sense in terms of improving things.

They're not looking to blame. They're not looking to scapegoat. They're not looking to dig up nothing but scandal and dirt and the rest of that stuff. They want to make sure that the men and women they send to this chamber are individuals who are willing to work together, to co-operate, to find the kinds of solutions that they will respect.

Speaker, not just on the health care issue—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize. I would ask the members of the opposition to refrain from heckling the member for Vaughan so that I can hear him.

I return to the member for Vaughan.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Much appreciated.

As I was saying, not just in the health care file, but on a variety of issues, people said to me in my community—and I'm willing to bet, if every member opposite was going to be completely honest on this particular topic, they would say the same thing: The residents of their respective communities want to make sure that we are all working together to find solutions.

And in this particular situation, on this particular bill, this bill represents the culmination of a great deal of work, a great deal of positive work—people on this side of the House looking for the kinds of positive, realistic, practical solutions so that we can make sure that those 600 front-line workers at Ornge are backed up by the kind of infrastructure to make sure that they can keep doing their job in the best possible way.

Over the last number of weeks and days, as we've been discussing these issues here in this House, I've continued to have those ongoing conversations and dialogue with the people of my community. I've been asked the question from time to time: What's happening with Ornge? And I've had the opportunity to let them know about some of the improvements that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is proposing in this legislation, and while they continue to have questions, while they want to make sure that we are aware of the fact that there may continue to be challenges, as there are in any organization like a provincial government, they are heartened, they are encouraged to know that we are moving in the right direction, that we are proceeding in the right way. As a wise person once said, there's never a wrong time to do the right thing, and that's exactly what we've done here with this particular bill.

I could also say—and it's been mentioned, I know, by members on this side of the House over the course of the debate today and previously, prior to this particular legislation—there's a great deal of improvement around governance: for example, Dr. Andrew McCallum being hired as president and CEO, Rob Giguere as the chief operating officer—people with impeccable credentials; appointing a new board of directors led by Ian Delaney; appointing a quality-of-care committee; submitting its first quality improvement plan.

There are a ton of improvements that have taken place with respect to responding to the concerns that the people of Ontario and the people of my community of Vaughan have had regarding Ornge. I think everyone in this House should take a moment to pay tribute to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care because of her outstanding leadership in responding to a very challenging file over the last number of months—incredible work from the minister. I know that she and her staff and her team and the officials at the Ministry of Health continue to work as hard as they possibly can, as all of us do on this side of the House, to make sure that we go forward in the most positive way, that we go forward continuing to make the improvements that we need to make in order to guarantee the residents of my community of Vaughan and the people right across Ontario that we are doing the very best job that we possibly can to make sure we are delivering the kind of results they deserve.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Working 24/7.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Absolutely, working 24/7. The member from Peterborough is 100% right.

In addition to some of the other changes that I talked about a second ago in terms of individuals, we see that the new team at Ornge has a new patient advocate. We have installed new medical interiors in the helicopters. We've expanded service in Thunder Bay.

Interjections.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: You know, Speaker, I will say for members opposite who talk an awful lot about the concerns of northern Ontario, the fact that they would speak over the point that I just made about Thunder Bay speaks volumes about their concern for the north. I sit here and look at the member beside me here, who represents a wonderful part of Thunder Bay, and I know that he's delighted to hear about the expanded service that we've delivered there.

We established a dedicated patient flight service in the north—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): There's rarely silence in this House, but the Speaker does need to be able to hear the member who has the floor, and the member for Vaughan has the floor. I would ask the members of the opposition to refrain from heckling so that the Speaker can hear the member for Vaughan make his presentation.

The member for Vaughan.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly quite the experience. Last week with my maiden speech there was no heckling. It's nice today to actually get into the cut and thrust of things a little bit more. I sincerely appreciate the passionate interjections of the members opposite.

I'm also going to mention what's been established as a dedicated patient flight service, again in northern Ontario. I want to stress that that's an indication that we on this side of the House understand the importance of continuing to provide exemplary service to the residents of northern Ontario, and we will keep doing that.

Interjection: Exemplary.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I know it's a big word.

We created a whistle-blower policy, something that's extremely important to make sure the people who want to come forward with concerns do have an understanding that they will be protected in doing so.

As I mentioned a few minutes ago, Ornge has also submitted its first quality improvement plan, something that indicates very clearly that we are moving in the right direction.

The legislation specifically that we're talking about today takes additional steps in ensuring that we will restore public confidence in Ornge. That's extremely important, as I said at the outset. The residents of Ontario, the residents of my community and those of my seatmate's community, the residents from Scarborough–Agincourt, want to hear about the fact that we're moving in the right direction.

This particular legislation, if passed, if the members opposite can see their way to looking past the partisanship and actually want to work with us in terms of getting real positive results for the people of Ontario, for the north, for the south, for the east and west—if the members opposite are willing to work together with us on this and pass this particular bill, this bill will entrench protections for employees who disclose information to an inspector, to an investigator or to the ministry.

This legislation will allow the government to take control of Ornge in extraordinary circumstances through the appointment of a supervisor or to appoint special investigators, just like we do currently with our hospitals.

In addition, this legislation, if passed, will allow the government to change the performance agreement with Ornge at any time.

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Those are the kinds of bold, innovative, striking improvements that this government has presented with respect to how we can improve circumstances and make sure that the individuals across Ontario have that confidence in our government, continue to have the confidence in our government, and have confidence that what's happening at Ornge is something they can be proud of, as we are on this side of the House, under the leadership of this new team.

I'd also point out that in addition to what I mentioned a second ago, our government is also proposing to make Ornge retroactively subject to freedom-of-information requests, which is completely in keeping with our commitment to transparency across the broader public sector.

Interjections.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Speaker, I sincerely appreciate the enthusiastic support of my colleagues, but that last sentence, I think, bears repeating because it's extremely important.

Hon. Jeff Leal: One more time, Steven.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: We are proposing to make Ornge retroactively subject to freedom-of-information requests, which is in keeping with our commitment to transparency across the broader public sector.

Interjections.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Speaker, for those individuals watching at home right now, whether they're from my community or they're from the communities represented by members opposite: I find it remarkable that members opposite will want to trample all over me saying something as clear and as important and as articulate as what I just said a second ago.

What we are doing regarding Ornge is so that we continue to be in keeping with our commitment to transparency.

Interjections.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: How the members opposite can speak over our desire to make sure that we remain transparent is beyond me, and it's certainly beyond the members of my community.

There are a number of other things that we are doing or we are proposing to do with this legislation that I'm

going to discuss in just a couple of seconds. But there are some other things that I want to point out.

I mentioned a few minutes ago that what we are doing is we've hired a patient advocate regarding Ornge to work with patients and their families, to address concerns and to advocate for operational improvements.

I mentioned the actual technical machinery, the helicopters themselves, a second ago. I should point out that we've installed new, improved interim medical interiors in the fleet of AW139 helicopters, after extensive consultation with front-line staff, those 600 women and men, some of them who are actually working with this equipment on a daily basis. We've been talking to them and we've been responding to their concerns and their ideas, because they are, after all, the ones who have the expertise.

I mentioned Thunder Bay. I mentioned the Thunder Bay base a short while ago, and I think it bears repeating. We took steps to introduce a third line of paramedics at the Thunder Bay base, to help ensure 24/7 service for northern Ontario. Surely that's something that the members opposite, who talk an awful lot, who talk a really good game about wanting to respond to the concerns of northern Ontario—surely, Speaker, that's something that they can applaud, that they can support.

We created a dedicated flight service for the Sault Ste. Marie-to-Sudbury corridor, increasing patient access to out-of-town treatment.

We launched a pilot project in Ottawa on the use of critical care land vehicles in place of a helicopter for certain calls, when deemed appropriate for patient care.

Speaker, when I talk to the women and men of my community, when I explain to them that these are the concrete steps that we are taking to improve the situation at Ornge, they are thoroughly impressed. They understand that our government is reacting in a positive, proactive way.

Over and over again, what they want to know is whether or not members opposite are working together with us on this. I understand concerns, some of which have been valid, over the last number of weeks and months; I understand there are concerns. But when people see that we have concrete, appropriate steps that are being proposed by this legislation, when they see that there's a recent track record at Ornge with the improvements that Minister Matthews and her team have helped make, when they see that kind of bold leadership from the Wynne government on this particular file—Speaker, people in my community, and I'm sure in some of their communities, don't understand why the members opposite wouldn't want to work with us on some of this stuff.

I think it's really important to note as well that we—you know, this actually reminds me a little bit of the government's experience over the last nine or 10 years with the health care sector, generally speaking. Whether it relates to the steps that we've taken in response to what has happened at Ornge or, generally speaking, how we've cleaned up the mess that was left, the mess that we inherited, in the health care sector; whether it relates to

the air ambulance performance; whether it relates to the construction of hospitals; or whether it relates to the firing of nurses—Speaker, over and over and over again, first under the leadership of the member from Ottawa South, the former Premier, and continuing under the leadership of the current Premier, the member from Don Valley West, Kathleen Wynne, our government remains committed to delivering the kind of positive results in health care, in education, with respect to crucial infrastructure. And, Speaker, I would argue that the air ambulance system we have in the province of Ontario—Ornge—is a crucial part of that health care infrastructure that I'm talking about.

You can see, Speaker—anyone can see, looking at this in an objective way—that we have taken steps repeatedly over the last nine years to make sure we have the kind of improvements needed so that the people of Ontario have confidence in this government. In every conversation I've had in the six or seven months or so that I've had the chance or the privilege to serve the people of Vaughan, it's clear from the people of my community that they understand that, while no government can expect to be perfect—no government is expected to be perfect—governments that, along the way, find appropriate ways to improve situations should do so.

Over the last six or seven months since I've had the privilege of being elected to serve here in this hallowed chamber, I've seen us do this with Ornge—I've seen us do this with a variety of other situations and other issues. I know that the people of my community are responsive to the fact that we are moving in the right direction, the fact that we've brought a new team online, the fact that we have a new board of directors, the fact that we are delivering the kind of technical equipment that the employees—those 600 front-line employees I talked about and paid tribute to at the outset of my remarks—need for them to continue to do the job they do so well for the people of Ontario.

When people in my community hear that we are taking these steps, they say, “While no government may be perfect, at least we know that at Queen's Park we have a government that's responsive. At least we know we have a government that responds to our concerns for greater transparency, that responds to the concerns that we express around how tax dollars are spent.”

They appreciate the fact that, through legislation like this, we try to reach out to the members opposite from both of the other parties. I think I wouldn't be surprised in some cases to learn that perhaps there's some disappointment that the members opposite, while it's perfectly acceptable that they continue to express concern, wouldn't want to jump on board being supportive of some of the initiatives we have taken and that we continue to want to take with this particular legislation. I'm sure that individuals across my community—individuals representing their communities—would want a better sense of why they feel it's more important to be obstructionist and more important to be critical in a very highly partisan way instead of finding ways to work

together with our government, to work together with the Minister of Health and our Premier to engage in that kind of dialogue.

Not everything we put forward every single day of the week will be perfect. We look forward to having their input, but only when the input is done in a constructive way, when the input is done in a manner that's consistent with trying to provide the best possible results for the women and men of Ontario.

That is what we have done with this legislation. We are moving in the right direction. There are a number of improvements; I mentioned them a second ago. Providing additional service to the people of northern Ontario—I know that was something that was extremely important to Minister Matthews and her team, and to all of us here on this side—to make sure we continue to meet those metrics that I outlined at the outset of my remarks, to make sure the individuals working at Ornge can perform to the highest possible level.

What we are doing with this legislation is doing our very best to provide the people of Ontario with a sense that we are moving in the right direction, with a sense that we have listened to the concerns expressed by the people to make sure we are providing as much transparency as is required and should be required for this kind of undertaking, but at the same time making sure that the employees at Ornge have the technical machinery, equipment and know-how so that they can continue to provide that excellent level of service, like they've done over the last number of years.

As I said earlier—as I said, in fact, at the beginning—people in my community and in every community across the province of Ontario don't expect perfection of government, but they expect solutions. They expect that government is going to work together regardless of stripe, regardless of colour, regardless of whether one is a Liberal or not. They want to make sure we move forward in the right direction, that we co-operate and that we find those meaningful, practical solutions so that we can continue to deliver those kinds of results. It's what we're doing here with Ornge; it's what we've done over the last nine or 10 years as we've invested more in health care, as we've found creative ways to invest more in education, as we've done with respect to investing in crucial public infrastructure.

When I think of my own community in Vaughan—the fact that we are tantalizingly close to being out to tender for our new Vaughan hospital, the fact that we have a subway that's under construction, the fact that I continue to advocate daily, it would seem, for the extension of Highway 427—I know that I am able to do these things, that I am able to advocate for these kinds of projects because I am part of a government, and we have a government here in Ontario today that understands the importance of investing in the province and investing in the people. Not a narrow-minded government, not a government that's unduly partisan, but a government that understands it is important to work with the opposition, but above all else that it's important to continue to drive

results—not just any kind of results, but positive results. It's the reason I was proud to stand as the Liberal candidate in the by-election in Vaughan back in September. It's the reason that it was such a delight to knock on the thousands of doors in my riding, to let them know about the vision that we have for the future of Ontario. It's why I continue to be very proud of our government, very proud of the Minister of Health, and why I'm so happy to support Bill 11. I ask the members opposite to join us in supporting this very important piece of legislation.

1510

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to offer a response to the member from Vaughan. He spoke, in his opening remarks, about moving forward, and he wanted to find solutions. I find it striking strange, then, when we ask for a select committee to be able to get to the bottom of this issue and truly be able to understand what exactly were all the mistakes they made so we can prevent them, that they block that at every step of the way.

I'd offer, perhaps, a suggestion that maybe they should consult us before they make all these boondoggles, to help them get their way out of it, and maybe we could get along with things that are more proper.

I can't understand, in this bill, why they want to add another level of bureaucracy. They want to add special investigators. I think, on behalf of my caucus, the only special investigators we're ever going to vote for, in consultation with that government, is to look into their whole operation over there on the other side and not just Ornge—special investigators to look at the whole Liberal issue.

He made a comment, a quote, and I'll actually read it back to you: "There's never a wrong time to do the right thing." Well, I would like to just throw the door open to those horses that they've slammed the door on and ask them to do the right thing in that issue. I'd ask them to reverse the decision on how they've done Ornge boondoggles. And let's talk about the gas plants, perhaps. Maybe they should actually, as my colleague says, fess up when they've messed up.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: You're right, my colleague from Renfrew-Pembroke-Nipissing. Did I get it? Whatever. It doesn't matter.

They need to come forward. There's another old quote that maybe they should listen to, and that is, "The truth will set you free." Maybe, as my colleague from Renfrew says, they should just actually apologize to the people who aren't getting the services because of all the money they're wasting.

Their exemplary service: Speaker, I would hate to see what would happen if they ever lowered the bar even further than what they have now. Their Liberal definition of moving forward, I think, means strapping horses to Ornge helicopters and sending the billion-dollar boondoggles off into the vaporous atmosphere.

Speaker, we need positive results. If we weren't wasting so much money, the people of Ontario would get better health care and better education.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Vaughan, because he's a fairly new member and we all want to hear the wit and wisdom that he has and is going to impart upon this House.

I listened to it, but I have to tell you, he talks about this new team that he's on—I think he was forgetting that he was on an old team which was identical to the new team—and he wants us to believe that this bill somehow is going to expunge all of the difficulties that the Liberal Party had in the last number of years.

Part of about being a guy who has been around here for a while—I've heard it before. I heard when the Premier before this one stood in his place and talked about how there was no difficulty at Ornge. I heard it before when the minister stood up and feigned that there was nothing at all. I remember George Smitherman standing here in his place and talking about how Dr. Mazza was one of the finest people in the entire province and how he was going to do great things at Ornge. We heard all of those things before.

You know, when you're a new guy, I guess, you have to think that you're going to be making some great, giant change. But these changes have only come about because this government got caught. And because they got caught and there was nowhere else to go, we have this piece of legislation.

When the legislation was introduced—if it was really, really important to the Liberals opposite, then why did they prorogue the House and kill it? They prorogued the House and killed this piece of legislation.

Now they've brought it back with a new statement that freedom of information is going to be put into the bill. My goodness. We've been using freedom of information for the last five or six years, trying to get at the bottom of this, and every single time, you and your colleagues around you have killed it. This is coming far too late—far too late—to convince me.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise, to be given an opportunity to speak in support of Bill 11. I want to congratulate my colleague from Vaughan for his opening remarks in this debate.

I think I want to remind my colleague opposite, as well as my own colleagues here, of the fact that men and women across Ontario depend on this House to pass appropriate legislation. We know that men and women every day—the paramedics, the front-line workers and staff at Ornge, along with the pilots—are doing a great job. We want to recognize that. The other thing is that Ornge is moving forward, whether the opposition party agrees or not. This organization is moving forward on the right path.

Our government is committed to transparency, accountability and collaboration with our partners, whether the opposition party agrees or not. We have evidence that the proposed legislation will have transparency. We know that the new performance agreement will strengthen government oversight and ensure accountability. We also recognize that the proposed Bill 11, if passed, will ensure more transparency of executive salaries and expenses. Furthermore, it allows whistleblower legislation, because at the end of the day, I hear very attentively in the House that the opposition party wants to protect those who come forward with concerns. This proposed legislation will do that.

You can have all the faces across there. I can see your face, opposition member. You cannot deny that you're making faces at me. I want to say, Mr. Speaker, it is the right thing to do. You know I will be saying it because it is the right thing to do.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm proud to rise in response to the member from Vaughan. Unfortunately, I thought he was a new broom in the closet here, but from my understanding he was an EA of a former member from Vaughan, so he should be very much aware of the issues that have been going on in this House.

We have here legislation that is a remake of Bill 50, which some people called the red herring bill, not the orange herring. It just talks about how they're not interested in getting to the bottom of anything. We hear about the whistle-blowing legislation. If they were truly serious, we would have had the select committee that was talked about. They wouldn't have prorogued to get this off the table.

The contempt issue was our way of getting at information because freedom of information wasn't working. It took that contempt issue to finally force them to release documents. I guess it's the threat of going to jail that sometimes makes people reconsider their conviction on different issues. It shouldn't have to go there, and it shouldn't take the resignation of some of the ministers across who never acknowledged that there was an issue in the other files. But we see that here.

We see the Auditor General, we see the Ombudsman wanting to get involved and not being allowed to get involved in this issue. We hear a government that wants to get to the bottom, but we don't see the actions that would allow them to get to the bottom. We hear whistleblowers who have come forth and been threatened with letters of lawsuits, firings and intimidation.

This is a record for this government that—

Mr. Paul Miller: Brutal.

Mr. Jim McDonell: It is brutal.

We're looking, as are the people of Ontario, to find out what happened here. Unfortunately, it's not just this file; it's many files. It's eHealth, it's the power plant issues. It just goes to speak of the waste that we've seen—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. That concludes the time questions and comments. We return to the member for Vaughan for his reply.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I'd like to begin by thanking the members from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound; Beaches–East York; my wonderful seatmate, the member from Scarborough–Agincourt; and the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for their comments.

It's interesting, Speaker: As I sat and listened very, very careful to what I heard from the members opposite, it struck me that they hadn't paid very much attention to much of what I had to say over the 20 minutes that I was up speaking. I say that because they seem very clearly, on that side of the House, to be only interested in looking backwards.

1520

The member from Beaches–East York talked about whether I'm part of a new team or not a new team. He clearly failed to hear that I wasn't talking about this government being a new team; I was talking about the new team that was in place at Ornge, the team that's performing as well as it is—those front-line workers, the 600 people and more who are doing a wonderful job; the new board of directors. It's clear to me that they would rather look backwards and try to dig up imaginary scandals and play that game instead of actually trying to move forward in conjunction with our Minister of Health and with our Premier and with our government so that we can make sure that we're continuing to deliver those kinds of results that I talked about.

I'm not quite sure about the communities that some of the members opposite represent. I know what's important to the people of my community. I know what's important to the people on this side of the House. And what's important to the people of my community and the people on this side of the House and their respective communities is that when we walk into this chamber, we try our very best to work together to come up with the kind of solutions that will deliver positive results for the people that we have been elected to serve. That's what this legislation does. It's what informs the work of our Minister of Health and our Premier and everyone on the government side of this House.

I would have thought—and I'm sure the women and men watching at home today would have thought—that with all of the positive steps that we're taking in this legislation, the members opposite would have gone past their own narrow partisanship and supported this legislation. They still have time to consider and to do so.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate on Bill 11?

Mr. Toby Barrett: While I do appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 11, the Ambulance Amendment Act, I want to point out that my opinion really hasn't changed from the previous bill, the pre-prorogation bill, Bill 50. What sticks in my mind: Meet the new bill, same as the old bill.

This government's duck-and-hide really has done nothing to change this new bill, this new proposed

legislation, from, in my view, nothing more than a thinly veiled attempt to cover up for an unsupervised, government-paid free-for-all at Ornge air ambulance services, obviously putting patients' lives at risk and obviously costing taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars.

Before I go there, and after sitting for a number of months on the public accounts committee, I think it is important to turn the clock back and to take a look at what has happened, to follow the trail. I know there's been some criticism of looking back on what went wrong. I refer to this as evaluation, something that's very important to determine why there has been this lack of oversight, this lack of transparency, this lack of accountability.

If you go back to 1977, at that time Ontario established the helicopter and airplane base in what was called the aero-medical program associated with Sunnybrook. They contracted out with private operators, not only for aircraft, but for pilots, for paramedics. In 2005, this government, the Ministry of Health, announced it was appointing a not-for-profit Ontario air ambulance corporation, and it didn't take very long before this was renamed Ornge.

Health care in Ontario, and in this case specifically with respect to emergency services and air ambulance services, does have tremendous strengths, and none greater—and we've heard this many times over in this House—than the strengths of the dedicated, very highly trained paramedics, the doctors, the pilots and other professionals who essentially devote their lives to delivering care.

However, we've seen the challenges preventing these people, essentially, from fulfilling their responsibilities. Number one priority: Ensure the safe and timely transport of patients needing air ambulance, needing essential life-saving services.

What we have seen, if you look back at what has gone on at Ornge, is an insult to these volunteers, the professionals, the pilots and the paramedics—as I've said, those who do an excellent job, a job that was made only more difficult under, really, what became a rogue agency driven to expand, allowed to operate while this government and this Minister of Health failed to ensure that ever-important oversight function, failed to ensure that transparency was continuing, and failed in a very crucial management function: the function of control and accountability.

The minister had these powers with or without the new bill and with or without the old bill.

In 2006, the ministry committed to set and monitor standards to ensure that the "end result will be improved care, improved access to service, increasing effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of service, and the assurance of greater fiscal and medical accountability." That sounds great when I read that statement. Yet, here we are today; we're debating a bill that the government claims will now give them the oversight powers. Speaker, these are powers they actually had all along.

Since 2006, Ontario's Auditor General has pointed out, while funding to Ornge for air ambulance had increased more than 20%, the number of patients served actually went down 6%. On land, Ornge received \$65 million to perform what's referred to as inter-facility land ambulance transfers. They projected these transfers at 20,000 annually. Ornge ended up only conducting about 15% of that projection.

Over five years, Ornge received \$730 million from the health ministry and they borrowed another \$300 million, with virtually no monitoring and no oversight. The \$300 million was borrowed to finance, among other things, the purchase of 12 new helicopters, 10 new airplanes and 11 used helicopters, as I understand, basically to kind of fill in until the new ones came on order. What do you do with 11 used helicopters once the new ones arrive?

Speaker, what's important here is that the minister had the power to stop this. She had the oversight capabilities to ensure that this sorry tale never commenced in the first place. This came up again and again during committee hearings on public accounts. If you take a look at the testimony on committee, you'll see many examples of officials confirming this government's oversight responsibilities, responsibilities they had all along.

I think of an exchange between Frank Klees, the member for Newmarket–Aurora, and the head of emergency services. Mr. Klees asked for any indication—he was referring to article 15 of the original performance agreement that was struck between Ornge and the Ministry of Health. He asked if this would relieve the Ministry of Health of its oversight responsibilities. Mr. Bates, the head of emergency services, was very clear: "I agree that the Ministry of Health and the emergency health services branch have and had oversight responsibilities and that oversight responsibility was basically set in line by the Ambulance Act, by the performance agreement and by the transfer-of-payment accountability directive."

We now realize that article 15 of that original performance agreement gave the Minister of Health powers of intervention, and yet we saw no intervention. We hear of more waste and more unaccountability from the minister as she presently argues for more powers. It's really a bit of a show-and-sham, Minister.

I think back to just last week at committee, where the replacement for Chris Mazza confirmed that Ornge air ambulance has gone in the red by \$2.5 million. This is according to Dr. Andrew McCallum. He's the president and chief executive officer of Ornge. Dr. McCallum commenced his duties on January 21, 2013, so he has been on the job eight or nine weeks now. During his testimony, Dr. McCallum talked about the challenges he's facing in turning things around. Number one, as he said: "The first challenge is that we need to focus our core businesses.... More than 60% of our transports occur north of Sudbury, and it's a responsibility we take very seriously." There is an evident "north-south divide that exists."

1530

I raised this in the House during a two-minute hit a couple of weeks ago: I'm reminded how important air

ambulance services are in southern Ontario. I represent the rural south. On March 6 at 9 a.m., our public accounts committee reconvened. This was after four months of prorogation. That very same day, at 9 a.m., an Ornge helicopter arrived just outside of my hometown of Port Dover. There had been a horrendous crash. A cement truck had rolled over a car. I know this because my daughter witnessed this. She was actually the only witness. She phoned 911. It had just happened. A land ambulance came along, taking a young patient to the hospital. They asked my daughter to sit in the ambulance with the patient. They ran down into the ditch to deal with this. Volunteers showed up. They ran down. Volunteer firefighters were on the scene within minutes. It's a very important service in the rural south.

I think of those volunteers on that road that morning, the good Samaritans, the professionals. They ran down there to do what they could. These people do not get very expensive speedboats. They do not have access to courtesy government taxpayers' money, Harley-Davidson motorcycles. They are there to try and do the right thing.

Dr. McCallum added, "The second challenge that we must meet this year is that we must refresh and update the strategic plan for the organization," and he indicated that "if one doesn't know where one is going, one won't get there." In this case, Dr. Mazza took this government on a bit of a trail somewhere that the taxpayers and the potential patients and clients of the service would not want to be.

And he added, "Our strategic plan will refocus our vision, mission, values and goals and objectives." Again, we have to go back; we have to do this armchair analysis, if you will, take a look at the previous planning process. Planning is part of management, and the lack of planning thereof is something we have certainly seen in this sorry tale.

Where was the Ministry of Health's vision, their mission, their values and goals and objectives, but most importantly, where was the action? Where was the oversight on this to ensure that those kinds of objectives were met?

Just to refer back to Dr. McCallum's presentation, "The final challenge," as he described it, "is our financial position, as it always is in the public sector. The transport of critically ill patients in the air and on land is, by its very nature, an expensive endeavour. On top of that, we are dealing with the implications of financial decisions made under previous leadership. While handling this situation will not be easy, we are fortunate that there are real opportunities to correct these problems."

Well, here's the problem, Speaker: Ornge is over budget. It's gone in the red, and now we discover they have handed out \$2 million in employee bonuses. Speaker, \$150 million a year flows into Ornge, as I've indicated, money that was wasted on Harley-Davidson choppers, a speedboat, kickbacks for helicopters not suited to conduct CPR. Now government is awarding employee bonuses of \$2 million, leading to a \$2.5-million deficit situation. So here we are. There's more

work to be done as a result of things that are going on virtually as we speak.

Given the history, I continue to state my concerns over how this bonus bailout, this deficit, will affect these crucial operations we're discussing today with our air ambulance service. How will that affect patient care? Where will the money be found? Will there be cutbacks in other essential services to pay for these bonuses?

CEO McCallum went on to testify before our committee about operational problems. For example, he referenced remedies to the lack of suitability of recently purchased aircraft for essential medical procedures. Again, we think of the CPR that could not be done on those helicopters, with the way the interior had been designed.

He told us, "We ... implemented the interim medical interior in our fleet of AW139 aircraft"—these are the AgustaWestlands—"and the process of finding a permanent solution is well under way." So in spite of what we might have heard today, that problem hasn't been fixed yet.

These are the same helicopters that Ornge ambulance purchased from AgustaWestland for \$144 million and, under an amendment, increased it to \$152 million. This was followed up and we learned of a \$6.7-million reported kickback to Ornge's "for-profit arm." I will point out that all of this is now part of an OPP investigation. I'd hope to refer to this shortly.

These helicopters were delivered. They were fraught with design issues, specifically concerning loading and unloading of patients, and concerns around patient care or patient safety concerns. The design issues specifically included, first of all, the height of the stretcher in the interior of the helicopter that the interior wasn't high enough to accommodate; secondly, the ability, or the inability, of paramedics to access and treat a patient, not only hampering CPR but advanced airway management, intubation and other procedures. Ornge went back to the manufacturer and advised them of the design problems. The firm claimed that the project was completed in accordance with the specifications provided by Ornge.

Again, how do these things happen? How do we end up with \$152 million worth of life-saving helicopters whose design itself impedes life-saving procedures?

Mr. Klees, my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora, referenced the vital design problems in reporting—he indicated to Dr. McCallum an accident that occurred July 17, 2011.

Again, Mr. Klees: "Upon arrival at scene of a motorcycle accident, the single primary care paramedic on board the helicopter informed local land EMS that due to the interior design of the Ornge helicopter, he would be unable to perform CPR on a patient. The patient 'was transported by land ambulance and died en route.'"

As Mr. Klees pointed out, "That interior that cost us millions of dollars was designed by an individual who is still on your staff"—referring to the CEO—"and has responsibility to oversee the design of those interiors."

Mr. Klees's question: "Have you ever had discussions with him about this issue and how he could have allowed that to happen?"

As to figuring out what went wrong, Dr. McCallum told us, "I've not gone backwards and said, 'Why did this happen the way it did?' Again, it's a valid question and it's early days for me, but it's something I will definitely be pursuing, because, as you correctly state, my most fundamental goal is to ensure that we don't make mistakes that cost people their life or limb, and we should do everything we can to minimize that possibility."

Again, Speaker, evidence of lack of oversight continues. I find it surprising; I find it really confusing. We learned last week that the Minister of Health has yet to even meet with Dr. McCallum. Just last week in committee, Dr. McCallum was asked, "How many times have you been asked to meet with the Minister of Health to receive a report and to discuss the progress ... being made" on these operational issues, these financial issues?

I quote Dr. McCallum: "With the minister to date in the eight short weeks I've been involved in the organization, I have not met with her yet regarding"—and Mr. Klees interjected: "I'm sorry?"

Dr. McCallum: "I have not met with her regarding the matters"—

Again, Klees interjecting: "She has never asked you to meet with her?"

Dr. McCallum responded: "Not to date."

Mr. Klees: "You see, that's disturbing to me, because one would have thought that, given the excuses that we've had over the last number of months from the minister, the reason that things were allowed to slide is because she didn't know about what was going on. She told us that she actually asked for meetings with Dr. Mazza and he didn't show up. I would have thought that one of the first priorities that she would have would be to have regular meetings with you to be briefed on the progress that you're making." So Dr. McCallum said that he did not have a meeting with the Minister of Health.

1540

I raised this issue in question period. I asked the health minister, first of all, "Do you know who's in charge here?", adding "You have not met with the new CEO, Andrew McCallum. You never did meet with the old CEO, Chris Mazza." While I did query whether the minister was hiding behind the sofa or trying to sweep this under the carpet, the minister countered the committee testimony, indicating, "I have met with Mr. McCallum. In fact, I've seen him earlier this week."

This raises, again, yet another issue: Who do we believe? This kind of a sorry tale is not new in the tale of Ornge. Meet the new bill; it's really the same as the old bill. I don't think it's really going to accomplish very much, and it's going to require much more stringent measures than what we see before us today.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand up and speak to this bill, G11, the Ambulance Amendment Act.

I think it's important to start from a positive place in this debate. I think that if we say that, the provisions that mimic the Public Hospitals Act and the whistle-blower protection act may be of some value. Moving forward, I think that we've actually seen that there's a genuine need for whistle-blower protection in a number of agencies and organizations across the province. This is something that, I think, has some value.

That said, I think that this bill is being implemented after the fact, and it's unlikely that most of these new powers will be of any use at Ornge. Additionally, all of the provisions are aimed at the designated air ambulance provider, which is currently, obviously, Ornge, and would do nothing to prevent future scandals in other government-funded organizations.

Our health critic from Nickel Belt has been vigilant on this file, and she has shared serious concerns about the wide-reaching regulation-making powers that will allow the government to substantively change performance agreements without any consultation or negotiations. This has never been done before and could set a dangerous precedent.

It's been obvious, actually, from the beginning that this bill, in many respects, is a way to take a step backward and try to undo some of the damage. I think that there's a genuine concern that it's a public relations exercise.

Often, voices outside of this House have even greater weight. I think that when the Ontario Ombudsman, André Marin, expressed such strong concern around his office not having oversight over Ornge—I think that's a voice that we should be listening to; I think that's a credible source.

I think that, going forward, I have some serious concerns with this legislation, in that it will not necessarily prevent another scandal or truly meet the needs of Ontarians that have clearly been articulated from the public.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate today and give some remarks based on the remarks that were recently given by the member from Haldimand-Norfolk. The previous speaker, the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, I think started in a constructive vein, and that's what I think we all need to bring to this House on this piece of legislation.

Clearly, there were some things that have happened here that we wish hadn't happened. They happened on our watch, as a government, and we've brought forward now some measures that are going to try to rectify that. I think any government in its history will find that there will be times like this, where you find that a branch of government or an arm of government is doing something you would prefer they weren't doing, or you find out that something has happened that shouldn't have happened.

Certainly, people in Oakville—and, I can't help but think, people around the province of Ontario—how they sort of measure the effectiveness or the responsiveness of

a government is how they react after that: What do they do to ensure that this will never happen again? I think the Ambulance Amendment Act that's been put forward is a good start. I think it's a good starting point for debate. It's got to go through the committee system, obviously, but I would say that Ornge is now on the right track forward, that it's doing the things that were anticipated it would be doing when it was first put in place.

It is a fantastic organization. The people who work there are the people who arrive on the scene when you need them most. When you find yourself in a situation, either on the highway or at home or wherever the accident has taken place, or whether you're experiencing a health challenge, these are the people who arrive and these are the people who come and try to save your life, basically.

We need to ensure that this organization is running top-notch. This piece of legislation that's been put forward, I think, is worthy of the support of all members of the House because it does just that. Members may have their own opinions on what has happened in the past. We've heard that, and I respect some of that. I wish it hadn't happened. The fact is we're moving forward here. This piece of legislation deserves support from the House.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to rise today and comment for a couple of minutes on the remarks of my colleague from Haldimand–Norfolk. I think he took us through a pretty good overview of what led up to the implementation of this bill. Like the member from Haldimand–Norfolk said, "Meet the new bill; same as the old bill." He gave us a good explanation of why this legislation has been brought forward. I think a previous speaker from our party, our critic from Whitby–Oshawa, talked a lot about oversight and what the Ombudsman would like to see, and about involving him more and his office a lot more so that this type of scandal can't happen again in the future. As she said, and as Mr. Barrett, the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, also referred to, the investigation is still ongoing, so how can you bring in any proper legislation until you know exactly what you're trying to correct?

They also touched on inadequacies of the oversight that was in place when this organization was first set up. It reminded me of my old role that I used to have in industry. We called it the six Ps: proper prior planning produces preferred products. Obviously, there was a lot of inadequacy placed on Ornge when it was first implemented, when it was allowed to run amok. The spending scandals and the scandals that the member from Haldimand–Norfolk and a number of other speakers have also commented on just allude to that.

I think, as was pointed out, Ombudsman oversight would certainly help. We need protection for whistle-blowers. They talked about one individual at least who found his job terminated after he came and spoke, and I think that's a real injustice.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the rest of the afternoon and the rest of the debate on Bill 11.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Toronto–Danforth.

Applause.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to my colleague for the recognition.

Today we're debating Bill 11. As you are well aware, Speaker, we've been here before. There's a new number on this bill, but it's really identical to the bill that was introduced almost a year ago.

For four months the Legislature was shut down. There were four months of opportunity for people in the Ministry of Health and for legal counsel to go through this bill, respond to the comments that had been made in previous debates and improve on what was obviously a very hasty effort when it first came forward. One has to ask: In fact, did improvements get made? Did the lessons learned in debates that had been presented before prorogation get incorporated in this bill? I have to say, Speaker, and I have to say to everyone who is following this debate, no. We were left with the product that was put on the table before Dalton McGuinty shut down this House.

We're happy that Ornge is going to be brought under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and so subject to freedom-of-information requests. We called for this. We called for this the first time around and are obviously happy to hear that this essential transparency and accountability tool will apply to Ornge.

But there are a lot of other criticisms of this bill that weren't addressed. There was no movement on bringing forward Ombudsman oversight or making Ornge accessible to questions in committee here in the Legislature. Most importantly, the government didn't admit that they dropped the ball.

1550

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments for this round. I return to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk to reply.

Mr. Toby Barrett: This afternoon, as we debate this tangled web, we attempt to untangle the web. We do this on public accounts—there will be hearings again this week—and debate will continue in this House. I think we all realize that we can avoid and prevent the kind of waste we see here, literally billions of dollars of waste if you look at this issue and several other scandals before this House, but particularly with this failed, out-of-control agency, Ornge.

Some ideas have come forward just in the two-minute hits from the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, the member from Oakville, of course the member from Sarnia–Lambton and the member from Toronto–Danforth. It's important that we continue to discuss this. Stay tuned: This discussion will continue for a considerable period of time into the future. We have to get this right. We have to not only identify the lack of oversight, the lack of transparency, the lack of accountability; we have

to come forward with measures for oversight and transparency and accountability.

The OPP investigation—a very significant investigation. We have been assured by Commissioner Lewis before our committee that if he comes up with evidence, if his officers come up with evidence, if there are charges to be laid, we will know that. One year from now, if there are not charges to be laid, he will certainly report back to this government, to the Ministry of Health.

This investigation is far from over, Speaker.

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

Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been now more than six and one half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I wish to inform the House that we wish to continue debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Toronto—Danforth.

Hon. John Milloy: I wanted to hear you.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My thanks to the government House leader, whose appreciation of my oratorical skills apparently knows no bounds.

Speaker, I'm going to be drawing extensively on the commentary made by our health critic, France Gélinas, when she had the opportunity to discuss this a short while ago. She started off by saying that it felt like déjà vu all over again when she rose to address this bill.

People shouldn't be surprised by that. This bill has been tabled in the House before. Madame Gélinas went through it extensively, critiqued it extensively, and had mentioned at the time that it came through that the Auditor General had presented his report, a special report on an investigation into the value-for-money audits at Ornge in March 2012. The same day, the government responded with the Ambulance Amendment Act—the bill we're debating yet again this afternoon.

When that bill was first presented, it was very clear to our health critic that it was a bill that had been assembled in haste, a bill that was the result of a large amount of cutting and pasting on computers in the ministry. Ornge had been making headlines in the papers and the headlines of all the media non-stop since December 2011. It had been a frenzy of information, and much of that information damning and often proceeding to be more sensational in the latest reporting than the reporting that had gone before.

All of that showed clearly that the government had not succeeded in its basic function of oversight of that organization. That was utterly apparent. So the Ambulance Amendment Act was pulled together in haste and presented to this House. I note, Speaker, that even though it was assembled in haste, once again it's being presented in essentially the same form as it was presented in initially.

Right away, our health critic, France Gélinas, went through it and demonstrated the flaws in the bill. As she will say herself: Fair enough; that's the way the process works. Governments or private members bring forward bills. They have them debated in the House. Their weaknesses are subjected to scrutiny and, hopefully, to correction; their strengths are, hopefully, recognized. It goes through a first reading, a second reading, then goes to committee, and the hope is that when it goes to committee, when there's an opportunity for detailed debate on different elements, the bill is improved.

But frankly, our health critic finds that the improvements were not made. We were presented with a flawed bill back when it was originally put before this Legislature, and we are now again presented with the same flawed bill.

Our health critic was more than willing to be patient. She has worked in this field, in this area, for a long time, deeply drawn into the investigation of Ornge—a member who raised questions on this issue regularly. She felt, at the time when the bill was first introduced, "Let's see the process unfold. We'll make the bill stronger." That was in 2012. Speaker, we're now in March of 2013.

This place, this Legislature, was shut down—prolonged—by the Premier for four months: an extraordinary opportunity. Suddenly all the time constraints, all the immediacy of having to get something out the door in a hurry, were gone. The Ministry of Health, senior officials, senior people in the legal department, had an opportunity to review the speeches that had been made, to listen to the suggestions from the official opposition, from us, the third party, and from backbenchers in the government, to take what had been put forward in a very hurried and very slapdash way and iron out the kinks, and to bring something forward that was far more substantial—and then, with a new and improved bill, an opportunity for debate to move things forward.

But, Speaker, even though the House was shut down, even though the immediacy of the day-to-day need to bring legislation to this chamber was set aside, improvements were not made. An opportunity was wasted. The same flawed bill that was presented in response to a media crisis is presented in this chamber a year later. Time that could have been used to actually address the weaknesses in the bill wasn't used. Suggestions that were made by the official opposition and that were made by the NDP were not reflected in this bill as it has been re-presented.

Madame Gélinas gives credit to the minister. She says she was very insistent that Ornge be open to freedom-to-information requests so the public could get at some information about what was going on. That hasn't happened yet. She's hopeful that the minister will move in that direction. On this, our critic gives the minister benefit of the doubt.

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She, our health critic, delved into why this bill was flawed. What she wants to do first is a from-the-treetop sort of view, a from-the-mountaintop view of what's

going on here. What she relates is that the ministry has said they didn't have the tools to deal with the crisis at Ornge, so what they're doing with this bill is giving themselves the tools. If you were to look at this and use different language, you could say the ministry was giving itself a stick so that they could apply some pressure to Ornge when it was behaving badly. What they have done with this bill is given themselves a larger stick to hit Ornge when it is not behaving the way it should behave.

The problem, Mr. Speaker, was never with the size of the stick. The problem was that the government didn't act. It did not act on warnings it was given from multiple sources. It didn't matter how many whistle-blowers went to them. It didn't matter how disturbing the stories were that were told. All of that was set aside. The fundamental problem was not lack of leverage on the part of the government but lack of attention. It didn't matter how many reports were submitted to the government. It didn't matter where the money was going. They refused to act. They had measures and tools they could have used.

We in the NDP had bureaucrats who came to us and say they were willing to and had put forward steps to bring back Ornge, but they were told not to. So it's not because this government didn't have leverage, that they didn't have the power and authority to bring Ornge into submission; it was that they refused to use the power they had. That is where the flaw, the failing, is found in all this.

Precisely why they didn't use those powers, that authority, the jury is out. Madame Gélinas has her own opinion, and I think there is a lot to recommend her analysis of what went on. She notes that the Liberals wanted this model of an air ambulance service. We've had air ambulance in Ontario since 1977. It's not a new service. Our health critic lives in northern Ontario. She looks after an area that is mainly rural. She has 33 communities in Nickel Belt, and most of them don't have ambulance services except for Ornge—except for air ambulance.

The service has been in place for many decades, but the Liberal government had this idea that they were going to privatize air ambulance service. They were going to allow air ambulance services to make money, to run like a business because, for some reason, running like a business is better than being accountable to the public. Speaker, we have seen problems coming up from this. In the energy field, we've seen it on a regular basis. We're seeing it now in the whole area of gambling and casinos, where this push to privatize OLG is leading—hopefully, in the minds of OLG leadership—to a proliferation of private gambling right across Ontario.

She says, "I don't know where these ideas come from," and I agree with her. But with Ornge, they failed miserably. It failed, and it has shaken the confidence in the air ambulance system of every single Ontarian. And that is a very substantial piece of damage, Mr. Speaker. When Ornge drives their ambulances in the riding of Madame Gélinas, people write messages in the dust on the sides of the ambulance. They're offensive messages,

because people are offended at how they have been taken advantage of, at how a public service has been twisted in the service of a few individuals.

The front-line workers, those who actually deal with individuals in life-and-death threatening situations, have to deal with public anger. That is not fair. They did not commit the errors. In fact, many of them tried to make this government and politicians in this chamber aware of what was going wrong. Unfortunately, this government didn't listen to them. Those men and women continued through difficult times to deliver as good a service as they could. When half the fleet was not staffed, when morale was in the basement, and when they could see the rot at the top of the organization, they tried hard to tell everybody, "Look at what's happening with this organization. Look at the top. Things are going wrong. Action is needed." This government did not listen until it burst into the headlines. Only at that point was any attention focused on the problems with our air ambulance system at Ornge.

So now we have a service that is constantly facing demoralizing and discrediting comments. It used to be that people were very proud of our air ambulance service; at the moment, they're not. They use the term as a commentary on corruption and on rot in government.

Speaker, our health critic, when she goes through these realities, asks, "If the government is given a bigger stick, do we really think this is going to build confidence?" She believes not—doesn't see it happening, not part of the program. The public doesn't care about how big a stick the minister has, because this government had the stick in the past and didn't use it. What they want is a change so that their interests and concerns, their complaints, are part of the equation. They want to make sure that if they see something going wrong, there will be a response; that if a whistle-blower comes forward, that he or she won't lose their job, and that the complaints and the dangers that they raise will be acted on. They want to be included in this.

How do you include people? How do you make them feel that they're included? The first step, obviously, Speaker, is to give jurisdiction to the Ombudsman. Who do people naturally turn to when they have a complaint about government services, when they feel that something is deeply wrong? Well, in fact, this government of Ontario, over a long period, has set up and supports an Ombudsman. They're there to hear complaints about government operations running badly, to shine a light on them so that those problems can be addressed. When the Ombudsman is contacted, investigates, comes back and says to people, "I'm sorry; I understand there's a problem here, but I don't have jurisdiction," that doesn't build confidence. People feel that events are out of their control—untouchable, unreachable. They expect for this kind of service that the Ombudsman's services will be available.

How else can people get involved? Through freedom of information, through access to information. If all those whistle-blowers, all those on the front lines and their

families, who knew things were wrong at the top had been able to file a freedom-of-information request, and had been able to get back the information, we would have had a very different set of events.

The NDP filed many freedom-of-information requests for Ornge, from 2009, 2010 and 2011. What kind of response did we get? We got nothing. We had been hearing about the problems; we had been raising those issues. We tried to get the data, the facts, the reality, through freedom of information—not available.

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We knew things were going wrong, but as we tried to get the proof—and frankly, Speaker, when you have seven whistle-blowers from seven different parts of the province coming to you, it's a pretty good indicator that there's something big going wrong. You can see that there's truth to the story. But when you dig in and you're denied information, using freedom-of-information access, when the Ombudsman is ruled out because he doesn't have jurisdiction, then people start understanding that they're up against a brick wall, that there's an agency, a part of the government, that they can't access that clearly is operating outside of all control and authority.

We tried to get this information in the committee hearings called estimates. For those who aren't familiar with them, every ministry, every year, can be called before a committee to justify its spending. The estimates committee: a tough committee; a tough committee for the ministers who come before it; tough for those who are trying to get answers.

We put forward questions and we tried to get answers in estimates. We didn't get anything back, Speaker. The Ombudsman had no jurisdiction; freedom of information returned no answers; and when we went after the ministry in the estimates committee—one of the checks and balances in a democratic system—that wasn't available either.

That, for our health critic, was quite unusual. She had been an MPP for about five years. In estimates, you don't get all the information you want, but generally speaking, you can get a fair amount of information. Ministers are there; bureaucrats are there. You have to press hard; you have to be persistent. Sometimes you have to be noxious, but you can get information—except on this matter. None of our questions in estimates were answered—not one. Months went by; years went by. It didn't matter that the Clerk of this assembly tried to get the answers for us. They were not forthcoming.

Speaker, we need better than government-by-headline. This legislation needs to be amended profoundly.

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

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to respond to the member from Toronto–Danforth and have a couple of minutes this afternoon on the Ambulance Amendment Act, 2013.

First, perhaps, just a quick comment on the theme that has been percolating through to the surface in the conversations, primarily from the opposition, when it comes to

the issues of prorogation relative to legislation that's in the Legislature, and the idea that's trying to be put forward that we've been prorogued for four months: I think it's fair to remind the viewing public that in fact the prorogation affected 14 or 16 sitting days. As I've said more than a couple of times in my home community of Thunder Bay, I'm more than happy to compare the records of this Liberal government over the last nine and a half years when it comes to how many sessional days have been sat, as compared to the previous two governments when they were in power. I'm happy to do that.

But I do want to speak more specifically a bit to the bill. We do know that there were some very serious issues that arose at Ornge. I think ultimately what the government will be judged on is how they responded to those issues. When people misuse public funds, when they conduct themselves in a way that is not in keeping with what is expected by the public, I think it's appropriate and it's expected that the government responds in a very serious way.

I'm not sure how much more significant a response you can make as a government—beyond legislatively bringing in measures that, hopefully, will mitigate or prevent it from happening again in the future—than by calling in the Ontario Provincial Police to conduct an investigation. We've done that. That investigation is ongoing.

We have retroactively brought freedom of information and transparency to this particular file. Between those two things, I'm not sure how much clearer a response we can give to the public that we're very serious about what's going on there and that we're trying to do everything that we can to see it doesn't happen again. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: I comment on the presentation by the member from Toronto–Danforth. I will mention, as a member of public accounts, that there are two MPPs from the NDP who are members of that committee: the member for Nickel Belt and the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton. I think everyone in this House is aware of the contribution of the member from Newmarket–Aurora. The committee is chaired by the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka.

If anyone here thinks that this story is over, they would be wrong. This past week we heard testimony from OPP Commissioner Chris Lewis, who indicated that if charges are warranted, if there is evidentiary reason, we will hear about it 12 months from now. This is far from over, this issue, and that's the way it should be. We will be hearing more testimony this coming week.

Our OPP commissioner: I found his presentation reassuring. He indicated the investigation is under way. It's under the direction of a detective-inspector from the criminal investigation branch. This is a major case manager. He's heading up a team of investigators from the OPP's anti-rackets branch, the corruption unit, which includes a forensic chartered accountant. They're bring-

ing in additional investigators from the anti-rackets branch to supplement, and they have conducted interviews with more than 50 people to date. They've taken a look at 22,000 pages of documents and more than 500,000 emails.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I think that this is a really interesting debate because it actually illustrates how differently we see this bill, G11. I think the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan has said, “You know, we’ve taken some measures to try to make some changes, and I don’t know what else you expect.” It think that it’s reasonable for us to expect measures that actually are going to work. To date, we haven’t seen that in G11.

One thing, though, that I’m very supportive of—our whole party is—is the whistle-blower protection. We’ve seen it; we’ve seen, actually, case after case across the province of front-line workers who have the lived experience in situations of high crisis and high stress, and they’ve come forward. They’ve tried to tell the powers that be the truth. Actually, their argument is solely around patient safety, and those people haven’t been listening.

My colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane had illustrated last week nine health care workers who have come forward, raised their concerns and thus are now in a court situation, and the taxpayers are on the hook for that. I think that whistle-blower protection is a good learning lesson that’s contained within G11. I think that our basic concerns around this piece of legislation, though, have to do with basic transparency measures. Ornge will still not be subject to Ombudsman oversight. Things do go wrong in the field and I think that the clients, the patients, the citizens of this province, should have a clear recourse to face some of those issues and concerns that they’ve had. Without Ombudsman oversight I fail to see how they’re going to have a clear path to justice in many cases. So we still have very serious concerns with regard to G11.

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

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I didn’t have the opportunity to sit on public accounts, but I’ve heard and I said in the past that we have, on the front line, very dedicated employees that work there. They are the pilots, they are the paramedics, they are the doctors, they are the receiving hospitals, and I must congratulate them for all the good work that they have done.

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But again, I’m saying the past management of Ornge have failed all of us, and we’re very sad about that, because a lot of public money went into it. But what I’m pleased about is to see what the Minister of Health has put forward to try to correct these situations. I feel that Ornge is well into a new chapter and is on the right track, the right path forward, under the new leadership.

I have all the confidence in the new leadership and especially in the new CEO, Dr. Andrew McCallum. I had the opportunity to work with him for more than 14

months. I could see his dedication and management style and his willingness to improve the situation at Ornge. I was at his going-away party, and I told him that he was a very brave man to take over, but he has all the confidence that he is able to put Ornge on the right track.

We need this service, because as I said before, patients that go onto these helicopters are not in the best shape, so we need to make sure that we have all the safety and all the best-qualified people to take care of them. Merci.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): And now we return to the member for Toronto–Danforth for his two-minute response.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My thanks to the members who stood to speak: the members from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Haldimand–Norfolk, Kitchener–Waterloo, and the Minister of Community Safety.

Speaker, a few things: First, the fact that this government prorogued the Legislature for four months was, in and of itself, a huge insult to the people of the province. But beyond that, to have not taken that opportunity to pull together the suggestions for improvement in this bill, so that what we have before us reflects the arguments and the analysis that was put forward previously in this chamber, is irresponsible. Time was wasted, time that could have addressed shortcomings in this bill so that what we were debating here today and in the days to come would be of greater consequence for Ontario as a whole.

The member from Haldimand–Norfolk is correct: This matter is not over. My understanding is that public accounts is now writing a report on what they found. The OPP is still investigating. This bill should take the best that comes out of the public accounts report, should have taken into account the analysis that was put forward previously, and will need to be amended when it gets to committee.

I thank the member for Kitchener–Waterloo. Again, she emphasized the need for the Ombudsman’s oversight. Let’s face facts: There will be governments for decades to come in this province who will deal with a different nature of problems, different kinds of problems. Having given the Ombudsman oversight is another layer of defence for the public in ensuring that when things are going wrong, no matter which government it is, that those issues can be addressed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I’m pleased to recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you very much, Speaker. I’m pleased to address Bill 11. I think the last time I was speaking about this, it was Bill 55. Perhaps it would be useful to start with what, to me, are a couple of the really significant things that are in this bill.

First of all, because Ornge is governed under the Ambulance Act—and for the most part, ambulance services in Ontario are run by municipalities and therefore sort of the management ultimately is subsumed by the Municipal Act—there was no authority for the Ontario government to appoint a supervisor. We have lan-

guage in the Education Act, the Municipal Act, the Public Health Act—various other acts, in fact—that allows the provincial government to step in.

The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound questioned why one would have a special investigator. In exceptional circumstances, in all these acts, the first step is for the minister to appoint a special investigator, who looks into the situation, reports back to the minister, and if the investigation shows it is warranted, allows the minister to then go on and appoint a supervisor, which, *de facto*, means that the supervisor, and through the supervisor the minister, takes over the operation of whatever service it is. So to bring the air ambulance act with respect to Ornge into that parallel with hospitals, for example, is very important because it provides the minister with a power the minister never had with respect to Ornge.

The other thing that it does is it specifically allows, in the performance agreement, for the government to actually change the performance agreement. There was no legislative authority to do that before. In various health sectors where there are transfer agreements with various other health partners, the minister already has that authority to change the performance agreement as situations come to light. That was never the case with Ornge. This legislation provides that authority for the minister to change the performance agreement when there is clearly a problem with the existing performance agreement.

Those are two very important things which Bill 11, the current version, has in common with Bill 55, the previous version.

But I think it's important that we not think that nothing has happened in the intervening year. When we stood here a year ago, I talked about this bill as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care at that time. A lot has happened in that intervening year. We've heard a lot of testimony. We've learned the extent to which there was a deliberate setting up at Ornge by the then CEO, Dr. Mazza, of a corporate structure which was designed, quite frankly and deliberately, to take money from the public purse and transfer it through for-profit corporations into private pockets. That whole understanding of what was going on there has been frightening, I would say, and it's certainly very, very disturbing that a public service would be doing this.

An interesting transition in the testimony of the old board, from the first appearance of the original chair to the second appearance—where it went from a defence and claim of full knowledge of all activities on the first appearance, to a second appearance where the original board chair admitted, in fact, that there were payments going to Dr. Mazza which he knew nothing about and which the board had never authorized. That was information that has come to light.

We learned that the lawyer who set up the original performance agreement, Lynne Golding, who was the wife of the then Minister of Health, Tony Clement—we

found, when we looked at the legal billings, that as far back as the winter of 2003, Dr. Mazza, before this corporation was even set up, was seeking legal advice on what you actually had to reveal on the sunshine list and what you could park off the sunshine list. You could see that from the billings. You could see from the billings that Dr. Mazza, before this was even set up, was seeking legal advice on corporate structures and how you could set it up in various ways, which we unfortunately eventually saw come to pass. We found out that the performance agreement as originally drafted by Lynne Golding's law firm in fact gave Ornge veto power over any changes that the Ministry of Health requested in the performance agreement. That was the bad stuff that we found out.

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In the meantime, there have been a lot of good things going on at Ornge. As my colleague mentioned, Dr. Andrew McCallum has been appointed as the permanent CEO of Ornge. What's important about that is that, yes, he brings the experience as the chief coroner of Ontario and obviously knows a lot about emergency medicine and emergency management, but he's also trained as a military flight surgeon, which means that, for the first time, we have as the CEO somebody who has both medical emergency and flight training, all in the context of the practical applications of flight to medicine. That's an important first.

When we look at some of the issues that came to light, we heard a lot about problems in the Thunder Bay and northern Ontario area. As a result of that testimony, Ornge has taken steps to introduce a third line of paramedics at the Thunder Bay base to make sure there really is 24/7 service in northwestern Ontario—a big improvement of service.

We heard over and over again, and this was highlighted in the auditor's report as well, about the training level of the paramedics, were they really advanced-care paramedics? A lot of the front-line paramedics told us with great frustration that they had taken a lot of courses in the way of moving from basic standard to advanced-care paramedic but they couldn't get time from Ornge to complete the training. The training has been revamped so that people actually can get that training to upgrade to advanced-care paramedic, which means that the training of the crews has dramatically improved over the last year because, in fact, the training has improved.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: The money's not going to pay for trips and vacations.

Hon. Liz Sandals: It's not going for trips and power-boats anymore. It's going to actual flight training or paramedic training.

One of the things we heard about in testimony was whether or not the helicopters and planes were licensed to fly into the US when that was necessary. Over the intervening time, the Federal Aviation Administration—the FAA—in the United States has approved Ornge for helicopter flights into the United States to transport patients to and from US destinations.

Interestingly, this wasn't just an issue of the new helicopters. What's come to light is that under the old way of

doing things, the helicopters never were licensed to go into the US. That's something new that has been improved and is now a service to people all over Ontario.

As a result of these improvements—and these are all areas on which the Auditor General commented in his original report—this is the latest data: From October to December 2012, Ornge air crews and aircraft were available to respond to calls 97% and 97.3% of the time respectively—way up in performance; 93% of the calls Ornge receives are for transport between facilities, and 96% of these calls were confirmed within 20 minutes—way up; 7% of Ornge calls are scene calls—that's the emergency stuff that we think of. Currently, 90% of these calls are confirmed within 10 minutes—performance way up. So Ornge is now a first-class air ambulance system.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: Speaker, it's a pleasure to stand up and offer some comment; I don't even know where to start, really, in two minutes. But, you know, a couple of times I heard from the minister, "It's not going to trips and boats anymore." Well, why did it ever go there? Who was looking after this? Who was paying attention? People are going without hip surgery, they're going without doctors, they're going without front-line care, and yet you're saying "not anymore" about the boats. You're probably going to tell us there are no more hidden helicopters in hangars, but I think there might be out there.

Where was the oversight? Will that money be paid back by anyone? The deputy minister involved received a raise despite all of this going on, Minister. I didn't hear too much about any of those pieces.

Why does this bill not want the Ombudsman involved? You want to build in yet another layer of bureaucracy but you don't want the Ombudsman, who has jurisdiction over many, many, many other organizations, and yet it's all—you just don't want it. That raises flags all over the place—orange flags, red flags. It just makes me very, very nervous.

You gave Dr. Mazza personal loans. Where was the oversight there? I'm very concerned about all this. You talked about Dr. McCallum. It's passing strange that you take someone who was the chief coroner when there were investigations going on and you move him in to the CEO. Is that kind of not putting him right in the headlights, as a deer, of this whole investigation? It's very strange that you just want to be able to deflect everything around you. Mazza was under the bus. I think Dr. McCallum better be very nervous, because if we start getting closer—and we will in these committee hearings—we'll finally get to more of the truth and more of it will come out, and then we'll throw him under the bus. It's just very disheartening.

We would have thought that there would have been a lot more accountability and a lot more transparency built into this bill; there's nothing there. There need to be a lot of amendments before we would ever consider it. Thank you, Speaker.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The Minister of Education raised some concerns and some issues. I think it's also important for us to recognize that a piece of legislation doesn't take the place of a government's responsibility. Regardless of what legislation exists, the government always has a responsibility to ensure that every dollar that is publicly derived from our taxpayers is spent efficiently and properly, with the right oversight.

There is ample evidence in the committee that there were a number of red flags that occurred for years and years that were not given attention, not responded to. In fact, the NDP had asked questions regarding the salaries, which were the key to unlocking the scandal in Ornge. Those questions were asked years and years ago in estimates committee by the NDP.

Whistle-blowers had contacted the ministry raising concerns about what was going on at Ornge. The corporate structure, in all its complexity, was disclosed to the government, including the Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Health and various other ministries were briefed specifically regarding the for-profit and the not-for-profit structures. Meyers Norris Penny conducted an audit that flagged many of the same issues that the Auditor General flagged. So the issue is that while we may bring a bill forward that may have some improvements, it doesn't have the Ombudsman oversight that we'd like. But it doesn't nullify the fact that the government has a Responsibility. If you're paying the bill for any transfer agency, you must oversee that agency, make sure they're doing the right job. There is ample evidence that the ministry simply did not do their job, did not oversee Ornge, did not provide that oversight that they have a responsibility to do. And that's really the problem, because there may be a number of Ornges going on across Ontario still, and we need to ensure there is oversight over those as well.

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: I think the member from Guelph, the Minister of Education, certainly got on the record today with regard to the important elements of Bill 11, the air ambulance act of the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, there's no way of getting around this: The government of Ontario put trust in a number of people throughout this organization, and those people fundamentally betrayed that trust. When that happens, no government oversight is going to—if people decide that they're going to break that important sense of trust, that's going to happen.

But having dealt with that in terms of we put a lot of new people in place—we hired Dr. Andrew McCallum as president and chief executive officer, a man of impeccable integrity. He's trained as a military flight surgeon; former chief coroner of the province of Ontario. Any talk about throwing this individual under the bus is just absurd; it really is. That says a lot in terms of this gentleman and his impeccable integrity.

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We have a new board of directors in place—Ian Delaney, who has a distinguished record in corporate Canada with Sherritt International. We have appointed a quality-of-care committee under the direction of Dr. Barry McLellan, president and chief executive officer of Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, another individual of impeccable integrity.

We're turning this ship around. It's a lot like eHealth. There was a report the other day about eHealth: Nine million Ontarians are now hooked up to eHealth in the province of Ontario. It's moving forward, a great success, and there will be individuals within this chamber that will take advantage of eHealth in the months and years to come.

The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has taken the appropriate action. We're turning the ship around, and it's going to benefit patients in the province of Ontario.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I have been listening to the debate this afternoon, and there seems to be a lot of congratulations on the other side of the House: "Don't worry; everything's been taken care of. This bill will fix the mess at Ornge, which we didn't know anything about in the first place."

Well, to begin with, they either knew or should have known that there were problems at Ornge long before they surfaced. Secondly, as I stated during my remarks a little earlier this afternoon, how can you possibly fix something when you don't actually know what the problem is? It goes back to that. This is just a very hasty, cobbled-together piece of legislation that attempts to deal with some of the problems that they think exist. But it's not comprehensive, because we haven't completed the testimony from witnesses in public accounts; there are many more people that wish to be heard on this subject, and we need to make sure that we hear from all relevant parties, because there has been some pretty startling testimony that's come out from what we've heard so far.

We need to make sure that all of the witnesses who do come forward come forward in a sense that they won't be reprimanded or suspended, as we saw with one of the helicopter pilots—sorry, a fixed-wing pilot who appeared before the committee earlier on. We need to make sure that they can come forward, give their evidence clearly and not be worried that there are going to be repercussions.

We need to make sure that the bill actually responds to the real issues here. We've heard from the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman feels very strongly that his office should be involved in the investigation of any kinds of complaints and that it's not going to be enough to have these special investigators that are going to be appointed by the Minister of Health because, in fact, they are going to report right back to the minister's office. It's hardly the kind of independent oversight that we need to find in any investigations of any complaints here. The Ombudsman

stated it, and most of the parties here, except for the Liberal members, have reiterated the need for independent oversight. Again, I can't stress strongly enough that we need to make sure the Ombudsman has the ability to intervene here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return to the Minister of Education for her two-minute reply.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'd like to thank the members for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Bramalea-Gore-Malton, the Minister of Rural Affairs and the member for Whitby-Oshawa for their comments.

I must say that I'm a little bit confused by some of what I hear from the opposition. On the one hand, I hear, "You should have fixed it sooner." On the other hand, I hear, "This bill is premature, because you should wait until the public accounts committee writes its report." From what I understand, the public accounts committee is still hearing witnesses; I don't know what their schedule is for completing their report, but you can't have it both ways, folks. You can't say, "You should have fixed it yesterday," and, "Wait for the report," because those two things are not consistent messages.

The other thing that I find very disturbing is a senior civil servant of the highest integrity like Dr. McCallum, who has done nothing but serve this province with great dedication, skill and integrity over the course of his career—to have this threat from the official opposition that their goal is to throw Dr. McCallum under the bus. And I quote, from Hansard, that they're going to throw Dr. McCallum "under the bus." That is totally unacceptable, for a civil servant of the greatest integrity; I reject that attitude totally.

We agree with you that what Dr. Mazza did is unforgivable; it is getting fixed. Minister Matthews has shown extraordinary leadership in getting Ornge back to the service it needs to be for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate? I recognize the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I just want to clarify, before I start my formal remarks, that the last speaker—I just want to clarify, first and foremost: You're in the market of throwing people under the buses. Let's talk Bentley. Let's talk Chris Mazza. He was the expert; he was the shining star. But he's no good now; it was all his fault.

A further point of clarification: What we were trying to say is, if you didn't make so many mistakes, if you didn't make these boondoggles, you wouldn't have to have these worthless pieces of bills to come to the table, to be wasting our time. We'd be talking about more things.

Now I'm going to move into just a little bit of history on this and why this bill is even having to be at the table.

There's a \$700-million cost to the taxpayers of Ontario; there's money wasted. I think we admitted that we're not going to waste money on boats and trips—"anymore" being the key word—motorcycles, and helicopters that you can't do CPR in. So we'll just set the

tone there a little bit, that if you hadn't created this boondoggle, you wouldn't have to be confused about what we're asking you to do.

That money could have been, and should be, going to front-line health care. It should be going to people for their operations, for testing, for doctors, for nurses, for X-rays. It shouldn't be being wasted on all of these other things.

It's very interesting. My colleague from Newmarket-Aurora, I believe, in his original remarks on this—and I'm going to just quote a little bit from what he said: "The Ornge air ambulance scandal is a textbook example of why people are cynical about politics ... politicians ... bureaucrats and the role of the private sector in delivering public services." And he's absolutely right.

You know what? It sometimes makes me wonder if maybe that coalition of the NDP hadn't been involved—because they are deathly against any of these corporations making profits as well—although I'd like to check sometime to see if they accept any donations from these horrible, horrible corporations that make profit.

As the Speaker keeps saying and the Premier keeps saying, we need to rise with the ship. Well, if we didn't have to be dealing with all of this poor management—poor lack of management—we would be talking about more positive things, because we'd be giving the services to the people that they deserve.

We need to be talking about how Ornge is, and continues to be, dysfunctional. They talk about this new board, but it's kind of like talking about a new government that keeps doing the same things. We keep not getting information. We keep being swept under the carpet, it seems. "Oh, just forget the past. Forget the past. Let's move forward." Well, you know what? That's not the appropriate role of the opposition. We need to hold them to account. We need to get the truth for the taxpayers of Ontario. That is exactly what our job is, and we will not ever flinch from doing that. We will stand solid, to ensure that we always are asking the hard-hitting questions, because that's the taxpayers' money that they are wasting on the opposite side.

It seems almost that this failure of the minister, the failure of the deputy minister, the failure of the bureaucrats—that they just want to divert attention from this. We need to have clearly defined responsibility of the minister. She keeps saying that now this new act is going to give her the powers that she needed. It's unequivocally clear from day one, from the Auditor General, that she always had the ability to stand up and do it. She should have had the oversight.

The Minister of Education referenced that there will be no more boats and flights and all this other stuff. Why did that happen in the first place, if the minister was truly paying attention and was on top of the file? Where was the deputy minister, if the minister was too busy? Where were all that myriad of bureaucrats? Someone should have stepped up. But you know what? There probably were people in the bureaucracy that want to step up, but they knew that they'd throw them under the bus, because there is no whistle-blower protection for that.

This originally came to us as Bill 50. There was extensive debate and input. They did not incorporate a single one of those changes into this version. They're either blind to the problems, they refuse to see them, or they're complicit, and I'll leave it to the House and the people watching at home to decide which that is.

At the end of the day, we can't continue to just say, "Sorry, we messed up again. We'll do better next time. We'll raise the bar." We need to ensure—this bill needs to ensure—that we go down to the very deepest level to understand how it happened, so that we can correct it and prevent it from ever happening again.

The biggest part of this bill should be about accountability; it has not been addressed. The Liberals have failed in their oversight responsibilities. We still have not received any form of an apology to the people of Ontario for the money that's been wasted and the services they're not getting.

1650

The bill should be giving oversight to the Ombudsman. Why do they refuse? Why will they not even accept even a glint of giving this to the Ombudsman? I think for 500 other agencies, he has the ability to look into and provide oversight, an arm's-length critique and understanding of that. No, they want to have—unfortunately, typical of the opposite side—another layer in this. They want to put in special investigators that would report to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I'm not certain how that's going to work, particularly when these whistle-blowers have gotten thrown under the bus before.

They want to put in an office of the patient advocate and in there somewhere they said it's so they can receive the compliments. Well, I'm not certain, if I've read any of this file correctly, that they're going to be getting much in the way of compliments, considering that you can't do CPR in the helicopter that they custom-designed for Ornge.

I'm just not certain why we would build all of this in. Why would they just not fess up, step up and take responsibility for their actions on how poorly they did this? It should have been the first amendment to this bill; they should have been giving the Ombudsman arm's length, from the government, the ability to have oversight for this.

We should note that, again, the original Bill 50 and all associated time and resources were wasted when Dalton McGuinty prorogued for partisan reasons. We wouldn't even be having this discussion, perhaps, if we'd have been there and, again, if we'd have gone right back and designed this organization properly.

You know, there's lack of oversight; there's lack of accountability. What happened to Deputy Minister Saād Rafi? No repercussions. All of this has happened. They're somewhat, I think, now trying to now admit a little bit that there have been some things they could have done a lot better, but he got a raise. Speaker, that's going in the wrong direction—someone who didn't take accountability, who didn't step up, who actually didn't step forward and apologize. The right thing to do would

probably have been to resign; they award him with a raise. It's just not right.

I move on to kind of the transparency that I'm concerned about, or lack thereof, with this bill. They want, again, as I mentioned earlier, to put in special investigators who would answer to the Minister of Health. Why do we need more special investigators? Why do we need more special investigators if it's properly thought out, properly planned and you give your staff the due diligence to do their job properly and you put whistleblower protection in that actually allows those people that see things going wrong to step out without fear of recrimination?

Speaker, it's unbelievable. The Auditor General's report did not suggest in there—he did not say we want a new bureaucracy of special investigators. He did not say to create another layer of bureaucracy. Why are we going down this path? Why don't we just actually step up, give the proper reasons for what has gone wrong, admit your mistakes and work with us? We keep hearing every day in this House, “We want to reach out. We want to work with people. We want to do the right thing.” Well, here's an opportunity again.

You know, it really makes me sad that at the end of the day we continue to go through all of these discussions in here and yet the same things happen over and over and over again. We hear the same old thing: “We're sorry. We can do better. The bar is raised.” They talk about all the flowery stuff that they're doing so well, but really let's get down to the facts of the \$700 million that's wasted. There's no accountability. No one has stepped up yet and said, “You know what? We totally messed up.” They keep telling us we've got a new board—self-appointed star again. But I think Dr. Mazza was supposedly their shining star originally. I can't understand why they would ever spend \$10 million on an insurance policy, but they did, and, at one point, a \$4-million salary.

This is typically, again, a bill that they bring to this Legislature that is all fluff and stuff. There's nothing there that really actually makes the minister stand up and take accountability. She even, in this document, says, “I need the ability to do that.” You've had the ability, Minister, from day one. You did not step up. You still have your deputy minister. You gave him a raise. Minister, you have to take accountability; you have to do the right thing. I think my colleague, who is not here today—Mr. Milligan—says, “Do the honourable thing, Minister.” You need to step up and take that accountability. You need to not just keep sweeping it under.

Some of your other colleagues today in this discussion have kept saying, “We just need to move forward. We just need to move forward.” Well, you know, you can't move forward unless you understand how you've messed up so badly in the past so that you can put practical ideas in to prevent that from ever happening again.

This Ornge boondoggle is an absolute nightmare for the people of Ontario. It's impacted our health care. It definitely has impacted the services that people on the

front lines are getting. It's impacted the morale of the staff within the air ambulance. You know, it really actually hurts me to say this, but it's sad that the people have lost trust. It's sad that it's actually added to the cynicism because rather than actually stepping up and saying, “We absolutely messed this one up. We need to actually open the door to you to make those revisions and really get to the bottom of this,” and giving us all the documents, similar to the gas plant fiasco, all we get is deflection, diversion and more of these fluffy papers that really aren't worth the paper they're written on. We need to ensure that we have accountability, we have transparency and we have a government that truly is going to step up and say sorry to the people of Ontario.

Yes, you need to do better. We will do better, but at the end of the day you should have just done it right in the first place.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I actually agree with many of the comments made by my colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. One of the points he brings up which I think is quite salient is: What was the government doing when this was all occurring anyway? What does this bill actually do? Does this bill actually provide anything useful?

In fact, if you look at all the changes that happened at Ornge—the changing of the board, the new CEO, the oversight that's going on right now—all of this occurred without introducing a new bill. So all the changes that have occurred in Ornge have actually occurred right now—the new CEO, the new board, the new performance agreement, the oversight mechanisms that are now in place—without a new bill being put in place.

I'll argue that the bill actually has no benefit. In fact, if you look at it, the current CEO indicated that the bill wouldn't change anything that he's doing, that if we introduced this bill, if this bill was passed, it wouldn't change anything that he's not already doing. He would still continue to have contact with the ministry regularly. He would still continue to report and provide information. The board would continue with their mandate. Nothing would change.

What I wanted to see, what I had hoped to see, is a mechanism that would be applied government-wide, a simple oversight mechanism that would be applied government-wide. One of the easiest mechanisms is this: Every transfer payment agency that the government provides money to should provide salary disclosure, a simple oversight mechanism. In this case, when we asked for the salary of Dr. Mazza, we weren't provided with an answer. That should have been the immediate flag. Every agency that is funded by the ministry, that is funded by the government, should disclose the salaries of all their employees. That's a starting point.

Second, regular contact could have avoided this by overseeing that industry. By having regular contact, we could have avoided this in the first place.

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I compliment the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound on his comments. First of all, as this was all unravelling with the Ornge issues and that, I actually had an acute care paramedic come to me. I hope this can apply, as we move forward with this legislation and we look for whistle-blower protection, to all people in the public service. This gentleman is a good employee. He knows what he’s doing, and he’s got a lot of experience in his job. He was terrified to even talk to me, but I know that he and some of his colleagues were wanting to get this information to the appropriate people to draw attention to the problem. He wouldn’t meet me at his home, and he wouldn’t meet me at my office. So I had to meet him 75 miles away in a coffee shop where he gave me a bunch of background information and materials etc. and explained exactly what we’re hearing, what has actually unravelled here.

My comments here are meant to always protect those kinds of people. He told me there were millions of dollars being wasted. He told me that they were the wrong ambulances for the job, that you couldn’t get a stretcher properly into the actual ambulance. What I really want to hear, when this is all done—and I know we’re parties talking on each side of the House here about our different views, but I hope that people like that in the public service can always be protected, because those kinds of people brought this to our attention and in the end will probably save millions of dollars if Mr. Mazza and his group of people would have continued on into the future. But this particular gentleman was terrified to even approach me because he was so sure he would lose his job if he ever got caught.

1700

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Very good points. I think there was a genuine effort on behalf of everyone in this House to make their points around the accountability piece.

I think the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton has sort of hit the nail on the head: Certain things had already been put in place before the bill was before the House. So really, why are we actually even debating this if not just for a public relations exercise?

Once again I’ll say that our main concerns have to do with transparency, because Ornge is still not subject to the Ombudsman—this is a very simple thing—and because Ornge will still not be able to be called to public accounts, or any other government agency, for that matter.

We still haven’t got a good reason for why. Why would you not put these measures in place to actually make Bill 11 effective? What reasons can the government give for their reluctance to take these easy and cost-free steps? At this point, we haven’t seen any reason. We have seen no rationale.

I think that for a lot of us there are more questions than answers at this point in time, and the bill as it’s presented doesn’t provide clarity.

I’ll go back once again to what the Ombudsman said. He has expressed strong concern that his office will

continue not to have oversight over Ornge. He has said that without this oversight there would be “no credible accountability.”

The patient advocate role reports to Ornge’s vice-president, not to the public or even to the board of directors.

We have a serious credibility issue here, and we have a serious trust issue here. This is a missed opportunity, as it’s presented, to actually restore some of that trust. I think the people of this province deserve greater clarity, and they deserve to have a service that is actually going to meet their needs.

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

Hon. John Milloy: I have listened intently to the debate this afternoon. I think the first point we should be putting on the record is the fast action of our Minister of Health in terms of dealing with the situation at Ornge. All of us were troubled and, obviously, continue to be troubled with the things that went on at Ornge. I want to give her credit for coming forward with a very specific action plan: a new performance agreement with Ornge.

No minister wants to do this, but she took the action of calling in the OPP. We had the Auditor General, who looked into the Ornge situation. We also have the work that is going on in the public accounts committee. I want to remind members of the action by the Minister of Health to appear in front of that committee several times, in my recollection, where she gave as much time as was needed. She answered all the questions, and she talked about how she was getting to the bottom of this situation.

As I say, Mr. Speaker, all of us are troubled by the events at Ornge, and I have outlined some of the steps that were taken by the minister. The one that is missing, though, is the legislative component. That’s what this bill is about—of course, in the previous Legislature it was Bill 50. What it is is an attempt by the government to fill in that final piece of the puzzle and make sure the government has the powers and, indeed, that Ornge is working within the legislative framework in which there’s the type of accountability that’s needed. I urge all members of the Legislature to see this bill as this important final piece.

I’ve sat here today and through other debates and heard them stand up and harp on and about the problems in the past at Ornge. I think it’s time that the members of the Legislature look forward, look to strengthen Ornge as it exists now and make sure its relationship with the government is strengthened through accountability through this bill, this framework that’s coming forward. I congratulate the Minister of Health for bringing this forward, and I urge all members to send the bill to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound to reply.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you to the members from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, Simcoe North, Kitchener–Waterloo and the government House leader.

A bit of a theme came through there. Just before the government House leader leaves, once again he wants to just deflect everything. He wants to sweep it under the carpet and just pretend it went away. It's not going to happen. It's our job; it's our duty to the people of Ontario to ensure. I can understand why they want to get past all these and move on, because there's boondoggle and fiasco, one after the other. It has to be getting painful over there to be doing that. We can't let that happen.

What really comes up here again is the lack of oversight, the lack of accountability. It's great to say, "We put a new accountability agreement in there, a new performance agreement." But you know what? Unless you actually know what's in there and you actually hold them to account, it means absolutely nothing.

My colleague from Simcoe North talked about a very important part here: an acute care paramedic who made him drive 75 miles to meet him because he is so afraid of recriminations from this government if he steps up to do the right thing. That's inappropriate. The culture obviously haven't changed, if it's still the same way—that he will not even do this because he is fearful of recrimination.

A couple of the members talked about accountability. It comes back again: Why are they so fearful of allowing the Ombudsman to take this on and add it to their portfolio? Why do we need to add more layers of bureaucracy and administration? You know why? It's so that they can deflect and control. They want it all to come back through their funnel so that they can just continue to say, "We want to move on. We're just going to sweep that under the carpet again."

One of the members, I believe the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, made a very salient point, similar to the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton. There are more questions than answers still coming out, and this bill is not going to do anything to turn that around. We need to understand that accountability. We need to ensure that there's accountability and transparency in any legislation. In this case specifically we need that because it wasn't there the first time. We've gone through a nightmare of a \$700-million waste of resources, and that might be just the tip of the iceberg. We need accountability. We need bills that are actually going to work for the people of Ontario.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to thank everyone who has spoken on this bill so far for their comments and their thoughts. I myself am eager to speak to this bill as the constituents of London–Fanshawe are very concerned about what has happened with Ornge and what continues to happen under this government's oversight. Too much money has been wasted, and more is being spent with no change so far. This government chose to prorogue this Legislature for four months, during which time they did nothing to make improvements to their own bill to strengthen the oversight and the accountability at Ornge.

I can hardly believe that this is the exact same bill the government proposed before proroguing the Legislature.

I am shocked that, even with an additional four months to review this portfolio, there wasn't a single new measure of control, accountability or transparency they could think of before bringing it back exactly as it was. What kind of message does this send to the people of Ontario? The question to the government is: Do you really believe that you have earned back the trust of Ontarians, who expected you do your job in the first place, with this piece of legislation?

I will tell you what this bill says loud and clear: that restoring the public's trust in this government and this agency isn't worth further consideration. It demonstrates the arrogance of a government so comfortable with their mistakes that they no longer feel the need to go beyond lip service. They don't need to rethink, they don't need to take responsibility, and they don't need to earn our trust back.

Well, the people of London–Fanshawe and the people of Ontario want and expect more than this. They deserve better than this; we all do. With millions of tax dollars blown under this government's stewardship, I would have hoped for more care and consideration than this legislation shows us. My riding struggles with unemployment soaring at just over 9%, and the southwestern economic fund has yet to be properly constituted to deliver so much as a penny. While the people of London–Fanshawe are desperate for funding of any kind, this rogue organization is running amok with millions of public tax dollars.

What took place at Ornge is the worst kind of abuse. This government has claimed ignorance and washed their hands of any responsibility, yet we know that if they had done their job properly the first time around, this fiasco may never have occurred.

For example, let's take a look at a few items that this bill includes. This means that, for the first time, the government has decided that it is important for them to be allowed to:

- appoint representatives to the board of designated air ambulance service providers;
- appoint a supervisor or special investigator, as can be done with hospitals;
- issue directives to air ambulance providers;
- allow for the amendment of the accountability agreement at any point through a regulation-making authority and without consultation with the service provider; previously the minister had to work with service providers on this;
- provide whistle-blower protection to air ambulance providers;
- facilitate the continuance of air ambulance services as provincial corporations.

An accompanying regulation—unrelated to the bill—to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act will add Ornge to the list of agencies accessible to freedom-of-information requests.

1710

Mr. Speaker, the provisions outlined in this bill do nothing but demonstrate that the government did not

bother to do their due diligence from the onset. Why are these items being included only now? Why weren't they included the first time around? Why did it take millions of tax dollars to be lost before they thought to include these measures? Did it not occur to them until now?

Even now, the government doesn't seem to want to be truly accountable. This bill is full of half measures and still denies true accountability. This bill seems far more interested in creating a system that works to protect the ministry than the people. How so?

Why does this bill deny the Ombudsman's office to oversee this organization? He is a non-partisan officer of this Legislature, yet this government would prefer to spend even more tax dollars by hiring their own officer for investigations—an investigator who, by the way, answers to the minister directly, and not to the Legislature and not to the people of this province. Whose interests are being served by that step? It appears that the minister is far more interested in preventing scandals from hitting the press than actually preventing them from occurring at all.

This is the same minister who told the Legislature that there were alarm bells raised in the January 2011 letter, and then later reversed the story and claimed there were none. Then she told this Legislature that she fired the board at Ornge, and then later on remembered that she did not have the power to fire the board and that they voluntarily resigned.

When the minister wants the authority to sidestep an investigation from the Ombudsman's office by spending more tax dollars on an investigator that reports to her directly, I am thinking this is not the way to earn back trust. It is the best way to control bad press and avoid taking public responsibility for her portfolio.

At the end of the day, Ornge will still not be able to be called before the public accounts committee. Why is that? What is the minister so afraid of? Is there more to uncover that we don't know? At this point, we have no reasons, and none have been given.

It's this attitude that Ontarians can't stand any longer. It's the attitude that says it's okay to spend tax dollars like it's Monopoly money. How can this government, in all honesty, think that spending more tax dollars in order to prevent their mistakes from becoming public is acceptable? Yet we are seeing this happen more and more frequently. We only need to look at the gas plant fiasco to see that the message is reinforced.

Ontario families need to know that Ornge is back on track. This bill does little to earn back the public trust and even less to promote accountable, transparent and excellent government services. Is this really the kind of half-baked leadership and oversight that the people of Ontario deserve?

How many tries at getting it right does this government think they're entitled to? First, they set up the agency and didn't bother to do the job necessary to protect the people of this province from a catastrophic abuse of powers. Then they denied the responsibility for it all going so wrong. In fact, the Minister of Health and

the Premier want all of us to believe they had nothing to do with it. They blamed a faulty accountability agreement. They blamed federal incorporations of Ornge. They blamed Ornge executives for not keeping them informed. All of their excuses have come to show one clear message: This government was either too incompetent to do their job or was complicit in this fiasco.

What happened at Ornge is not simply a case of mismanagement or incompetence. This was a case of flagrant abuse, with an intention to benefit the government-appointed board members. Ornge created a whole host of schemes, and all the information we have to date, all the official testimony, clearly shows that this government was informed every step of the way.

There is official testimony that this government knew and did nothing. From lawyers, from witnesses, the same story has been told in committee: The government knew but feigned ignorance. This strategy of pretending not to know is now their status quo of behaviour. From Ornge to gas plants, their not knowing and their not releasing information is the new normal. I say it's about time that this government take responsibility for their actions.

For me, this bill shows more than ever that the government has been asleep at the wheel. These basic accountability and transparency measures should have been in place from the creation of Ornge, but weren't. All this bill does is show the people of Ontario that this government did not bother to do its job in the first place with Ornge. More importantly, this bill does nothing to prevent another Ornge scandal from happening again.

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

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from London—Fanshawe for her comments.

Most members of the Legislature and, I think, the public and those that were interested in the goings-on at Ornge, myself as well as most others in the Legislature, I am sure, were very discouraged at what we came to learn from an organization that was provided a great deal of public trust, and an organization that was in charge of a large amount of public funds.

I don't think it's straying too far at all to say that severe, strong and quick action was required, and I think that's in fact what we have done. When I had a chance to speak on this issue relative to Ornge a little earlier this afternoon, I mentioned that I'm not sure what more you can do that's any stronger than calling in the OPP.

People who have been watching this transpire over the course of the last several months may not be aware, in fact, that we've done that. I think it's a very clear signal from our government that we view what may have transpired at Ornge—some of what we know, some of what we don't know for sure—that in fact, a criminal investigation that's currently ongoing and being conducted by the OPP is a very clear and a very strong signal from our government on how seriously we've taken the issue.

More to the point, I would say, in fact, to provide as much transparency and accountability around the goings-

on at Ornge, we have retroactively—and I don't know if this has happened before or not—provided and made Ornge subject to freedom of information here in the province of Ontario; not only retroactively, but of course on a go-forward basis.

Between the OPP's criminal investigation, and retroactively providing freedom of information and making Ornge subject to that, as well as what's contained in this legislation, I think it's a very clear signal in terms of how seriously we're taking these issues.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I've been interested in this debate all afternoon, listening to my colleagues and members of the third party and the government speak.

My father was a pilot. My brother still flies; he has been flying since he was 15 years old. One thing pilots do is they check out their airplane before they get going. They have to know what the airplane will carry so that they don't overload the plane, because it can only pick up so much weight.

He checks the rudders; he checks the ailerons; he checks the motor. He does all this type of thing before he takes off in the airplane or starts it up and gets ready to go.

It's interesting that when we were talking about the helicopters that Ornge has had an issue with—that somebody somewhere wouldn't have looked in these things and seen that they wouldn't work, that you couldn't do CPR in these things. You would think that somebody would have looked at that. Nobody did.

Interjection: Pretty basic.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Pretty basic stuff, you would think.

Now, I was very fortunate, Speaker—at least, my granddaughter was very fortunate this year; she got a ride in an Ornge helicopter. She broke her arm rather badly. She broke her arm rather badly up north, and she was flown to London. I was very thankful to the crew and the pilots of the helicopter that she was treated very well, and she's fine. Her arm is fine. But that thing had to be transformed into an aircraft that could transport patients. They spent millions of dollars on these things, converting them, converting a helicopter into something that would work.

That has been a signature of this government for too many years: You don't think things out, you blow the money, and then you've got to start fixing things, which costs more money. Unfortunately, this is a legacy of this government, and it's too bad that it's happened this way.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker, and my thanks to the member from London–Fanshawe for presenting the NDP's approach to this matter in her remarks.

Speaker, it is very clear that Dalton McGuinty shut down this Legislature for four months and in those four months the work that was needed to be done to improve

this bill was not done. My colleague has mentioned two points that I think people in this province understand quite well. The first is that this bill should give the Ombudsman oversight over this agency.

It doesn't matter which government is in power. It does matter that the people in this province, when they have a problem with an agency, have the authority, the right to go to the Ombudsman and say, "This isn't working. There are serious problems here. We need you to investigate." And then the Ombudsman can make that investigation, bring those problems to public light, instead of us in the public and in this chamber having to rely on employees who do their best but may not have the authority, the voice, the impact the Ombudsman has.

She also noted that legislative committees should be able to call Ornge before them in order to question the leadership, question the policy direction, question the operations—something that's commonly done with other agencies, with other bodies of the government of Ontario. The member from London–Fanshawe is right. That ability has to be incorporated into this bill. Legislators need to be able to question the management of Ornge if we're going to avoid this kind of scandal in the future.

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: The member from London–Fanshawe made a valuable contribution to the debate this afternoon.

Bill 11 is a bill that will go to committee, it'll get reviewed at committee, and one would anticipate that amendments will be made at committee.

There was some talk about prorogation. When I checked the prorogation that was invoked last October, in fact, we lost only 16 sessional days. And when I checked the history, in 1994 and 1995, the NDP government of the day didn't sit for the last year of that administration. Now, that's something, Mr. Speaker, that no one should be very proud of.

But I want to get back to the speech.

Interjection: You digress.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I didn't mean to digress, but I couldn't resist.

When you look at what's going on in Ornge, we have 600 front-line employees. We're beating the target quality-of-care metric 90% and exceeding the aviation safety target: 0.13 incidents per 100 flight hours—a target of 0.17—exceptional. From October to December 2012, Ornge air crews and aircraft were available to respond to calls 97% and 97.3% of the time; 93% of calls Ornge receives are for transports between facilities; currently 96% of these were confirmed within 20 minutes—pretty exceptional. Seven per cent of Ornge calls are scene calls, usually emergency cases. Currently, 90% of these were confirmed within 10 minutes.

It's rather interesting; talk about helicopters. A little situation is occurring in Ottawa today with the Cyclone helicopter that's going to replace the aging Sea Kings that are in fact falling out of the air. It was interesting: The Harper government had a helicopter; the armaments were so heavy on the Cyclone that they were under-

powered and couldn't take off. Now, that helicopter is back to the drawing board and costing hundreds of millions of dollars. So it's always interesting to look at those cases, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Now we return to the member for London–Fanshawe for her two-minute reply.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thanks, Speaker. We have been saying the same thing: that there's lack of oversight on this bill. We've asked for the Ombudsman to be the person designated to provide that oversight. I hope, when it goes to committee, that this bill—that the committee members will see—

Interjection: If it goes to committee.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Well, yes, if it goes to committee; exactly. If it does go to committee, I hope the committee members will actually see the importance, the seriousness, of asking for Ombudsman oversight.

I'd like to read something from the Auditor General's report on Ornge. He said, "... in February 2006," the Minister of Health "committed to set standards and monitor performance against those standards to ensure that the 'end result will be improved care, improved access to service, increasing effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of service, and the assurance of greater fiscal and medical accountability.'"

Assurance of greater fiscal accountability: Part of that fiscal accountability hasn't been met through Ornge. There was a lack of fiscal accountability, and that's why we have the Ornges that we do today. We need to have oversight that's going to take this commitment from this minister seriously. You don't just say, in a quote in the Auditor General's report in 2006, that you are committed—committed—to set standards and monitor performance. There you go: If you're committed, then be committed to show Ombudsman oversight on this bill.

We urge you, Minister, to listen to this party and have Ombudsman oversight, to fulfill your commitment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to Bill 11, an Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services, formerly known as Bill 50 from the last session, unfortunately prorogued.

As several members of our caucus have stated today, our opinions on this bill remain mostly the same. In fact, last year a top-secret Liberal cabinet document leaked to the PC caucus confirmed that the Minister of Health wasn't totally honest with Ontarians when she continually claimed she knew nothing about the problems at Ornge. This document proved she in fact knew all about these issues—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the member for Kitchener–Conestoga to withdraw that unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Michael Harris: Withdrawn.

I want to get to one of the incidents in that document, and that was a delayed response to a fatal helicopter crash in Waterloo region last year that tragically killed pilot Tiffany Hanna. Although Ornge air ambulance was initially called in, it was intentionally grounded when it was less than 10 minutes—because local ground ambulances were already on the way. Unfortunately, the helicopter wasn't put back into the air until regional paramedics arrived on the scene and discovered the seriousness of the injuries. When in fact paramedics called Ornge, they didn't immediately get through and had to wait on hold before speaking with an operator. This is a call to Ornge.

Now, I've talked to Tiffany's mother, Marion, and she agreed this type of failure is completely unacceptable.

The details in the leaked cabinet document showed that the emergency health services branch was prompted by media articles to launch an investigation on December 28, two months after the incident at the Waterloo regional airport. The investigation concluded that Ornge's launch policy caused the delay in the air ambulance's response to this fatal crash.

This incident, in fact, should have been a wake-up call for the Liberal government. Instead, though, it was business as usual. Ontarians expect the government to act quickly on issues of health and public safety, yet Ornge failed to act for nearly two months after receiving the report, and the government sat on their hands and allowed these incidents to continue.

I know that people in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga want to see true change in the way Ornge operates. They're sick and tired of hearing the excuses and seeing half measures. Having such an unfortunate incident occur in my riding is very saddening and concerning, especially when other members on the other side of the House continue to defend, including the minister herself.

This complete lack of oversight on a service that is a matter of life and death is truly troubling. When I see an Ornge ambulance driving on the road or one in the air, I pray that the person in danger is attended to and taken care of in the highest of standards. Hearing about that poor six-year-old girl in Windsor having to wait three hours for an ambulance that never arrived, or the incident with a dump truck and van in Stouffville where there wasn't enough staff on to respond, makes this an issue that cannot be taken lightly.

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And you would think that with all these tragedies the Minister of Health would stop at nothing to ensure that Ontarians had the best air ambulance service for those in critical situations to save lives. It continues to baffle my mind that the executives hired to make these important decisions couldn't even purchase an ambulance big enough to perform CPR. If you can only imagine, when you need the service the most—there was an accident; an air ambulance arrived at the scene—being told, "You know what? Unfortunately, we can't do CPR. We're going to have to put you in a land ambulance to drive wherever you need to go." That's truly troubling.

Beyond these expensive and life-threatening mistakes, just this past January more documents, in fact, were released on lavish spending from some of their top executives, money that could have been spent on more research into improving the air ambulances, or further training for the first-line responders, who we'd like to commend for their hard work and bear with through this troubling time over at Ornge—in fact, hiring more paramedics and pilots. Instead though, under the minister's watch, Chris Mazza enjoyed first-class trips to Europe where he stayed in first-class hotels, drinking expensive alcohol and eating at high-end restaurants. Or what about the lavish staff holiday party he hosted at his home with limos to and from? He even thought it was okay to expense the interest he accumulated on his own credit card he used to fund all of these parties.

I would think that on his \$1.4-million salary he could have paid for those interest charges on his own dime, but again, there seems to be that culture of entitlement, and we talked about that entitlement, in fact, this morning in another agency of the Ministry of Health. When people need those precious health care dollars the most, they cannot stand to see them being funneled to areas that truly are not in the front lines. That's what we saw over at Ornge.

Back to the bill, Bill 11, that's before us today: I recall, and some of my colleagues have mentioned that we had this bill, Bill 50, before prorogation by Dalton McGuinty. At that time, my colleague, the member from Newmarket–Aurora, Frank Klees, made many recommendations that would give this bill more teeth. However, none of those points have been included today. I raise some of these issues we had on Bill 50, since the government in fact didn't listen to our recommendations then.

First, I think we need to strengthen the whistleblowing protection in section 7.7. First responders over at Ornge, like the paramedics, the pilots, the dispatchers, work hard to ensure that they respond to the scene quickly to provide the best possible care for victims with the resources they have. They see first-hand how Ornge operates, and everyone here respects all of the work they do. Section 7.7 of the proposed bill says that those who make complaints about the system in order to fix the problem would report to their superiors at Ornge. Now, I ask everyone here today, if mismanagement and poor planning hindered your day-to-day task to get the job done and that mismanagement and poor planning was because of upper management's actions, who would you find confidence in reporting this to? Clearly not the culprit of the situation, Speaker. That is exactly why in this section we are suggesting that information can be exposed to the superiors of Ornge—about these people who are in fact causing the problems. If this government wants to bring true accountability back into Ornge, then whistleblowers should be confident that the critical information they provide to improve this agency's effectiveness is in fact protected from the managers trying to hide the scandal themselves.

Secondly, Ombudsman authority to investigate Ornge: The second part of this bill suggested that special investigators would be hired to have oversight over Ornge and propose recommendations. So on top of the \$700 million that has already been spent, we are going to create another government body and spend, in fact, more money. It seems to me that the Liberals have not learned their lesson.

This special investigative body would report to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. They would not be independent of government, but would work internally. Clearly, Ornge needs an accountability review process going forward that reports back on a regular basis with updates on targets met or, in fact, missed. But I don't see any performance measures outlined in the bill or in an amendment to the original performance agreement. How can you accept that this is accountable when it is from within the organization itself? Quite frankly, this bill seems like an attempt to divert attention away from the fact that the minister has had the power to hold Ornge and its board responsible from the get-go.

Just recently, the Ombudsman raised a very good point in his letter to the minister, suggesting that he has a role to hold government to account. He already has the resources and the staff to investigate Ornge. In fact, it is his job description to investigate “the more than 500 ministries, agencies, boards, commissions, tribunals and corporations that fall under our jurisdiction.” The recommendation that I would make, like my colleagues have also made to this government, is to show that you are responsible to the people of Ontario and the families affected by Ornge. Support the Ombudsman's call and have him be the independent body to investigate and monitor the progress over at Ornge.

I ask the government to consider these recommendations yet again. They had that opportunity, given the fact that we were prorogued for several months. It would have been a great opportunity to go back to the drawing board—I know they rushed this bill out in the first place—and include some of those comments that we had made on Bill 50 prior to prorogation. But sadly, they didn't do that.

If this government continues to want to deflect responsibility, then it is going to continue to head down that same path that got them here in the first place.

With that, Speaker, I'm pleased to offer my comments to Bill 11. I await questions and comments from my colleagues, and I'll be back to you in a few minutes.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's really interesting to hear the member from Peterborough; he couldn't resist weighing in on the prorogation. Our side of the House has been very clear: When this House was prorogued, it was an interruption into the democracy of this province. It was to avoid the scrutiny that they were under, which was Ornge, which was eHealth, which was gas plants—

Mr. Bill Walker: Power plants.

Ms. Catherine Fife: —power plants, yes, shut down.

For you to say “only 18 days” is an insult to every Ontarian in the province, and I’m telling you it is also a great lack of respect for the voters, a great lack of respect—“just 18 days.”

In that four months, do you think that you worked on this bill? No, you did not, because nothing was done on this legislation. In fact, here we are again: Groundhog Day at Queen’s Park. Every piece of legislation that died on the order paper, including this one—which fails the people of this province, I want to say—fails the people of this province.

Do you know what we’re concerned about? We’re concerned about accountability, we’re concerned about oversight and we’re concerned about patient care. When the people who worked on the front lines came to the government, you ignored them. They had the lived experience of living and working in crisis, of not having the right resources, of not having the right oversight. People in this province were harmed because you did not put those measures in place.

And you still failed them. You have still failed them, and all while in the defence of prorogation. You should stop talking about “only 18 days.” It is disrespectful, and it is unnecessary to pull that into this debate.

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

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I’m actually a little bit confused, because when I joined in the House here this afternoon, I thought we were talking about the Ambulance Amendment Act, 2013. I didn’t know we were talking about prorogation. But I’m very glad that the member from Peterborough had straightened out the record in terms of the actual loss of sessional days during prorogation. Just to build on that, of course, we had two extra weeks in June, and I think we came back early in August as well, so I think every honourable member of this Legislature has worked very, very hard on behalf of their constituents and Ontarians.

However, as I said, I believe what we’re debating here is the Ambulance Amendment Act, 2013. As I think many speakers have said before, we are grateful to the paramedics, the pilots and the front-line staff of Ornge for being the people they are, for putting patients first.

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But I want to talk about who else I’m proud of, and that is the Ontario Minister of Health. I’ll tell you why I’m proud of her: because she has implemented accountability agreements. If you listen to the comments that were made by the member from Kitchener–Conestoga and I think even the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, they are looking for accountability. This Minister of Health has delivered that, and it’s a model. The model that she has put in place, quite frankly, is a model for other ministries. It’s a model for other jurisdictions in Canada. We should be very proud of her, and Ontarians can be very proud that she has taken these steps to ensure that we have accountability, that we have transparency. We spend, as you know, so much of taxpayers’ dollars in health care, and the Minister of Health has been

proactive. She has been responsive to the issues. That’s what you do when you’re the Minister of Health. That’s what you do when you have a major file like this. When there are issues, you address them. She has done that. We can be proud, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: The member from Kitchener–Conestoga has just explained to us in a very concrete way that you cannot have accountability without fulsome whistle-blower protection. We require protection for the dedicated employees we’ve been talking about this afternoon, employees who are willing to stick their neck out, to stand up for patients, to stand up for taxpayers, employees who take a great deal of pride in their jobs. We heard from a number of these employees during our public accounts testimony, employees who were bullied, harassed, ignored and, in some cases, terminated.

These are the words of Trevor Harness, a former aviation training officer with the Ministry of Health, part of MATC, the Medical Air Transport Centre. He described Ornge as “an experiment gone very wrong, an experiment whose responsibility” for going wrong lies “with the Ministry of Health” and with this government.

He described the organization that was created under the nose of this Minister of Health as an organization “built on a culture of fear, intimidation and harassment.” It sounds like Caledonia; it sounds like the Six Nations Caledonia situation in my riding. “Anyone who questioned any decision, policy or procedure was dealt with swiftly, from immediate dismissal to threats of legal prosecution. Many hard-working, responsible and dedicated employees found themselves forced out of a job they were committed to, and no one would listen at the Ministry of Health, whose job it was to oversee this vital emergency service.”

That’s why the member from Kitchener–Conestoga just finished telling us you get no accountability without whistle-blower protection.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I neglected to make this comment earlier, and I would like to make it now. I think to a certain degree we have to give the Minister of Health some credit for the fact that Ornge is going in the right direction now, and she certainly has done that. I think that should have been acknowledged in my previous comments, which is fine.

But my concern is this: that these steps could have been taken years and years ago. There’s nothing particularly unique about the circumstances now that the Minister of Health could not have done this years and years ago. The oversight could have been done years and years ago—

Mr. Bill Walker: Should have been done.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It should have been done. The oversight should have been done years and years ago. The salary disclosure, which was the key to unlocking this entire problem, was something requested of the min-

istry years and years ago. The essential problem is that this scandal could have been avoided if steps were taken earlier, if the oversight was done in a timely fashion.

The whistle-blower protection is so important. If we look at the track record or the history of Ornge, the excellent care provided by the front-line service workers was damaged or was put in a position where they couldn't do the care we wanted to. They tried to come forward and complain about that. They tried to address that problem. Those great front-line workers tried to raise these concerns of the ministry, and many of them were silenced. Their concerns were ignored, and they were not reacted to. They were not acted upon. That's one of the crucial elements here; we have to make sure that, in the future, if anyone raises a concern in any transfer agency—not just in the health industry or the health care field; any industry, any division of the ministry—if there are any front-line workers who are raising concerns, we have to respond in a meaningful way. We have to investigate their concerns, because they are the front-line workers, and whistle-blower protection is an essential element of oversight that should be involved in any transfer agency in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We now return to the member for Kitchener–Conestoga for his response.

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank those that provided a comment on my initial remarks: the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, the Minister of Consumer Services, my colleague the member for Haldimand–Norfolk—who also sits on the public accounts committee—and, additionally, the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton, who is also on that committee.

Just to wrap up the last minute and a half that I have, I think it's important to reiterate the important part of this legislation and what truly is missing; that is, as my colleague from Haldimand–Norfolk who sits on that committee says, the whistle-blower protection. As he had mentioned, you know what? There was actually a culture of fear, a culture of harassment over at Ornge. I'd like to thank the hard-working front-line paramedics and pilots for the work that they do, the services they provide Ontarians. As I had mentioned before, when I see an Ornge ambulance, either on the road or in the air, you have to think that that usually means trouble. These folks are put into this in seconds or at a whim's chance, and they step up and do what they have to do, so I would like to thank them for that.

But at the end of the day, those employees at Ornge, as the member for Haldimand–Norfolk said, were standing up for patients; they were standing up for taxpayers. And this government continues its trend of attacking those folks. You look at committees, whether we're in power plants—if somebody turns on them, the first thing that they do is they start attacking the person themselves. That is why whistle-blower protection is truly necessary in this bill. It's critical to ensure that, moving forward, we allow those folks to be able to make comments and protect patients and protect taxpayers,

because ultimately, that is in fact what they are doing here. It's unfortunate it wasn't in the bill, but we'll have to see where it goes in committee. Thank you again for the opportunity.

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

M. Gilles Bisson: Monsieur le Président, je suis donc content d'être ici avec vous aujourd'hui et de parler de ce projet de loi.

On sait tous dans cette province ce qui est arrivé avec Ornge. Le gouvernement provincial a décidé qu'il y avait un système en place qui marchait bien, qui avait des pourvoyeurs de service qui donnaient des services à travers le secteur privé et le secteur public. En d'autres mots, quand on avait besoin de plus « d'air ambulances », on allait chercher d'autres opérateurs pour être capable de donner ces services quand c'était nécessaire.

Le gouvernement a dit : « Écoute, on a un système qui est parfaitement bon, qui marche très bien pour le public de l'Ontario et qui nous coûte moins cher. On n'est pas content. On a besoin de changer le système et de faire un système qui va fermer tous les opérateurs à travers la province qui sont des pourvoyeurs de service à travers des compagnies comme Commercial Aviation et d'autres, et on va créer cette nouvelle organisation appelée Ornge. »

Et monsieur, cet Ornge était une tomate. Cet Ornge était une tomate complète, parce que ce qu'on voit, c'est qu'on a système en place—ce n'est pas que les travailleurs chez Ornge sont du méchant monde; c'est du bon monde comme tous les autres travailleurs de la province—qui, à la fin de la journée, nous coûte plus d'argent et qui, à la fin de la journée, possiblement nous n'a pas bien desservi pour les contribuables de la province de l'Ontario.

Je dis premièrement qu'on avait un système qui marchait, un système qui marchait bien. Il y a un vieux dicton en anglais : « Leave well enough alone. Don't fix what ain't broke. » Je pense qu'on aurait pu prendre ce dicton pour être capable de regarder possiblement comment on peut mieux faire. Mais de complètement changer le système dans la manière que le gouvernement a fait, je ne pense pas que ça fait beaucoup de bon sens. À la fin de la journée, tout ce qu'on a fait, on a fermé à travers cette province beaucoup de pourvoyeurs de service du nord-est de l'Ontario ou du nord-ouest de l'Ontario et d'autres places dans cette province. Les pourvoyeurs étaient « on call » quand on avait besoin d'eux. En d'autres mots, on les payait seulement quand on avait des travaux pour eux. Et là, on a un système où ça nous coûte plus cher et possiblement on n'a pas les services tels qu'on avaient avant.

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L'autre affaire : est-ce que ce projet de loi va, franchement, changer rien quand ça vient à la manière dont Ornge est ménagé? Moi, je dis, écoute. J'ai entendu mon collègue de Bramalea–Gore–Malton, qui a parlé et qui a dit : « Écoute. Il y a possiblement des parties dans

ce projet de loi qui sont intéressantes. La ministre dit essayer de réparer les problèmes qui existaient à Ornge. » Mais moi, je n'ai pas confiance que ce projet de loi va changer beaucoup. Est-ce que Chris Mazza, qui était le directeur de la vieille organisation d'Ornge, aurait été dans une situation différente sous ce projet de loi? Aucunement. M. Mazza aurait fait exactement ce qu'il a fait dans le passé avec ce projet de loi passé tel qu'il est proposé aujourd'hui.

Je me demande, c'est pour quelle raison qu'on a ce projet de loi? On a ce projet de loi, monsieur le Président, parce que le gouvernement a un problème politique, et ce gouvernement veut être vu comme : « On fait la meilleure affaire pour réparer les problèmes qu'on a causés en Ontario. Regardez, on va tout réparer. » Mais je vous propose que, quoi qu'il y ait dans ce projet de loi, comme on dit en français, il est très mince. C'est très mince dans ce projet de loi, ce qui va réparer les problèmes qui ont causé la mise à pied de M. Mazza et qui ont causé toutes les affaires qu'on a vues faisant affaire avec les dépenses à l'organisation Ornge.

I want to speak of my favourite subject, and the Clerk will have fun with this one because she knows this one is dear and close to my heart. This bill delegates the authority of this Legislature to cabinet. Why do we do that? What is it with this Legislature? We fought for centuries in order for us, the commoners, to have an ability to say to the King or the Queen that they can't do all that they want, that everything had to be done through a Legislative Assembly. The primary role of this assembly is to deal with the issue of taxation, but we also have a responsibility to make sure the laws that we draft in this House, the laws—I shouldn't say "draft"—but the laws that we pass in this House, once they are finally enacted, are according to the will of this House. If you look at this bill, a lot of the details are left to the delegation of cabinet to make up the regulations. We are delegating our authority as legislators to the cabinet of Ontario to determine how this bill is going to be structured when it comes to things like performance agreements and other measures within this bill.

I just say that that is a really dangerous thing, and I want to give you a good example. My good friends the Conservatives, when they were in power, had a bill that came to this House, and it said, "You know what? You shouldn't have a casino unless there was a referendum." It was pretty clear, when I was in this Legislature, what we were voting on. We were voting on a measure that said, should there be a casino in this province, the municipality would have to have a referendum where the people made the decision. So I stood in this House knowing full well what was in the bill and I voted because I knew that this bill would in fact provide for a mechanism—a referendum—in order to give people and municipalities an ability to say yes or no on a casino. So that was the intent of the legislation.

But the problem with the Conservatives is, they delegated all the detail to regulation.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm trying to give you guys credit. I hear the Conservatives heckling me. I'm finally saying something nice about Conservatives, and they can't take it. But listen: I just want to say that it is hard for me as a New Democrat to say positive things about the Conservatives, but sometimes we'll agree. I thought the idea of the government providing a mechanism for referendums to municipal citizens about casinos was a good idea. But the problem is, they delegated everything to authority.

So what did Dalton McGuinty do when he came to government? He sat in cabinet one day and he said, "You know what? The regulation says we can do the complete opposite of what the bill intended, as passed through the House." So the government, by regulation, essentially took away the provision that forced municipalities to have a referendum in the case of establishing casinos.

My point is this in this debate: Why are we delegating our authority to cabinet? This Legislature is responsible for the legislative part of what is government. Cabinet is responsible to execute what this Legislature has decided. And I really have a hard time when governments of any stripe decide that they're going to delegate everything to authority. It is, quite frankly, wrong-headed in my mind, because a future government can completely invert what the House wanted in the first place. I was in this Legislature. I knew what I stood and voted for when that bill came to this House on referendums for casinos. That is not what's happened at the end as a result of what the cabinet of Ontario under Dalton McGuinty did when it came to the delegation of authority.

So I would say to members of this House that, should this bill go to committee, we should really look at tightening up the sections that deal with the delegation of authority to the cabinet to deal with the issues of, for example, how performance agreements are to be negotiated, because under the bill, it's up to cabinet, and cabinet could say, "There will be no negotiation; there will be no discussion. We'll just do what the heck we want." That's not what democracy's about.

The other thing I want to say is this: Mon bon ami M. André Marin, qui est l'ombudsman de la province de l'Ontario, nous a dit : « On a encore un problème dans ce projet de loi qui fait affaire avec l'ombudsman, qui n'a aucune autorité de faire la vérification d'Ornge et de regarder à ce qui se passe au sein de cette organisation si ce projet de loi est passé. » Imaginez-vous, monsieur le Président, si M. Marin, qui est l'ombudsman de la province de l'Ontario, aurait eu l'autorité dans les années passées quand ça vient à Ornge, ce qui aurait pu arriver. Moi, je le sais. J'ai eu des coups de téléphone par du monde qui travaille pour la nouvelle organisation d'Ornge, tel que mon collègue M. Howard Hampton, qui était dans le temps du nord-ouest de l'Ontario, qui nous disaient les préoccupations qui se passaient avec Ornge. M. Frank Klees, le député conservateur du comté de Newmarket–Aurora, avait exactement les mêmes appels que nous autres. Nous autres, on a essayé d'appeler l'ombudsman pour être capable de donner à M. Marin

l'habilité de faire une investigation. Mais Ornge était exclu de la législation qui donne l'autorité à l'ombudsman de faire la vérification—cette organisation qui était appelée Ornge.

Quand on regarde à ce projet de loi, monsieur le Président, je ne sais pas comment vous le dire—je sais que vous allez être très déçu et que vous allez peut-être brailler ce soir quand vous regardez, pensez et réfléchissez à ce que je vous ai dit—mais M. Marin n'a aucune responsabilité ou habilité d'investiguer la question d'Ornge une fois que ce projet de loi est passé.

Donc, comme mon collègue de Bramalea–Gore–Malton a dit au début du débat, écoute, est-ce que la ministre essaie d'être vue comme quelqu'un qui fait

quelque chose de positif pour contourner les problèmes avec Ornge? Je pense que la réponse est oui. Je pense qu'elle essaie d'être vue ainsi. Mais quand ça vient à la concrétisation de ce qu'il y a dans cette législation, je ne pense pas qu'il y ait beaucoup là-dedans, qu'on peut accrocher notre chapeau et dire qu'à la fin de la journée on va avoir une meilleure habilité d'arrêter un futur Chris Mazza chez Ornge.

Merci.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being very close to 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1758.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
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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
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Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

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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
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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	
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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	
Milloy, 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
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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	
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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
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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	
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Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
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Jerry J. Ouellette, Shafiq Qaadri
Jagmeet Singh
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
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Ernie Hardeman, Helena Jaczek
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
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