



No. 43

N° 43

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 16 May 2013

Jeudi 16 mai 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



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Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Thursday 16 May 2013

Jeudi 16 mai 2013

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROSPEROUS AND FAIR ONTARIO ACT
(BUDGET MEASURES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 POUR UN ONTARIO
PROSPÈRE ET ÉQUITABLE
(MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 14, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 65, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts / Projet de loi 65, Loi visant à mettre en œuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Since I wasn't here the other day, I'm not sure exactly to whom I'm replying, but I'd just like to make a few comments on the budget.

You know, this is really a great budget for people of Ontario. When you look at the fact that we're investing another \$700 million of the people's money, through our taxes, in home care over the next three years—if there's one issue I think that surely every member in this House can agree upon, it's that elderly people want to stay in their own homes as long as possible. Survey after survey indicates that, and they should not go into a long-term-care home until it's absolutely necessary. One way in which this can be done is to provide the support services that elderly people need in their own homes. This is probably the area where, consistently over the years, I get the most number of calls, quite frankly.

I think we have set up a good system in Ontario over the last number of years. You may be interested in knowing, Speaker, that I was a member of the board of health in Kingston back in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the Kingston public health unit became the first public health unit in the province to actually supply home care services to elderly seniors so they could stay in their own homes. From that system, which started in good old Kingston—the Limestone City, Canada's first capital—the home care system we have in the province of Ontario developed.

Speaker, let me just say that, sure, there are sometimes individual situations where we hear from people that

perhaps the services aren't available as quickly as they should be, quite frankly. We continually work with that, each and every one of us in our constituency offices, to help those situations. But one way in which we can really deal with that situation is to pass this budget so that the extra \$700 million that is required in home care can be distributed across this province and the elderly can stay in their own homes much longer than is currently the case.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I was here when the member from London–Fanshawe spoke on this bill, and I commend her for making some insightful remarks. I'm really holding my breath to see—if they really look at this budget, they're going to find out it's actually a disaster, and really the whole thing here in this House, with all due respect, hinges on the decision of the NDP.

Now, I want to frame this a little bit, so the people of Ontario know what's happened. You know, in the last 10 years, the budget in Ontario has pretty well doubled. You should ask yourself, are you any better off? Not only that, but the debt itself, the accumulated debt—that's the credit card, that's the mortgage on the house. They've taken out a second mortgage. We had a debt of \$139 billion. Now the debt is \$273 billion.

To put this in a little broader reference, some debt is good. A mortgage on a home for your family is good debt. A mortgage for going out to clubs is bad debt. They have a lot of bad debt. The gas plants: We don't get the gas plants; we're paying for them, but we're not getting them, do you understand? So that's bad debt. That debt is measurable by any amount. Then you look at servicing the debt.

Servicing the debt is almost \$12 billion a year. That's the third-largest expenditure. So this government has a significant structural fiscal problem, and I say to you and to the pages here, on their last day, that this debt is your taxes of the future. Not only do we have the highest tuition in Canada for you when you go to university or college—that's debt, because tuition is a tax. Electricity is a tax. Those are controlled by the government—services provided to the public—and there are charges attached to some of them. All of them, including physiotherapy for seniors—as of August 1 it's going to be a debt on seniors. This government—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, an honour to stand here on behalf of my constituents and respond to some of

the comments made earlier by the member from London–Fanshawe, and I think I’d like to respond to some of the comments made today.

Yes, we have a responsibility with this budget, and it does, in large part, hang on the decision of our caucus. It will rest on the decision of our caucus, and we take that responsibility very seriously. We believe we were brought here to look at what was presented and try to make the best decisions on behalf of our constituents.

That’s one of the reasons why we’re pushing so hard for an accountability office. We firmly believe that only in a minority position do we have a chance to get this, because, quite frankly, majorities of all types don’t really like accountability, and when they do—when the Harper Conservatives put it in, they didn’t like it either. They would love to back out, but it’s a good thing.

It’s a good thing, because the difference between an accountability officer and the auditor—the auditor performs a vital service, but he performs that service after the deal is done. It’s very easy for governments, for parties: “We promise \$700 million here, \$300 million there.” You know, you can promise and announce the same money three times over. An accountability office could say, “Okay, here’s what’s been promised, but here’s what’s actually happening in real time,” on a non-partisan basis. It’s not about gaining points; it’s about an actual, real-time accounting of what’s going on. That would benefit all the people of Ontario—it really would—and it would benefit government as well, because then they could see problems before they become scandals.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Questions and comments?

M. Phil McNeely: Je n’étais pas ici pour le discours du membre de London–Fanshawe, mais j’aimerais parler un peu de l’ouvrage, le travail, pour les jeunes.

La stratégie ontarienne d’emploi pour les jeunes fournira 295 millions de dollars sur deux ans pour appuyer les initiatives qui favoriseraient les perspectives d’emploi et l’entrepreneuriat et l’innovation pour les jeunes de l’Ontario :

—le fonds ontarien d’aide à l’emploi pour les jeunes, avec 195 millions de dollars sur deux ans, afin d’ouvrir de nouvelles perspectives d’emploi pour 25 000 jeunes;

—le fonds ontarien d’aide aux jeunes entrepreneurs, avec 45 millions de dollars sur deux ans, pour appuyer la prochaine génération d’entrepreneurs via le mentorat, le capital de démarrage et le rayonnement de l’entrepreneuriat;

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—le fonds ontarien d’innovation pour les jeunes, avec 30 millions de dollars, pour diriger et gérer les activités de recherche, de développement et de commercialisation au sein d’une industrie et aider les jeunes entrepreneurs dans les collèges et universités;

—le fonds pour une meilleure adéquation entre la formation et l’emploi, avec 25 millions de dollars sur deux ans, pour appuyer de nouveaux projets pilotes novateurs.

Le plan de l’Ontario pour l’emploi et la croissance repose sur de solides assises économiques soutenues par des politiques et des investissements du gouvernement dans six domaines.

Alors, je supporte bien le budget. On devrait travailler très fort pour l’emploi pour les jeunes, et le programme qu’on a ici est certainement quelque chose qui va aider les jeunes.

I spoke mostly in French in my response to the member from London–Fanshawe, but I think it’s so important that we do get that youth employment going. There is a real need in this province, so let’s support the budget and get on with it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from London–Fanshawe can respond.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you to all the members who contributed to the debate on G65.

Yesterday, the leader of the New Democrats met with the Premier, and they sat down to talk about some of the proposals we have made since the budget was released. One of the things we have said many times over is that we’ve had a minority government elected to the 40th Parliament and the people have asked us to make things better for them and get results. In a minority government, we all have to talk to each other in order to come up with the best policies and legislation for the people of Ontario.

But this government also needs to be held accountable to the people of Ontario, and we’ve heard that. We’ve had our phone lines and we’ve had our websites and our constituency offices, and people are saying, “We elected a minority government. We want results, but we need to hold this government accountable for the things that have happened.”

A financial accountability office can help stop these kinds of scandals before they get to this pinnacle point of no return. That financial officer can certainly prevent these scandals like Ornge, eHealth, and the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants, where billions of dollars are wasted. The people of Ontario don’t deserve to have public funds misused that way.

We need to make sure that public funds are used for education, health care and infrastructure, to look after the people of Ontario. That’s what they put trust in us for. They put trust in us to make sure their public interest is being looked after, and we need to do that. One thing that New Democrats have said we should be doing is having a financial accountability office to make sure this doesn’t happen and we hold governments accountable for where they spend the money.

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

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: It’s my pleasure this morning to rise and speak to this debate. The budget, as we know, is an important document; I would say probably one of the most important documents we discuss in this House. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to some of the issues that relate to me, both as Minister of Children and Youth Services and as the MPP for Windsor West.

Let’s be clear: The challenges we face in this province can seem daunting and complex, because they are. We

live in the shadow of an uncertain global economy. We are confronted with many challenges. We have an aging population, and young people who need jobs. Because of all that, it can often feel as though we have to choose among our priorities: to say that we can balance the budget or improve education; we can invest in our roads and bridges or reduce wait times at our hospitals. It's really tempting to oversimplify things. It's tempting to reduce public policy to an either-or equation, but that's not the way forward.

This proposed budget bill offers a clear path forward that creates prosperity for Ontarians while making sure we're protecting our most vulnerable. Our approach to this budget is one that started with the people of Ontario. It's based on discussions we've had across the province. We also heard from people in my riding of Windsor West, and we continue to get their feedback on why this budget needs to pass.

First, if I may, I'd like to speak to certain investments this budget protects and strengthens in crucial services for our children and youth. Through this budget, our government is proposing to add another \$5 million for children's treatment centres. These centres provide rehabilitation services for youth up to 19 years old with physical and/or developmental disabilities, chronic illness and/or communication disorders. This additional investment is very important for these children and youth and their families. It will support a pilot program to help children across the province transition into school. This investment will also expand the family-centred children's rehabilitation information system to five children's treatment centres in northern Ontario. This budget also increases the Ontario children's benefit, which we know has benefited thousands of families across the province. Investments like these that we make today in our children's future are one of the best things we can do to give them a bright and secure future.

This budget also addresses another major concern of people across Ontario and in Windsor-Essex, and that is economic renewal and job opportunities. Last week, I spent some time speaking with business leaders in Windsor and heard this loud and clear. I talked to them about how this budget will help create jobs for the region and give local businesses a competitive advantage. The response was positive, and I felt genuine excitement from the community.

We need to move forward on this budget bill so that we can invest in the areas that matter most. That's why a key element of this budget is our investment in jobs for our youth. I might say, my first job out of university was as a supervisor at an employment centre for youth, so this is something I'm very excited about. I've heard from so many people across the province, and especially in Windsor-Essex, that youth unemployment must be a priority. The \$295-million investment will complement our comprehensive youth jobs strategy by giving businesses financial incentives to hire, train and sustain skilled youth workers. The comprehensive approach to creating jobs for youth certainly responds to what I've been hearing in my community.

As you may know, I'm the mother of two boys. They are 12 and 17, and my 17-year-old is lucky: He has a part-time job. I'm also a former director of employment and social services for the city of Windsor. Based on those experiences, I can tell this House that a comprehensive approach that incorporates mentoring, partnering with employers and financial incentives for job creators is an approach that works. Our budget invests in people, and I truly believe that investing in people works.

There's also a youth entrepreneur and innovation fund. So if a local youth has a great idea for a successful business, their dreams can become a reality.

We've also created the first-ever Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities to engage with youth, young professionals and community partners, so that young people across the province get the right training and job opportunities and have the tools they need to succeed. Who best to listen to for a youth strategy than the youth themselves?

As well, we aim to give businesses a better environment to grow and prosper. Our budget provides greater employer health tax relief to small businesses by increasing the tax exemption from \$400,000 to \$450,000 of payroll, beginning next year. It would save up to \$975 per year for employers. I can't tell you how many small businesses in Windsor have told me that they're pleased with this move. For businesses that need to purchase new machinery and equipment, our budget extends the capital cost allowance to 2015. That would reduce Ontario tax on manufacturers over the next three years.

Speaker, as the MPP for Windsor West, I am also proud of the investments made in this budget for my region. Our government recognizes that Windsor has a unique economic base that must be supported and nurtured. This budget continues with this government's commitment to the southwest development fund. Since its launch last fall, the government has committed \$15 million through the southwest development fund, attracting a total investment of nearly \$120 million and helping create and protect 2,200 jobs.

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As well, some of you may know that Windsor is home to the busiest border crossing in Canada, where so much of our trade takes place. The province begins at Windsor. That is why our vision for a prosperous Ontario means a significant investment in infrastructure to ensure businesses get what they need on time—because time, after all, is money. In Windsor-Essex, that means that the Herb Gray Parkway, the 401, Highway 3 and other major transit routes will continue to receive provincial funding for widening and maintenance.

On top of that, this budget proposes to make the gas tax for municipalities permanent. Just last year, the city of Windsor received more than \$3.6 million from gas tax revenues. What that means for my riding, Mr. Speaker, is that this permanent funding will allow the city of Windsor to provide vital municipal services to residents.

The government has made important gains in making Windsor-Essex a better place to live and work. I know

that the people in my area directly took part in creating this budget. They are expecting that this Legislature will do the right thing. The budget really is for all Ontarians. It is really incumbent upon all of us to ensure that this province can move forward prosperously and to ensure a fair society. If passed, it will absolutely help build a more prosperous Windsor West and a stronger Ontario.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: It's important to recognize that a member from cabinet stands and of course endorses the budget. She's part of the same team that was there making decisions on wasteful spending in the province, which troubles me, you know. Really, this budget, if you look at—

Hon. John Gerretsen: John, say something positive.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no, with respect, she is a member of cabinet. I respect that. She'll be given orders to do this and that. She has a tough ministry, I would say, as well. It's a very important ministry. But the fact she should know is, you're increasing spending and reducing services. That's the problem. Right through all of this budget document, it's increasing spending and reducing services, physiotherapy being one; they're working on drugs—you see, the trouble they have on the chemotherapy drugs as just one example.

So I'm cautious about this budget to the extent that I think underneath it, it's sort of like a submarine: We can see the little antenna above the water, and that's all this budget is, but below the water is a lot of debt, a lot of risk. It's the price of energy in Ontario; health care; the hospitals in my riding are now operating at—they used to get 7% a year; now they're getting 3% a year. It will only show up when they start laying off nurses.

I'm seeing it in almost every area. I read this morning in the paper that the extracurricular activities in most of the high schools are not taking place. A young athlete who was given a scholarship is not able to participate in a sport, which could jeopardize her getting a scholarship at a top university. There's so much in this budget that troubles me. You know, even in home care now, the biggest problem we have is they're going to put more money into home care but they're taking it out of the hospitals. It's a shell game from start to finish. There's no possible way I can support it, and I'm surprised the NDP is going to support this. They haven't read it.

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

M. Michael Mantha: Je suis désolé d'entendre que mon collègue de Durham indique qu'on n'a pas lu le budget. Certainement, on a pris le temps—on a pris notre rôle extrêmement au sérieux dans notre position comme adversaire au gouvernement pour vraiment apporter la nécessité et puis les besoins qui vont refléter les gens de nos communautés et à travers la province.

Oui, on a pris le temps de lire le budget; c'est une des responsabilités fondamentales qu'on a comme député pour représenter les gens de nos circonscriptions. Le message qu'on reçoit de nos circonscriptions est qu'ils

demandent beaucoup une accountability de ce gouvernement. Ils ont vu plusieurs scandales qui sont passés et puis plusieurs argents qui sont fait, plus ou moins, lancer dans toutes sortes de directions pour vraiment protéger des postes.

Puis, là maintenant, il y a des gens—des mamans des enfants qui sont seules à la maison; il y a des pères de famille qui travaillent à deux, trois emplois—qui cherchent une explication ou une justification : comment est-ce que le gouvernement peut garrocher de l'argent à tout partout à travers la province, mais ils ne peuvent pas nous donner ce que nous autres, on en a de besoin pour rendre notre vie, à travers la santé, un petit peu plus sécuritaire; pour être capable d'aider nos aînés dans nos communautés, pour faire certain qu'ils ont besoin de cinq jours et puis la garantie de cinq jours pour que ma mère et mon père ou mon grand-père et puis ma grand-mère sont pris soin de à leur maison?

Ça fait que ça, c'est une affaire qu'on a regardée; puis oui, on l'a lu, le budget, monsieur le Président. On a aussi proposé à ce gouvernement d'imposer que l'ombudsman de l'Ontario peut regarder à ces services-là, à travers des services de santé, pour se rassurer et puis apporter quelque sorte de crédibilité en travers de notre système de santé, pour faire certain que les services qui sont dans le budget se rendent aux personnes qui en ont tellement besoin dans toutes nos communautés.

Monsieur le Président, je veux vous rassurer, on l'a lu, le budget. On a fait nos devoirs et on continue à travailler. Merci.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to follow the Minister of Children and Youth Services to speak about the bill. I was very disappointed to hear the comment of the member from Durham. I would challenge anyone to say that Ontario's Youth Jobs Strategy is not adequate to support our young people.

The other piece is that I held a youth entrepreneurship workshop in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt two weeks ago. Every young person who attended the event across the city—even as far as from Durham and Mississauga came to my workshop—was commenting on Minister Hoskins' good work in the youth jobs strategy. I cannot believe any member of this House can say that \$295 million is not a good thing for Ontario young people.

Let me read to the member from Durham that the government of Ontario will be initiating the Ontario youth employment fund to the tune of \$195 million:

“—Ontario Youth Entrepreneurship Fund to support the next generation of entrepreneurs through mentorship, start-up capital and outreach,” to the tune of \$45 million over two years.

“—Ontario Youth Innovation Fund to support skills needed to lead and manage industrial research, development and commercialization, as well as support young entrepreneurs at universities and colleges.”

This is what innovation is all about. The last fund for Ontario's Youth Jobs Strategy focus on youth:

“Business-Labour Connectivity and Training Fund to promote partnerships among business, labour, educators and youth to identify and solve” problems related to development issues.

So it is very rich for the member opposite to say this is not what Ontario young people want. I can tell you right now, Mr. Speaker, I challenge him to go across his region—across all of Durham—and say this is not appropriate to support.

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

Mr. Rod Jackson: You know, with this budget, we just see more of the same. It's the same old, same old. We're talking about scandal, mismanagement and waste. It's far from the first example that this government is unwilling to really take steps necessary to put Ontario back onto a better path.

This budget should have been used as an opportunity to really rein in spending, decrease the deficit, pay our debt down and get government across the aisle back in the place this province needs to be. Instead, the budget is being used to double down on spending and waste. We're seeing spending increase at a time when even your own economist, Don Drummond, said you need to take action now, and then you actually tout that you've done 60% of it.

Hey, you can't jump a canyon in two leaps; you need to do it in one big leap. You can't do it in half measures; you need to do it in one big, solid step that shows you have a commitment to this province and the people who pay the taxes. It's not your money; it's our money. It's all of our money, and we're here to represent that.

It should come as no surprise to those of us who have been doing our jobs holding this government accountable that they've got an awful lot to account for. It starts with the Liberal seat-saving plan—the gas plants, right? That's what really is the confidence motion we should be talking about here. That's what people really want to vote on. That's what is in the front of people's minds, not a pretend budget that does nothing to solve the province's problems. It's window dressing, just like just about every other piece of legislation we've seen come out of this government in the past couple of years.

Why don't you actually sit down and think about something that will really get this province back on its feet, instead of putting window dressing all over everything, putting pretty names to your bills and making sure you go out and market that? You know what? People are sick of that. They see through it. They want change. They want a government that's actually going to stand up and do what's right for Ontarians, listen to them and actually take bold action that's going to get this province back in shape, not pretty words and pretty bills.

0930

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Children and Youth Services, you have two minutes for a response.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I'd like to thank all my colleagues for their responses to my comments with respect to the budget bill that we're debating here today.

There were a number of things that I'm quite proud are in this budget that I wasn't able to speak to in the 10 minutes that I had. We're talking about \$42 million to help adults with developmental disabilities. We're talking about transforming social assistance and social policy. We're looking at continuing along the way to eliminate the deficit in time. We have the lowest per capita public service across the country, Speaker. There's an increase in community care, with increased support to rural communities. We're creating opportunities.

When I'm in Windsor, when I'm speaking to the staff from my constituency office, and I say, “What are the calls we're getting? What are people interested in?” Speaker, they're looking for help, they're looking for support, and that's what this is providing them.

We're looking at a balance between ensuring our economy stays strong, which we're doing with respect to our investments and our support of business, and investing in our citizens and in the people of Ontario, which I truly believe in. We hear the party opposite, the opposition, say we shouldn't be making these investments, that we need to just focus on the budget. Well, as I said when I started my comments, public policy is not an either/or predicament. It's one where we have to look at both sides and ensure that we have balance in terms of what we're investing in our communities and where we can make some changes to transform how we provide those public services. That's what we're working along, and that is what we will continue to do.

Speaker, as well, if I look back at the past in my riding of Windsor West, in terms of investments that have been made over the last number of years by this government in my riding, if those investments had not been made, I shudder at what that community would look like.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I want to ask you a question.

Mr. Robert Bailey: The Minister of the Environment is going to advocate on my behalf, and I appreciate that.

I'm privileged to stand today as the MPP for Sarnia–Lambton to speak to the 2013 budget motion. I'd like to say up front that I will not be supporting this budget motion.

Interjections.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I know that's disappointing for a number of people on the other side, but I thought I might as well be up front and clear right off the start.

Too many hard-working folks in Ontario and in Lambton in particular are having trouble finding work in this province, and this government has presented a budget that, unfortunately, provides no hope for them.

When we as MPPs stand in this House to debate the budget, we need to make sure that we are representing the interests of the people of our community. Unfortunately, the policies of this government for the last decade have done little for Sarnia–Lambton. This budget is more of the same.

This is a no-hope budget for the people of Sarnia–Lambton who have been looking for work since the good-paying manufacturing jobs have left our community due to skyrocketing green energy prices. This is a no-hope budget for the people who lost their job when this government took a hatchet to the horse breeding and horse racing industry. This is a no-hope budget for people who will lose their jobs when the Sarnia Jail, one of the best-run jails in the province, is closed, and millions in income and indirect spending will be shifted from Sarnia to the Liberal riding of Windsor–Tecumseh. This is a no-hope budget for the people who will lose their job at the Lambton Generating Station when it is closed at the end of the year—closed despite the fact that every energy expert in Ontario knows that the Lambton Generating Station is a prime candidate for conversion and is desperately needed to support the McGuinty–Wynne Liberals’ addiction to unreliable industrial wind turbines.

Despite the wishes of the Premier and the leader of the NDP, the people of Sarnia–Lambton know we can’t waste another year or two talking about problems while they sit on their hands. This is not my opinion alone. My constituents in Sarnia–Lambton have been overwhelmingly in favour of voting down this budget. In fact, I asked my staff to find me any letters from constituents asking that, as the MPP for Sarnia–Lambton, I vote in favour of the 2013 Liberal-NDP budget. Mr. Speaker, there were none. What they did find were emails like this from Mr. Chuck Matton of Lambton Shores. It reads:

“The wind energy situation is completely out of hand!

“We have lost \$2 billion over the last six years for our hydro dealings with the States and Quebec. And we pay the highest rates in North America. Why?

“Again, mismanagement. The only thing green about any of this is the money being wasted.

“The NDP won’t bring down the Liberals because, in my opinion, Ms. Horwath is so unsure of her party’s chances in an election and subsequently losing her seat.

“She talks a good plan at times but always fails to press the Liberals on anything or really try to make a change. Too comfortable, I guess.

“The dice have been rolled and action must begin....”

Mr. Speaker, this is just one example of the tone of the emails my office has received since the Liberals and the NDP began negotiations to keep Premier Wynne and her Liberal henchmen in power.

Here is another. I want to read this into the record because it is important that the people in this chamber are aware of what the people out on Main Street are saying.

This email is from Mr. Rick Hornblower. It reads:

“Well, Bob, almost two years.

“Still not sure about my alliances.

“What I do know is that the Liberals must go.

“My belief at this hour is that the NDP will support the present government.

“As much as the people of this province have had enough of the Liberals, I believe that those like yourself

have to step up the commentary. You need to convince the NDP, and speak out against them in the Legislature.

“As the opposition critic [for corrections] ... you need to take the minister to task on her mismanagement at the London detention centre.

“Make it personal. It is her ministry.” There’s quite a bit more.

“You can quote me in the Legislature, but it seems most evident that in London, the detention centre is being run for the most part by the inmates.

“Additionally, your party cannot give up on pressing the health minister, given all” of the outstanding issues on eHealth and Ornge.

“And do not forget the energy minister and Premier in all of this.

“Relentless pressure, the same kind of pressure and disclosure that sent McGuinty, Bentley and Duncan running away and hiding.”

Mr. Hornblower and Mr. Matton’s frustration with the inaction by the Liberals and NDP is evident. These are the sorts of emails that are common in my office. They are common because people in my community see nothing in this budget that will address their top concern: building the economy in a way that people have the opportunity to work in good jobs and earn good wages. Instead, the Liberal Party has committed the province to another year of no action in the budget, as they promised to “keep studying plans to build the economy.”

There is absolutely no plan to entice corporations or businesses to come to Ontario and to do better. That is a major concern for the residents of Sarnia–Lambton because, as a border community, the residents in my community understand how necessary it is to be competitive for business with our neighbour to the south. They understand that we are in constant competition with the US in order to land the big investments and new jobs.

To highlight this issue and shed some light on the concern that people in my community have with this budget, I want to share an article from First Monday, which is a business magazine printed in Sarnia–Lambton. The article is by a man that Mr. Bradley, the Minister of the Environment, might know from the past: Mr. Chris Cooke. It’s entitled, “146.5 Million Reasons Not to Invest Here.” It reads:

“It was a small story tucked away in a corner of the business section of the Globe and Mail.” This is from the article in First Monday.

“Toyota will build its next-generation Lexus not in Cambridge or Woodstock but in Georgetown, Kentucky. Even the largest car company in the world is shunning Ontario, the most expensive place in North America to manufacture anything. The ES350 will be built in the deep southern United States, where power costs are a small fraction of what they are here and where job-hungry state and municipal governments walk on water to attract auto investment and jobs.

“Unlike Ontario, the state of Kentucky is offering Toyota \$146.5 million in incentives to build cars there.

“Kathleen Wynne doesn’t get it.

“She and former Premier Dalton McGuinty destroyed manufacturing in Ontario by blighting the province with wind turbines and uncompetitive energy costs. She’s closing” down “Lambton Generating Station by the end of the year.

“She’s replacing a perfectly good power source with” a “half-billion dollars’ worth of gas generation less than a kilometre away.”

“Wynne could convert Lambton Generating for a fraction of the cost. Instead of creating jobs, she’s destroying them. Three hundred will be unemployed at Courtright by Christmas.

“She’s out of control and the largest auto manufacturer in the world knows it.

“Toyota is ignoring a provincial government that is out of touch with reality.

“Unlike Wynne, Toyota knows it must build cars people want in a competitive marketplace, and Ontario is anything but” that.

“Power costs are too high. Labour costs are too high.

“Taxes are too high. And there are too many bureaucrats pushing around too much paper.

“Kathleen Wynne, or, as Brian Keelan calls her”—another commentator in that paper—“Kathleen McWynnty, is allowing wind turbines to be built next to million-dollar homes along Lakeshore Road in Plympton-Wyoming.

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“Everywhere we go in Ontario we can see the power but we just can’t afford it. Toyota can see that too and must surely be asking the same question.” I won’t say what the next line was; it wouldn’t be parliamentary. Again, that was an article by Mr. Chris Cooke, editor of First Monday, a publication in Sarnia.

Mr. Speaker, as I said at the outset of my remarks, I will not be voting for this budget because as the elected member of provincial Parliament for Sarnia–Lambton I need to represent the opinions of the people of my community in this chamber. I might add, just to go back over that: the affront on the harness racing industry in the past, Lambton Generating Station, the Sarnia Jail—and that’s just a number I can think of off the top of my head.

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I had some help from the Minister of Rural Affairs; I’ll pay him credit for that. Just as recently as April–May, he and I met, and I think we got some results there. It’s unfortunate that people were put through that, though, for the last year. I will say that.

The people of Sarnia–Lambton want change in government. They want a government that will be courageous in its leadership. They also want a government that will not hide or ignore the problems of today, as this Liberal budget instructs us to do.

In conclusion, I would like to add that it’s been an opportunity and a privilege to stand here today to debate the budget. We did read the budget. I spent some time in the lockup. I know members in my party spent the whole day in there; we spent a lot of time in there.

Hon. James J. Bradley: You’re still voting no.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, we’re still voting no, as the Minister of the Environment said.

We had to weigh it all, and at the end of the day we had to do what’s right by my riding; other members can speak for their ridings.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, unlike my colleagues in the NDP, I cannot support this budget or this government, in good conscience. As we’ve said all along, it’s not so much about the budget; it’s about this government in particular. It’s not about numbers; it’s about this government. We think they’re past their best-before time, and we can’t possibly support them; I can’t possibly support them, as the member for Sarnia–Lambton. My residents are asking for change at Queen’s Park, and I am as well.

At this point, I will thank you for your indulgence and listen to the rest of the debate.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It’s once again an honour to stand here and talk about the budget and respond to some of the comments from the member from Sarnia–Lambton. He talked about his own riding. That’s a good thing; that’s what we’re all here to do.

He talked about the comments of people from his own riding. The comments he’s getting and the comments that I’m getting in my office are quite frankly different. Not everyone in my office is saying they support the Liberals, because quite frankly, in northern Ontario most people don’t trust the government because of the scandals. So I have people saying, “Bring down the government.” I also have people saying, “Make government work.” So I have a hard time believing that there is a universal—not one person in Sarnia–Lambton wants government to work. I have a hard time agreeing with the member on that one, because, you know what? There are various opinions across the province.

A lot of people comment to me, and it’s easy to say, “Oh, the Conservatives don’t read the budget.” That’s not the real problem. With the people who comment to me, the problem is that they said, even before there was any discussion, “We’re going to vote against.” The business people in my riding—a lot of them tend to be Conservative—shake their heads and say, “What kind of response is that? You never, ever say no or walk away from something before it has even been presented.” That’s what a lot of the Conservative-minded people in my riding have a hard time buying. That’s why we are still looking at this and why the one thing that we’re going to need is accountability, because that’s the one thing that no one is buying from this government. We need much stronger accountability measures.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: I’m always hopeful, Mr. Speaker. I was hopeful the member for Sarnia–Lambton would be positive in his response. I know they get their notes. They’re called talking points. The whiz kids—

Interjection: You get them too.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I don't read mine, though.

The whiz kids in the back room prepare the talking points, and members just get up and use them. Now, there were several quotes he had, or emails, that sounded as though they were coming from the Conservative executive, so they had a meeting and they decided they would send all these emails.

The fact is, it's a pretty balanced approach in this budget, and I think most people I've talked to out there—some like some portions of the budget; some say, "I would have preferred something else here or there," but by and large, they've said that it seems to be a reasonable budget that the province can work with.

I recall that from 1977 to 1981, we were in a minority Parliament that worked exceedingly well. Why? The government was responsive to the opposition, and the opposition tended to be responsible. Therefore, it lasted four complete years. Did the government put a little water in its wine? Yes, it had to. Let's hope there's wine after tomorrow to put water in. But the government did that, and the opposition had to tone down a bit in its approach.

We're looking at a budget that has a lot of positive components to grow the economy, to deal with those who have major challenges in these economic times, and at the same time to bring down the deficit in a period of time that's not going to push us back into recession.

I'm looking at my friend from Beaches–East York. He would have been delighted when he saw that the Trillium benefit now can be received either in a lump sum or in individual payments. That's just one part of the budget that has responded to people of Ontario. So I was deeply disappointed that my friend from Sarnia–Lambton was not really enthusiastic about a great budget.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I was intently listening to the member from Sarnia–Lambton, and I certainly agree with many of his comments. I have heard some members of the government wishing that we would speak positively about this budget. Well, I can give you some positive terms. The budget is positively awful; that's exactly what it is. It doesn't decrease spending. It's mind-boggling to me why a government cannot find ways to run this province without spending more money all the time, and that's what we see in this budget.

As far as saying that we would support the budget, of course we wouldn't support this budget, because you look back over the past nine years or so at the record of this government, and why would you support this government? All members on the opposition side, including the third party, have seen what a horrible record and the waste and the spending scandals that this government has been involved with. So why would we prop up a government like this? We certainly wouldn't. As has been proven correct, the spending is continuing at a rate that we just can't afford. That certainly was brought out in the budget that we received last week. That's why we don't support this. We can't support this.

People in my riding have been asking me more and more, and it certainly isn't an onslaught of people—I can agree with the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane on that; not everybody wants an election—but it's getting more and more that I'm being asked, "When are you going to pull the plug on these guys?" Certainly I think that the time has come to put this government out of its misery and get on with an election.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Sarnia–Lambton and, as well, to his colleague from Perth–Wellington who just spoke and reiterated many of the same points. It's quite clear that they are convinced that this government has created a great many sinful acts, and I think there are many Ontarians who would agree with them that the government has done a lot of wrong things in the last couple of years. We recognize, in the New Democratic Party, that there is much unease out there about gas plants, about Ornge, about eHealth, about 100 other things that have gone wrong for this government. But I have to tell you, the reality of this situation is that the people have sent us here, all of us here, to make this province work. They, in their wisdom, determined that this would be a minority Parliament, and we have an obligation from each and every one of the three parties represented here to make them whole, to make what they wanted work.

The easiest course, and the one I think my colleague from Sarnia–Lambton and the Conservative Party have chosen, is just to say no and force an election. That's the traditional role of an opposition party in a majority government.

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The hardest course is to try to make this Legislature work and to improve the lives of ordinary Ontarians. We, in this party, have tried, and we are still trying to do that. We are doing that because we believe that the people out there, the majority of them, want to see this Legislature work. They do not want an election at this time, they do not want the scandals to continue from that side, but by and large, most of the responses we're getting are that people are positive towards the budget itself.

We await Ms. Wynne's decision on where the Liberal Party is going to go with our suggestions, and that's the way it should be.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a privilege to reply to my colleagues from Timiskaming–Cochrane, the Minister of the Environment, the member from Perth–Wellington and, of course, our colleague from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Speaker, recent polls—I mean, we all know what the pollsters—

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes, but who knows what they're good for?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, who knows what polls are good for? One that was a couple of weeks ago said that

over 66% of the people in Ontario wanted a change in government; they wanted a change in direction. They were fed up.

Mr. Michael Prue: How many wanted an election?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I don't know how many wanted an election. I don't remember those numbers now. But like I say, polls are suspect now. I think the Right Honourable John Diefenbaker had a quote many, many years ago, which I won't use here, but he said what polls were good for; he said that dogs knew what polls were good for. That's being held more and more true as time goes on. I think it's the pollsters—I'll probably get myself in trouble with a number of them; I know a number of them. But I think their tactics and their methods certainly seem suspect anymore.

Anyway, it's good; I'm glad I had the opportunity today to hear comments from my colleagues and had an opportunity to speak about the issues in Sarnia–Lambton, and they are many. I want to be able to go back home on this weekend—we're on the parliamentary break, and life wouldn't be very comfortable for me if I went back and said that I was supporting this government, because that's not what I'm hearing at home. It would be very uncomfortable, I can tell you right now. The people who vote for me and even those who haven't made their minds up have already made their minds up on both this government and this budget, and a number of the scandals that I won't go into at this time; they are certainly legion. If I was trying to list them—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Bob, are you going to the races at Hiawatha?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I hope to be able to go to the races at Hiawatha, definitely.

I just would like to sum up with an old quote: It's not that they know so little; it's that they know so much that isn't true.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's with great honour that I rise this morning to offer my comments on behalf of the constituents of Algoma–Manitoulin. What is most important about this bill, Mr. Speaker, Bill 65, the Prosperous and Fair Ontario Act, is what it means for the people of Ontario. At the end of the day, Ontarians have made it clear that they do not want any more scandals or wasted money. They want their elected officials to do what they were elected to do and get results that would make life more affordable, improve health care and create jobs.

We have heard from thousands of Ontarians, and it is their voice we expect represented in this budget. Ontarians demand accountability and they deserve to have it as well.

There are a number of measures in this bill that will not work for Ontarians. This act attempts to look as though it is working for Ontarians by reducing auto insurance, but when you look at the fine print, it's just a weak attempt at doing so. The act establishes an industry-wide target for a 15% reduction in premiums that insurers are permitted to charge in the private passenger auto-

mobile category. That sounds great, Mr. Speaker, and a tad familiar, but the problem is, it is only a target. A target does not mean action. Setting targets is promoting trying, instead of demanding positive change.

FSCO gets an extended mandate to investigate the billing practices of these med rehab clinics and auto body shops, and a process of FSCO sanctions leading to the revocation of licences is laid out if a provider commits fraud. This is a step in the right direction when it comes to accountability. Insurance companies, auto body shops and health clinics all have a role to play and a part in the prevention of fraud. There is no doubt that fraud leads to greater costs when it comes to auto insurance—but if these anti-fraud measures do translate to consumer savings and not just increased profits for the insurance sector.

There is no mention of a review of the neighbourhood discrimination issue. This means that, depending on where you live, no matter your driving record, you will be legally allowed to be treated differently. This is unfair and a practice that the government is well aware of. Ontarians want to see this practice ended, yet all they are left with is another missed opportunity.

We want to bring accountability to this budget on behalf of Ontarians and have already announced a series of proposals that will enhance accountability measures going forward.

It is extremely difficult for people in my riding of Algoma–Manitoulin to understand how the government could squander millions on eHealth, Ornge, and now the gas plants while the north remains underserved in many areas.

I have raised the plight in the Legislature before of a constituent from Chapleau who must travel to Timmins for dialysis three times a week and has experienced long delays with the Northern Health Travel Grant, something that this government had committed to repair in a previous budget. We still are waiting.

It is difficult to understand how billions can be wasted while some northerners are forced into debt seeking medical care they desperately need. It is also difficult to comprehend that the government can throw money away on scandals but cannot spare money to fix the poorly managed northern transportation network. Northerners cannot rely on taking the cancelled ONTC train and must instead rely on driving on underserved roads in northern Ontario. These roads are often closed because of a private contract which has left these roads extremely dangerous to drive on in winter conditions. Now, in the spring, due to blocked culverts and water that is blocking these roads, we can't get to places of work.

Algoma–Manitoulin communities deserve accountability. They deserve to know that every tax dollar is going toward programs and services that will benefit this province and their communities as well. They expect this government to learn from its mistakes and have accountability and transparency issues built right into government policies.

New Democrats are proposing that Ontario's Ombudsman have oversight over the health care system. This

would start to rebuild the trust which has been broken through scandals and the failure to provide Ontarians clear guarantees in the health care system. Ontarians told us that they want concrete changes in health care, and they know better than to just allow the government to keep saying, “Just trust us; we’ll deliver.” Families have seen their faith in this health care shaken by chemotherapy underdosing, scandals at Ornge air ambulance, and the government’s failure to guarantee home care wait times. Asking Ontario’s Ombudsman to have oversight into the health care sector is a fair and reasonable way to start building trust.

New Democrats have also proposed to create a financial accountability office that would track government spending. This financial accountability office would be modelled after the parliamentary budget office at the federal level. It would examine the government’s annual budget and provide fiscal updates for accuracy, something we desperately need.

New Democrats have called on the government to close corporate tax loopholes. This is a no-nonsense policy that would create government revenue to spend on programs that help all Ontarians. Instead, new corporate tax loopholes are set to come into effect in 2015 and would allow corporations to write off the HST on entertainment and meals, something that northern Ontarians cannot fathom to understand—why we continue to do those things. This again frustrates Ontario families. The government wastes money on scandals and cuts programs and services and then goes so far as rewarding some of the highest earners and leaving open tax loopholes.

This budget also falls extremely short when it comes to promises on home care. This government sets a five-day target instead of a guarantee. We should strive to do better, not strive to try to do better. We need commitment to eliminate the 61,000-person wait-list for home care. We need to cap CEO salaries and find executive savings in the health care sector so that we can make guarantees and give our seniors the care they deserve in their homes at the time they need it.

This government brags about creating strategies, but besides adding a youth job program that we, the NDP, originally proposed, there is no program mentioned that will actually tackle the province’s 7.7% overall unemployment rate. This rate can be even higher for northern communities, and we need programs that create incentives to invest and hire in the north.

There are real issues that Ontarians want to see solutions for. This budget is troublesome because it does little to address challenges faced by northern Ontario. There is barely even any mention of the north in this budget.

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There is no talk of an infrastructure plan for the Ring of Fire. It is very unlikely that this project will move ahead and boost the northern economy while the government continues to ignore its challenges.

The government continues to divest ONTC while talking about a pan-northern transportation system. This shows that the government does not understand northern

Ontario, because the ONTC is an important part of the northern Ontario transportation plan.

The budget announces the extension of the northern electricity rate program, investing \$360 million over the next three years, but we need to have this program extended to medium-sized energy consumers. These consumers need to have a break in order to grow in the north so that they can develop their businesses and attract more to northern Ontario.

The government committed to working with stakeholders on the review of the mining tax, but there has been no announcement on progress of this review that was first initiated last budget. Ontario has one of the lowest mining taxes, and we need to ensure that communities are realizing the full benefit of hosting these mines.

There are valuable services that the north has lost, which are having serious repercussions on our local communities. There are no mentions of addressing these issues in the budget. The government refuses to reverse its decisions to cut ServiceOntario offices. Northerners who rely on these counters in Manitowadge, Wawa, Chapleau and along the North Shore of Manitoulin Island have had their hours of service cut in half.

These cuts have had a negative impact on local businesses and local economies, as well as employees who have experienced reduced hours and the loss of jobs. Businesses who rely on ServiceOntario to process transactions have to wait until these kiosks are open to do their business. This is a drag on the local economy.

It is clear that this budget has a way to go to work for Ontarians, and especially northern Ontario. Accountability continues to be a top concern, and we need to have a real effort to bring accountability efforts in. The budget will need to include measures that work for Ontarians in order for Ontarians and individuals in Algoma–Manitoulin to once again support this government.

We’ve set out very precise demands that we’ve been asking for in these discussions that we’ve been having in regard to the budget. I’m very proud of what our leader, Andrea Horwath, has done. I’m very proud of standing here with my colleagues, along with the NDP, doing the work that needs to be done.

It’s quite unfortunate that I look across the way to my colleagues in the Conservative caucus who chose the easy way out. I can assure you: When I’m talking to my municipal leaders and my communities, I hear a mixed message, but the one message that I consistently hear every single time—actually, from card-carrying Conservative members—is, “Why didn’t they at least read the budget?”

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I will end my comments there.

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

Hon. John Milloy: I want to thank the member from Algoma–Manitoulin for his remarks today. I couldn’t help but pick up my remarks from where he ended by saying that, certainly, the New Democratic Party and the Liberal government don’t see eye to eye on everything.

This is an opposition/government relationship but, at the same time, I do give a lot of credit to the NDP for coming forward with ideas and coming forward with proposals for the budget, rolling up their sleeves and working, as I believe most Ontarians want this minority government to work.

As I say, I pick up on his closing comments about the fact that the Progressive Conservative Party have basically been missing in action when it comes to the budget. I gave a media interview recently where I pointed out that when I talk to many people about my role as House leader, they say “Oh, it must be very exciting in a minority government. It must be deal-making and sitting down and”—as I say—“rolling up your sleeves”—and, as I joked in the paper—“ordering Chinese food and working late into the night to say, ‘We don’t like this clause, and if you could fix this schedule or if you could do this, we’ll let it pass. If you allow this bill to go this way, we’ll support you here in committee.’”

I think they’re always disappointed when I say, “Well, no, it actually doesn’t work that way.” I thought it was going to work that way, but instead, we have an official opposition which has just checked out, an official opposition which showed up and basically said, “We don’t care what’s in the budget.” We joked that we could have taken Changebook and put it in the budget, and they would have said, “We’re going to vote against it. We do not want to make this minority government work.”

I feel that that’s very sad. It’s a sad commentary on the message that I think Ontarians will pick up—I think, a point another member made—a message that Ontarians sent to us, which is that it’s a minority government and we’ve got to work together. So I congratulate the member from Algoma–Manitoulin for raising that point. I congratulate the NDP for sitting down and trying to work through things. Let’s hope that we can find a deal.

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

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate commenting on the member from Algoma–Manitoulin. A couple of things he had mentioned—I’m sure there’s probably very few in this Legislature that know about Sultan Road, which he’s talking about. If he knows the history very well, as I do, about Sultan Road, there are certainly a lot of impacts on there. Some of the other things are that when you talk about the mining rates, let’s find out which rate you’re talking about, because look what happened to De Beers at Attawapiskat. If you know what De Beers did in this Legislature, you would certainly think differently about the rates on mining and how it’s impacting. We need to look at all those things.

In regard to the Minister of the Environment, who spoke earlier, where he stated about some of the aspects: When is it that an opposition has actually supported a budget? Tell us when and show us all the details that we can go into—the official opposition, not a third party. If you go into the details now—

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes, but at least they read it.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Read it, yes. Let’s talk about page 31, when it talks about the revenue tax on there be-

cause, actually, I did read the budget. One of the concerns was that, “New revenue tools should enable choice among different transportations available while encouraging the use of public transit.” Is that a reference to a 10-cent-a-litre transit tax in order to support Toronto? A lot of individuals in Oshawa do not want that.

Let’s go to page 35. In the time I have, I want to make some comments about page 35, where it talks about extending the 407, the 35/115, but there isn’t a timeline there. As mentioned here, it talks about a significant component of the things that are happening there. We want to make sure. I’d love to have the time to debate that because I have a lot of answers for that specific issue.

Interjection.

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

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Thank you, Speaker. If we go on to page 208 of the budget, because I did read the budget, it specifically talks—people need to realize it—about a \$3.6-billion spending increase. You want to look at what’s happening in here. You have to realize the whole budget, do an analysis of everything that goes on and understand what the words in there mean in this particular one—pages 31 to 35—significantly. We need to talk about the mining tax, which the member from Algoma–Manitoulin was speaking about. There are a lot of other issues that I hope to get to.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I’m pleased to stand up here and talk about the budget for the members of my riding, London–Fanshawe. I was pleased to hear some of the actual comments from the member from the Conservative Party, because he talked about what was wrong with the budget. He talked about some of the things we’ve been saying, because there are no targets—or, excuse me, there are no guarantees. This budget has targets for things, and we are asking for guarantees. Just because you don’t like something in the budget—you should give feedback on what you want to see in the budget. But the Conservatives have said, “We’re just going to vote it down.”

New Democrats have been very respectful and thoughtful of this process and considerate of the voices of Ontarians and the people that we represent. We see that this government says that they want a target for five-day home care visits. We are saying that that’s not good enough. The people of Ontario want to hold you accountable to things that you’re promising. So we’re looking for guarantees and we’re asking this government to take our considerations very seriously before we decide on this budget.

The member mentioned about transit and how it’s going to be paid for. Well, again, we’re saying that you guys are offering that we’re going to have a transit system. You say it’s going to cost—independently, we’ve heard \$300 million, but we want to make sure we hold you to that and make you accountable because we know that with the Presto transit project—you started off, I

think it was at around \$25 million, was it—somewhere around there? It's now up to \$700 million.

That is not how the people of Ontario want to see a budget. They want to make sure that if you say you're going to spend something and you forecast that money, that's the amount. You've done the homework to make sure that's what it costs. They don't want fiascos that are going to cost three or four times more than what this Liberal government says in their budget.

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: I wish to respond to the debate by the member for Algoma–Manitoulin. I'm just looking through page 62 of the budget. That's the north—I hear that from the member from Thunder Bay often, advocating for the north. People have heard me advocating for Orléans in the Ottawa area. I think it's important that those issues—the low lake water that has a big impact on this member's riding and the docking of the ferry: Those things are so important and those things have to be looked at in the budget.

So I look at “Strong Northern Communities” on page 62, and it talks about the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. It talks about the government “investing \$360 million over the next three years through the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate ... Program.” He mentioned that. He just wants to see that continued longer-term, I believe.

“The Ontario Power Authority's Industrial Electricity Incentive ... program offers a reduced electricity rate on new and expanded production....”

“The government is making significant infrastructure investments to strengthen northern communities. For example, it is building a new Thunder Bay Consolidated Courthouse, expected to be completed,” and the Atikokan General Hospital.

“In 2013, the province is providing northern municipalities with \$339 million in support through the combined benefit of the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund ... and provincial uploads, an increase of \$86 million over the previous program.

“Government support for northern school boards” is a 72% increase since 2002–03.

“The Northern Ontario School of Medicine has graduated a total of 220 new doctors since the spring of 2009.”

So there are all kinds of good things happening in the north, but there always, always has to be that drive to get more for the northern communities who contribute so much to our economy.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I just want to touch on the member for Ottawa–Orléans. You're absolutely right: We always have to fight when we're representing the north. It seems that we're always left on the back burner, and we have to scratch and fight and bite for every single piece that we can get for northern Ontario. I can assure you, you will hear nothing less from me from this side of the House.

I want to also thank the Minister of Government Services for his comments that he brought to the discussion.

The member from Oshawa: You're absolutely right when it comes to the mining tax. Yeah, we have to think about it, but that's all that's been happening over the last couple of years with this government. We keep thinking about it, but we're not implementing; we're not doing anything. We need to sit down to really discuss how we're going to make this a benefit so that some of the municipalities and some of the communities that are providing good opportunities to these mining corporations benefit as well from it. So we need to discuss it, but we also need to take action upon it and stop talking about it.

My colleague here from London–Fanshawe really touched on what my whole message was about, really bringing an accountability measure and making sure that Ontarians have the faith and the trust, and we can re-establish some type of credibility into our government. For far too long, we've seen wasteful spending, unaccountable governments that they are frustrated with. They are beyond their minds as to what is happening with where this province is going.

They are happy with some of the announcements, which are very reflective of some of the demands that we have put forward. That's my role. That's what they've asked me to come to Queen's Park to do, to bring their needs and their wants to the table so that it can be reflected in the policies that this government is looking at moving forward. What they are now asking for, and what they are demanding, is that this government is accountable to delivering those programs to them, to their communities and to their municipalities back home.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'd like the Legislature to welcome the students from grades 10 and 11 at the Oxford Reformed Christian School from the city of Mount Elgin. The students have also brought with them some chaperones and teachers: Jake and Jacqui Van Meppelen-Scheppink, Lisa Groeneweg and Johann VanIttersum. We want to welcome them here to Queen's Park, and I hope they enjoy their day. They experienced one of the great experiences of Toronto—they got caught in traffic coming in.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of guests? The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Actually, Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to wear these beautiful carnations that were given to us by the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, who are having a day at Queen's Park today. I would ask for unanimous consent.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I was told that was coming after introductions, but now that you've done it, let's do it.

Do we have unanimous consent to wear the car-nations? Agreed? Agreed.

Introduction of guests?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce the interns in my office, Mackenzie Radan and Mariam Balika. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature, and we all hope you enjoy your time here. They're in the west lobby, Speaker.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's my pleasure to welcome to the Legislature today Taylor Workman, an officer with the Royal Canadian Navy, from London West, and Cassie Andrew, a third-year wildlife biology and conservation management student at the University of Guelph. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'd like to welcome four guests who are here in the gallery today to support my private member's resolution this afternoon: Miss Judy Mead, Mr. Brendan Pooran, Ms. Dawn Roper and Mr. Gordon Kyle from Community Living Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, I'd like to introduce the family of one of my favourite pages here, Chedi Mbagha. The mother is here, Leila Mbagha—where are they now?—and brother Jerome Mbagha—

Interjection: There they are.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There they are: brother Jerome Mbagha, sister Mariama Mbagha, sister Naila Mbagha, brother Kisenge Mbagha, and friend Robert Lowenstein. Welcome. Good to have you here.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: With your permission, I'd like to say goodbye not to only all the pages who will be leaving us tomorrow but, in particular, Mr. Simon Osak from the noble institution from Upper Canada College, which I share.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce a class from Maranatha Christian Day School in Drayton and their teacher Laverne Good. They're just starting to filter in on other side there. Welcome.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I guess I did that a little bit in reverse order, but I would like to introduce some guests who have come down to participate in the MS Society Day at Queen's Park. They are Laurel Ireland, who is the daughter of a good friend of mine; Rona Ramsey; also, Mr. Yves Savoie, who's the executive director for the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada; and Cathy Topping, who came to see me with her caregiver Marg. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'd like to introduce a couple of interns at the Ministry of Education this summer who are sitting in the east members' gallery: Paulina O'Neill and Natasha Milne. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of guests? The member from—the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Who are you recognizing?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Okay. Actually, Mr. Speaker, I stand as the Minister of Government Services to intro-

duce interns from my office: Azeem Patel, Zain Haq and Benjamin Atkins.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Mr. Speaker, just coming into the gallery up there are students from the Crawford Adventist Academy, an academy that's in my riding. I just wanted to welcome them, as I just did downstairs a few minutes ago.

Mr. Norm Miller: I want to introduce—I don't believe they've quite made it here yet—Elizabeth and Siegfried Kiessling, who are down at Queen's Park today for lunch with their MPP. They were successful bidders at an auction in support of Christine's Place. I'd like to welcome them to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the member from Sudbury and page Megan, aunt Anne-Louise Sabo, uncle John Sabo, uncle Jerry Tonello and cousin Zachary Tonello are here to visit Megan. Welcome, and thank you for joining us.

In the Speaker's gallery, I'd like to introduce some lifelong friends of mine from the riding of Brant. Three of them are retired; the other one's coming close to retirement. They're lifelong friends of mine: Dom DiBartolomeo, Mike Rafferty, Bill Chopp and Bill O'Neill. We're glad you're here with us.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is to the Deputy Premier. I find it remarkable that this government, which claims to be so open and transparent, can continue to pull the wool over Ontarians' eyes. Yesterday, the Premier met with the leader of the third party. It would seem to me that they are simply planning their next move, at Ontario's peril. The NDP were handed seven of their demands in this pathetic excuse for a budget, and they're asking for more. While the leader of the third party stands here one day claiming she has lost confidence in this government's accountability, the next day she is meeting with the Premier in a bid to keep them in power and the NDP at the table. Well, a pox on both your houses. Ontario needs a change. We need real action and an immediate stop to these charades and delusions of grandeur.

Would the Deputy Premier please tell us: Did your Premier take the Lexus lane to meet with the leader of the third party to throw future Ontario jobs under the bus?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think what this province needs is a budget. I think we need a budget to be passed in the House, and that's what we all should be talking about. You know, there's a lot at stake. This isn't a political game, Speaker; this is about real people who are waiting to know whether or not this budget is going to be passed. So let's talk about who's watching very, very carefully. Maybe the 30,000 young people who are going to benefit from the youth job strategy—they're watching

very carefully to see whether this Legislature will pass the budget that will get them the jobs that they need. How about the low-income families who are waiting to see whether we collectively will pass a budget that will increase the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Before I go to the supplementary, the member from Cambridge will come to order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I should have expected that kind of public relations messaging coming from a party with an unelected Premier. It seems to me that the only thing they can do right is to spin and shift focus away from their failed record. Well, spin this: Out of all of the provinces, Ontario has the highest level of provincial debt—\$273 billion. Ontario has lost—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, don't use the opportunity when it gets quiet to talk.

Finish the question, please.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Ontario has lost 58,000 private sector jobs in March alone. Here's the spin for the Liberal comms office: You cannot spend more money than you're taking in and still hope to balance the books. Taking advice from a party that is infamous for Rae days is not only poor strategy, but also compromises the future of the province. Credit rating agencies have already downgraded Ontario. Deputy Premier, how can you stand here and tell Ontarians your government is being transparent, or does the NDP have to make another ask for that?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As you can imagine, there are a lot of people talking about what this budget means for them. I think the member opposite might not care about the people on social assistance who are very, very excited about the opportunity to keep more of the money that they earn, but I bet he will care about what Ian Howcroft, the vice-president of Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, has to say about this budget. He says, "We are pleased to see the government formally recognize the importance of manufacturing to the province's economy.... Overall, this budget is a good signal that the province wants to work closer with industry."

This is a budget that has widespread support. It's time to get this budget passed.

1040

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: The Deputy Premier should be mortified that this is the hope that has been offered to Ontario families. Ontarians deserve more. Ontarians deserve a government with a Premier of their choosing, which yours is not. Ontarians deserve transparency. Secretly meeting with the leader of the third party in back-room talks does not instill confidence, in me or in the rest of Ontario, that your Premier actually wants transparency.

The time for talk has ended; now is the time for action. Only Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus have shown

clear and principled leadership to bring Ontario back to the top in places to live, economic performance and opportunity. The leader of the third party has made a deal with the devil.

Deputy Premier, does your caucus actually believe in its own budget—

Interjections.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Speaker, "the devil" is unparliamentary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Etobicoke North will resist, because I want him to go to his seat so I can tell him to stop.

Borderline. I remind you to stay away from that kind of language, please.

Finish. You have—wrap up.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'll just put the question, Speaker.

Deputy Premier, does your caucus actually believe in its own budget, or is the leader from the third party giving you a pill that's just too tough to swallow?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: You know, the member opposite raises the question of a democratically elected leader. I think he might also take a moment to think about what the people of Ontario sent to the Legislature the last time we went to the polls. They sent a minority government. They want us to make minority government work.

That's exactly what we're doing. This budget contains essential Liberal values. It also contains elements that are common ground with your party, with the third party. But over and above everything else, this is a budget that the people of Ontario want and are anxious for it to be passed.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question this morning is for the Deputy Premier. This week at the justice committee, we heard the Liberal political interference drove up the cost of your gas plant scandal. Michael Killeavy of the OPA told us the energy minister's chief of staff instructed them to put a richer counter-offer to give the Oakville proponent more money. This morning, John Kelly of the Attorney General's ministry told us the province had no obligation to pay damages for the full value of the contract, yet the Premier's office clearly instructed the OPA to do so.

The Premier signed off on the 2011 deal that kicked off this drive of costs in Oakville. Her signature was on that document. Deputy, why won't any of you admit when you knew it was more than \$40 million?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I think the member should review Hansard of what Mr. Kelly told the committee this morning. Let me share some quotes with him.

This is what he said on the idea of the issue of negotiating by the Premier's office. He said, and this is John Kelly, counsel to the Ministry of the Attorney General:

“To be fair to them”—by that he means Mr. Steeve, Jamison Steeve of the Premier’s office—“he did say throughout these notes that they were not there to negotiate; they were there to listen.” He went on further to outline how important it was to reach a deal with TCE as opposed to going into litigation, and let me again quote: “In my experience of 40 years of litigating, if you can avoid litigation, you should. It’s a process that is fraught with risk.”

I think what Mr. Kelly did was point out that in the situation we were in, we took the best course in terms of negotiating.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, I come from northern Ontario, and I’ve got to tell you, you can put as much baking soda on a dead skunk as you want; it still stinks.

Mr. Killeavy joined a long list of witnesses who told the committee the Liberal government knew, for months, the Oakville cancellation costs would be higher than \$40 million, but no Liberal will stand up and tell us when they knew that. Your Premier was either part of or leading the government that directed those bad proposals that drove up the cost.

Your government squandered \$585 million, all to benefit the Liberal seat-savers, instead of going to cancer treatments, MRIs or long-term care for seniors. Will somebody over there tell the Ontario taxpayers why you refused our confidence motion in this House yesterday?

Hon. John Milloy: The member opposite references the Premier, and I would remind him that it was this Premier who wrote to the Auditor General and asked him to expand his investigation to look into the Oakville situation. Mr. Speaker, let me quote what Mr. Michael Killeavy said in front of the committee. He said—listen to this—“These costs cannot be known with certainty at this point in time.” He went on to say, “The cost of relocation of both plants are estimates which are dependent on assumptions and information which becomes available over time. Because of this, numbers can and do change.” I think, Mr. Speaker, you would agree we’ve taken the responsible course in asking the Auditor General to look into this situation.

You know, Mr. Speaker, if you want to talk about Mr. Killeavy, let’s talk about what he said about the opposition’s antics to have documents released during the negotiations that were going on. He had this to say: When we were at “the negotiations, we were always trying to keep a close eye on the costs ... to the ratepayer,” keeping it “as low as possible.” I’ll finish it in my supplementary.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Deputy, your Premier’s political apology was just that: political. At home when you break a window, you don’t say, “I’m sorry the window broke.” You say, “I’m sorry I broke the window.” Your Premier said, “I’m sorry for the decisions that were made,” and she said, “I’m sorry about the mistakes the government made.” But it was the Premier who signed off on the

2011 arbitration agreement, and several other of you cabinet ministers signed off on that as well.

What Ontario wants to hear is, “I’m sorry I made those decisions,” and somebody from the Liberal Party has got to stand up and say that. Will it take a judicial inquiry and the threat of jail doors slamming to get somebody over there to tell us the truth, Speaker?

Hon. John Milloy: The member talks about politics. Let’s go back to last summer, when there were very delicate negotiations going on, and he and members of the opposition were calling for commercially sensitive documents to go forward. And as I said, this is what Mr. Killeavy had to tell the committee. You want to talk about Mr. Killeavy’s testimony? This is what he said: When we were at “the negotiations, we’re always trying to keep a very close eye on the costs and keep the costs to the ratepayer as low as possible. If documents had been disclosed, it could certainly prejudice our position in any negotiations.”

Mr. Speaker, that honourable member and his colleagues could have cared less last summer when they were demanding sensitive documents to come forward which would have prejudiced the negotiations. He’s one to talk about playing politics.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Finance. We are pleased that after months of hard work by New Democrats, the Premier has agreed that she needed to own up and apologize for the gas plant fiasco.

But taking responsibility means more than just saying you’re sorry; it means taking steps to make sure that it never happens again. Will the Minister of Finance be adding new accountability and transparency measures to his budget?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Accountability measures are critical in any operations of any government. It is why we introduced accountability measures in 2004 with the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act. We took initial steps to ensure that any pre-election report be assessed appropriately so we don’t have a repeat of what happened when they had a \$5-billion hole in their budget. Another item: we also provided an accountability act called the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act in 2010, again to bring higher accountability standards for lobbyists and enabling us to ensure that any activities going forward are measured and have proper oversight.

Mr. Speaker, in the budget, on pages 217 to 220 and pages 143 to 145, we have a number of accountability measures that have been added to ensure that we take proper steps and proper oversight measures always.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: None of those things that the finance minister just talked about stopped for one second what happened in the gas plant fiasco—not one of them.

1050

Speaker, words are easy to say, but taking action requires real leadership. New Democrats worked for weeks and we finally got an apology for the gas plant fiasco.

But now we need to see action to make sure we aren't back in the same situation on some other matter.

Will the finance minister agree that the Premier's apology is one thing but Ontarians want to see real action on accountability and transparency?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We agree that we have to enhance accountability on an ongoing basis. We recognize that certain mistakes occurred, and corrective actions have been taken. We have provided legislation, which has been stalled by the opposition, to try to do just that when it comes to air ambulance—and other measures. We are doing what's necessary.

The suggestions provided by the third party are interesting. We welcome the opportunity to have that discussion and we look forward to having a very productive conversation.

But let's get the budget passed. Let's move forward, because what's at stake right now is even greater, and that's the people of Ontario and ensuring that we take these initiatives that are in this budget to move forward. We're very open, and welcome any further enhancements that we can make to accountability measures.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: Ontarians are tired of being let down by their government. I hope everyone agrees that Ontarians deserve better. An apology doesn't give families any comfort that waste and scandals will be stopped before they start.

Does the finance minister agree with Ontarians that the budget needs to be more transparent and more accountable to people in order to end all of the things that have happened in the past?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let me refer to page 217 and page 143. We have chapters in this budget that speak to accountability. We have measures in here that speak to the initiatives to enhance and increase our accountability. We agree. We recognize how important it is to have these oversight measures in place. We're taking those steps. We've done so under the Ministry of Finance; we're doing so with all ministries, for that matter. And under the treasury board and management board of government, we're taking initiatives to ensure accountability.

So to the response to the member opposite: I appreciate your suggestions. We welcome them. We're taking actions on them as well.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Catherine Fife: To the finance minister: Ontarians told us that the budget needed to be made more fair, accountable and transparent. Will the finance minister tell Ontarians if this government will actually start being accountable and create a financial accountability office?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the fourth question on the matter, and let me reaffirm that we're taking measures. We're taking precautions. We're taking steps to initiate even greater accountability. I appreciate the recommendations made by the third party. For that matter, I appreciate recommendations made by all parties.

What we need is to put forward a budget that does indeed speak to the people of Ontario. We have a budget that is balanced, that is fair and speaks to those who are wanting to invest in Ontario. It also speaks to those who are most vulnerable in Ontario to help them.

More importantly, we want our government to be accountable. We want our government to deliver on its issues, and we want the government to deliver for the people of Ontario. We're looking forward to doing that together.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Ontarians want and need this budget to be made more transparent, accountable and fair. Will the government ask Ontario's Ombudsman to oversee our health care system and act as an advocate for patients?

Hon. Charles Sousa: What we need right now is to pass the budget that talks about creating jobs and promoting growth, that talks about being fair to all Ontarians and that talks about helping people in their everyday lives. This budget speaks to that.

It also speaks to measures to increase accountability to ensure that whatever government is in power, that it be accountable; whatever government and whatever programs are brought forward, that we have proper oversight. We recognize that. We share those same concerns. We want to make certain, though, that we pass this budget. Let's work towards making us all more accountable.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Ontarians told us that the budget needed to be made more transparent, accountable and fair. That's what they want to see. That's what they need to see.

Will the finance minister agree to stop telling families that they need to pay \$300 million to toll carpool lanes, while at the same time he hands a \$1.3-billion corporate tax loophole to corporations?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The notion of a tax loophole of \$1.3-billion is not true. It's not a loophole; it's not new; it is something that has been in existence, and the exemption comes forward in 2015 to 2018. We're asking the federal government to work with us to curb and stop those initiations so that we can balance our books.

Around reducing gridlock, I would expect that the third party would agree that we need to enhance HOV lanes in order to initiate and reduce gridlock for the benefit of all Ontarians. The extra hour that a transport truck is struck in traffic is an extra hour of lost productivity. We're talking about \$6 billion in lost productivity in this province because of gridlock. So we have to take these steps to move forward on that.

I would hope that we pass the budget. Let's work together for the benefit of all Ontarians.

LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I rise to ask the Minister of Finance a question. Minister, when I rose in the House

yesterday morning, your government had 36 hours to prevent an impending strike at the LCBO. Now there are 13 hours left to prevent a strike that would embarrass this province and hurt its tourism industry on this long weekend.

It's now a day later, and no progress has been made. In fact, OPSEU union bosses have ordered the set-up of dozens of strike headquarters across the province.

Minister, when people say that they want a dry long weekend, an LCBO strike is not what they had in mind. Will you stand with Ontarians today and prevent an LCBO walkout, or will you play your usual game and cower to the big union buddies in the public sector?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we respect the collective agreements. We want the LCBO and the employees to bargain in good faith. We recognize that the members opposite would rather create havoc and not allow for a collective agreement to occur. We're not doing that. We're going to allow them to have their discussions.

I'm hopeful and I'm confident that they'll come to an agreement so that we'll all enjoy a good long weekend. Let them do their thing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Minister, in the 2009 collective agreement, your Liberal government awarded OPSEU workers at the LCBO with a 7.75% wage increase over four years—almost double the rate of inflation. If the latest Statistics Canada data is to be believed, OPSEU is demanding that part-time staff at the LCBO be paid double—double—what the equivalent employee in the private sector would receive. That's double, Minister.

This government cannot afford to continue awarding big raises to unions at the expense of Ontario's fiscal future. Will the Minister of Finance stand here today and commit to taxpayers that no increases will be awarded and that liquor sales will proceed this weekend?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let me be clear: What the opposition wants are results, and what we've been able to achieve is close to zero-zero over the last couple of years. Our compensation envelope remains the same. Please recognize that our growth and spending have been below 1%, so we are achieving results.

We recognize that the parties all want to negotiate. Allow them that opportunity, because when they bargain in good faith, when they have that ability, it provides for the best result in the end.

I'm hopeful that we are going to have a resolution. A mediator is involved. A blackout is now before us. Let them do their work, and let's come to a resolution that all parties will agree to.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Yesterday, the Ontario Ombudsman came to the committee that was looking at Bill 11, the air ambulance act. Mr. Marin yet again urged the government to grant his office oversight of Ornge.

The Ombudsman had received complaints from whistle-blowers years before the scandal made the headlines. He was told about high executive compensation and the use of public dollars on the private side of Ornge, but he wasn't able to investigate. My question is simple: Has the minister heard enough proof? Is she finally ready to grant Ombudsman oversight of Ornge and our health care system?

1100

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted that Bill 11 is now before committee. I think members of the committee are doing their work, and that's exactly what they should be doing. Speaker, it's important to me that this legislation get passed. It's also important to me that the committee do their work, hear from witnesses and make their decisions about the bill going forward. I want to let that committee do its work. It's an important piece of legislation. I look forward to it coming back.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ombudsman oversight is not in the bill, and unless the minister gives her okay it will never be included in the bill. The committee cannot do this without the minister's support.

Ontarians were hoping that Ornge would mark the end of an era of scandals in our health care system. They want to be assured that our health care dollars are being properly spent and serving the needs of the people of Ontario. We will continue to lack accountability and transparency unless the Ombudsman receives the right to investigate complaints. The Ombudsman actually receives complaints about hospitals—hundreds of them every year—about long-term-care homes and continues to receive complaints about Ornge, but he doesn't have oversight.

Will the minister prove that her government is capable of learning from their mistakes and grant Ombudsman oversight of the health care system?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know the member opposite is deeply interested in making sure that health care in this province is delivered to patients who need it. I know that she would be interested in knowing what is happening at Ornge. There is a new patient advocate in place now. They've got a conflict-of-interest protocol established. Of course, they have a new CEO, a new COO and a new board. The salaries of senior leadership have been posted online. The whistleblower hotline is now active. The new medical interiors have been approved. The Thunder Bay base improvement plan has been approved. There are a lot of good things happening at Ornge, and I know that the member opposite would also be very happy to know that the two surplus helicopters have been sold.

NORTHERN ONTARIO HERITAGE FUND

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. In the recent Ontario budget, I was thrilled to see the commitment made to continue to support northern regional development. I'm speaking specifically about the Northern Ontario Heritage

Fund Corp., which provides funding for entrepreneurs who are committed to creating jobs and growing businesses in northern Ontario communities.

When I was in Timmins and Thunder Bay for pre-budget consultation, I saw first-hand the positive impact this program is having in northern communities.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can he please inform the House how our government's commitment in the 2013 budget to the NOHFC will provide a positive impact on communities all across northern Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks to the member for Scarborough—Agincourt for the question. Certainly, the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. is something that, as a government, we're very, very proud of, and as northerners we're particularly proud of. May I say it's a thrill, as minister, to be in a position to chair the heritage fund board.

What we are excited about is our strong commitment in the 2013 budget: \$100 million in annual funding to the program, which of course is an increase of \$60 million from the last term. This is something that makes a great deal of difference in terms of job creation in the north. Some interesting statistics, Speaker: Since 2003, the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. has approved over \$834 million in funding, leveraging over \$3 billion toward 5,000-plus projects. Over 22,000 jobs have been created in the north and retained in the north—great news for economic development in northern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: After listening to the minister, it is quite clear that the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. is having a positive impact across the entire north.

Where I believe the NOHFC is having a big impact is in giving northern Ontario's young entrepreneurs the best possible start. While I was in Thunder Bay, I had a conversation with young Ontarians who were able to remain in their hometowns in northern Ontario because they were given an opportunity through NOHFC funding to start a business that provided them with the best possible start to their young entrepreneurial career. Although these entrepreneurs may have ventured down different business paths, what they have in common is that they are able to create jobs in northern Ontario.

Once again, through you, Speaker, to the minister: Can he please share with the House how young entrepreneurs from across northern Ontario are being positively impacted by our government's commitment to the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp.?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm just, of course, delighted with the support from the member for Scarborough—Agincourt, and all my colleagues on all sides of the House. Certainly, speaking of the positive work the heritage fund is doing to support young entrepreneurs in northern Ontario—we want to keep our young people in the north.

We are supporting our young business people with creative and strong business ideas in creating their own job opportunities by opening up their own businesses. This does allow them to stay in their communities. It

allows them to contribute to the local economy and create jobs.

I could go through a long, long list—we've helped young entrepreneurs—we funded a fitness centre in Sudbury, a music studio in Kenora and a clothing company, a wonderful one that I patronize myself, in Thunder Bay, just to name a few. We've approved over 400 projects that have created over 800 jobs. It's truly tremendous to see the government working to keep young people in the north and helping them pursue their dreams and their visions.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Minister of Community and Social Services: We have a made-in-Ontario crisis from years of neglecting our developmentally disabled. We've all heard the disturbing stories of families unable to cope.

The Callaghans are coming to Queen's Park today; 20-year-old Anna is developmentally disabled and requires care 24/7. Both parents work. Anna is eligible for 24 hours of nursing care a week. The Callaghans asked for only 34 hours a month, but in March, her agency could only provide 12. When Anna finishes her education next month, she will have no supports.

This afternoon, our health critic is calling for a select committee on developmental disabilities to ensure that Anna, the Callaghans and other families receive the support they require. Minister, do we have your support for this resolution?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I am proud to say, in support of the colleague opposite, that I will be delighted to support the motion this afternoon. I think that anything we can do together to address some of the serious challenges that we have is something that we must do.

I would just point out that one of the ways we're trying to address some serious challenges that we must all address is through our budget. I specifically point to the additional influx of dollars to assist in the developmental disabilities sector; I'm sure that the members opposite support that.

I'll be delighted to support the motion, and urge all my colleagues on this side to do the same thing. We can use all the help, together, that we can get, and if we can do it on behalf of the people who are most vulnerable, good for us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Whitby-Oshawa.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: While we are grateful and this sector is grateful for the money that has been allocated in this year's budget, we know that it will not be sufficient to help all of the 12,000 people who are on the wait-list for service. It will help somewhat, but there are some innovative solutions that are being proposed by service providers across the province. I believe that a select committee shall have the opportunity to explore those and be able to disseminate them across the province, so I

am very grateful for your support. We look forward to the committee being established—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mrs. Christine Elliott:—so it can begin its work as soon as possible, because, as the minister knows, the need is urgent.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to hear that. Anything that we can do together to respond more appropriately to the most vulnerable folk that are there and need our help is good. You're right: There are a lot of innovative ideas that we can't—

Interjections.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Do you want to hear the answer?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Maybe your colleague in front, who asked a serious question, will have a chat with you, but we're with you. I think, together, we can get some important and good, innovative things done that will serve a lot more people. I think we'll all, in the end, be able to feel good about having worked together to do that.

1110

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Deputy Premier. There are laws in this land that say you have to hang onto documents—you cannot shred documents as a result of leaving your employ. When you work in the Premier's office, when you work within the government, there's something that's called a preservation notice. Chris Morley, your chief of staff, along with all of the staff in the Premier's office, would have gotten these preservation notices in order to not shred documents.

The question to the Deputy Premier is this: Why did Chris Morley, the Premier's chief of staff, shred documents as he left the employ of the Premier last June?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: In terms of some of the specific cases that the honourable member raises, as members know there is a committee of this Legislature which is looking into the issue of documents—that was the main focus of the committee before it was broadened.

But in terms of the general question, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, both as House leader and as Minister of Government Services, that we take our obligations very seriously as a government. We are very committed to being open and transparent. There are record retention rules, as the honourable member is aware, that require that certain official government records are retained as long as needed. We have taken a number of steps in terms of new staff, particularly new political staff here, to make sure that they are aware of that obligation, and we certainly take it seriously and will continue to work with the system to make sure that the rules are followed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The rules were not followed; that's the point. People left the employ of the government as political staff and they destroyed the documents. They hit the delete button and cleared the archives so that the records would not exist to shed light on the decisions that were made by your government. How can you stand in this House and say that you're living up to the law when it's clear in committee—testimony says that they deleted the records?

So I say to you again: Are you above the law? How do you get the rights to shred records?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: We have made every effort to provide the committee with the information they've requested. As members are aware, there were an initial 56,000 documents that have come forward. The committee has asked for other documents that we have worked diligently to provide to the committee.

The Premier not only asked the Auditor General to come in, not only offered a select committee, which the opposition, including that member's party, turned down, but she offered a broad government-wide search, broader than anything that had been asked for by the committee. We made that offer through Liberal members of the committee, and the opposition turned it down.

As I said, we take our obligation very seriously. We are working, particularly with new staff, to make sure that the safeguards are in place going forward.

ELDER ABUSE

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the honourable minister responsible for seniors. Recently we witnessed some terrible instances of domestic senior abuse. Many seniors may find themselves weak and defenceless while others may suffer from conditions such as dementia, leaving them in a state of vulnerability.

For many seniors in my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, this is a serious concern, but more so it is a concern for family members who worry and wonder how their loved ones can feel safe and secure in their residence.

Speaker, I'm asking the minister today: What measures is our government taking to ensure that our seniors living in retirement homes will not be subjected to abuse?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Thanks to the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Our government does not tolerate any form of elder abuse. It is my commitment and that of this government to make sure that our seniors live in healthy and safe homes.

We were the first government in Canada to introduce a strategy to combat elder abuse, setting very clear terms for our seniors. In 2003, Ontario invested some \$8 million in elder abuse prevention and awareness initiatives. Additionally, in 2010, our government passed the Retirement Homes Act, the first provincial legislation protecting seniors in retirement homes, requiring them to have a policy in place promoting zero tolerance of elder abuse,

complying with the residents' bill of rights, ensuring mandatory annual staff training on fire prevention and safety, zero tolerance of elder abuse, and whistle-blowing as well—

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

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister, for advising us on the measures already taken to prevent abuse and neglect of seniors.

But abuses take many different forms and are often perpetrated by close family members or acquaintances; sadly, these are not reported. Minister, it's a serious problem as too many remain silent due to fear, shame or lack of awareness. As you know, Minister, the senior population is growing—more than doubling by 2036. With that demographic in mind, the number of seniors seeking alternative living in retirement homes is going to rise dramatically as well. Through you, Speaker, to the minister: In order to prevent and eliminate elder abuse, could the minister please tell us what actions are being taken by the ministry?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I can appreciate the member's commitment to the well-being of seniors. Let me say, as the minister responsible for seniors, that the Premier and this government treat the well-being, safety and privacy of seniors in this province with utmost importance. Speaker, our proposed budget further addresses the elder abuse by continuing to commit to Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors to provide better access to health care, quality resources and improved safety and security for Ontario seniors. The budget also demonstrates that the government is committed to moving forward with additional recommendations concerning seniors' safety, as well as from Dr. Samir Sinha's report, *Living Longer, Living Well*. Together with public education, raising awareness, we can provide seniors with a safe and enjoyable retirement home.

TENDERING PROCESS

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, I would like to inform you about a long-standing problem with our outdated labour laws in this province. For years, certain unions have successfully exploited a legal loophole in the Labour Relations Act that allows them to certify municipalities and school boards as if they were construction companies. Once this happens, the public sector employers become trapped in a labour monopoly which requires them, by law, to contract out all publicly funded infrastructure projects to companies organized by a specific union. This unfair practice on average restricts 70% of qualified contractors from working on public projects and increases infrastructure costs by 40%. Minister, will you take a stand for taxpayers today by closing this loophole?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I appreciate the member raising an important issue. I believe the member opposite will also be tabling a private member's bill on this matter today or sometime soon. I look forward to reading the bill and the content of the bill.

But as you know, Speaker, our government believes in a fair balance in labour relations. We want to make sure that all parties involved in labour negotiations have the opportunity to negotiate agreements that are fair to both parties. I do understand that some broader public service institutions have become bound to province-wide construction agreements. There is a provision within the Ontario Labour Relations Act that allows for those broader public service employers to seek exemptions. They have to file to the Ontario Labour Relations Board in order to do so, and then there's a process that ensues from there on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Minister, that process is actually flawed, and this is not a project that can be reviewed, studied, analyzed, evaluated and assessed just so we can have another conversation about it. It requires action now. Certain unions have already trapped several public sector employers in labour monopolies, including Hamilton, Toronto, Sault Ste. Marie and the Essex school board; and now the region of Waterloo is at risk of becoming the next victim of this legal loophole, at a cost of roughly \$78 million. Minister, today in fact I'll be tabling the Fair and Open Tendering Act to protect taxpayers in my region and in all communities across this province. Will you take a stand for Ontario taxpayers and end closed tendering today?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I noticed with interest that the member opposite called the system flawed. I don't know if he remembers that it was in 1998 that Jim Flaherty, then Minister of Labour, actually put that system in place and then further on, in 2000, refined the system even further. The system we have in place was actually put in under the watch of the previous Conservative government, which is now the official opposition.

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So the system has been there and has worked well over the years. It's a system that is designed so that an arm's-length agency or tribunal like the Ontario Labour Relations Board is the one making the decision whether an employer is a construction or non-construction employer. The government should not be making those decisions; the board should be making decisions.

However, the member opposite is tabling a bill. I look forward to reading the bill and having further discussions with him on that.

CHILD PROTECTION

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Many children work in Ontario's recorded and live entertainment industries, and many of these children work in substandard conditions. Some very young toddlers are being denied basic rest periods, healthy snacks and safe waiting areas, and many older children work excessive hours each day.

Can the minister tell us what successive Liberal governments have done to provide real protection for child performers?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Well, we obviously have, under our employment standards laws, strict rules around the kind of duties that children can participate in, and I look forward, obviously, to learning more about this issue with the member opposite. If he has any specific concerns, I ask him to provide me that information, and then we can work together on it.

Most recently, I had the opportunity to meet with the actors' union, ACTRA. They did not raise this issue to me, but I will, along with you, reach out to them to see if there are any specific issues so that we can, together, work to ensure that all children in our province are protected and nobody is abused or violated.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Yesterday, I tabled Bill 71, the Protecting Child Performers Act, 2013. Writing this bill was a collaboration among ACTRA, Equity, my staff and legislative legal counsel. It's a good bill, and, coupled with strong regulations, will provide significant protection for child performers in Ontario. It will be a model for other provinces to follow.

Why has this government never supported legislation that would bring in long-overdue protection for child performers?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: First of all, the member opposite is tabling a bill, and I look forward to reading the bill and giving it careful consideration, so thank you very much for your work on this, working with important partners and stakeholders on this, because it's important.

But I do want to say that we respect the member's concern for health and safety and employment standards, children enjoying the workplace. In fact, to address those concerns regarding the implementation of health and safety laws for children in this industry, we have an excellent and readily accessible child performance guideline for reference. If that guideline is not sufficient and your bill has some more to offer, let's work together and see how we can improve on it.

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

Mr. Phil McNeely: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. We have made great strides in our education system. Our graduation rates and test scores continue to rise, and our education system is considered one of the best in the English-speaking world, if not the world.

But to have a great education system, it's so important that we do more to ensure that all of our students, no matter where they live, have access to a world-class education. I know that there is a lot more work that needs to be done to address the student achievement gap between aboriginal students and non-aboriginal students. At my budget breakfast last Friday, there was concern by several people about this important issue.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: Could the minister please inform this House what is being done to improve educational outcomes for aboriginal youth?

Hon. David Zimmer: Closing the achievement gap between aboriginal students and non-aboriginal students, whether it's on reserve or off-reserve, is a priority for this Premier, it's a priority for me as Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, and I know it's a priority for the Minister of Education, and I'll ask the Minister of Education in the supplementary to give some of the details.

But closing that gap is important, because education is the key to raising oneself up in socio-economic status. In that regard, last Monday or Tuesday night, I, along with Jeff Leal, the Minister of Rural Affairs, participated in a conference at Trent University, one of the leading universities for aboriginal studies in Canada. Tom Symons, Harvey McCue, Paul Martin and aboriginal leaders, experts in aboriginal education—we had a conversation to begin addressing this issue.

Similarly, I attended a conference in Winnipeg: all aboriginal affairs ministers but no federal participation—

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: We can all agree we want a fair and equal Ontario. I'm pleased to see that the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs has taken such strong interest in improving student achievement for aboriginal students. I know that our budget commits further funding to support our aboriginal students.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What are some other initiatives our government has undertaken to assist aboriginal students?

Hon. David Zimmer: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Yes, thank you to the member from Ottawa-Orléans for his excellent question. I've been pleased to work very closely with the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs as we work towards improving outcomes for aboriginal students. For example, last month, the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, the federal government and our government signed an historic memorandum of understanding. The agreement calls for all three parties to work together to support NAN youth so that they have every opportunity at success.

Our government is providing over \$45 million to improve student achievement for First Nation students. Our budget, which we should get passed, commits an additional \$5 million per year to support our aboriginal students. We know that more work needs to be done to support aboriginal student achievement in Ontario, and our government is committed to ensuring that all students in Ontario have access to our world-class education system.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question today is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, can you tell me how much first-hand experience the Ministers of Environment, Municipal Affairs and Housing, and Rural Affairs have in dealing with industrial wind turbines?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for Huron-Bruce for the question. We're talking about renewable

energy projects in the province of Ontario—a significant part of our long-term energy plan. The FIT program has generated 31,000 jobs. It has had a very large take-up in rural communities. In fact, over the last two or three weeks, I've met with a number of co-ops with very significant representation from farmers in the rural community. They are asking for more renewable projects. They're looking for more procurement so they can be part of eliminating dirty coal generation in the province of Ontario.

We're going to continue working with renewable energy proponents, including those in the rural areas. We have had some difficulties, particularly in the rural areas. We're addressing those by putting together a program that will give municipalities more control, particularly over wind.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Minister, I can tell you that the people on this side of the House have lots of experience in dealing with wind turbines. You would be wise to listen to us because, I'm sorry to say, this window is broken, too. Your working group of four is a little too late in devising a proper plan for the siting of wind turbines. Nevertheless, I hope your plans include going to places like Huron county and Bruce county and talking to people who are facing 1,000 more turbines around their homes. And don't forget about the people of Simcoe-Grey, Durham, Amherst Island, Wellington-Halton Hills, Haldimand-Norfolk, Dufferin-Caledon, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Northumberland-Quinte West, Chatham-Kent-Essex, Perth-Wellington, Nipissing, Prince Edward-Hastings and Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, while you're at it.

Minister, your Premier talks about wanting to work together in this Parliament. In the spirit of working together and co-operating, will you invite members of the opposition to join your working group to provide first-hand insight and halt the construction of industrial wind turbines until—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm very pleased to refer this to the Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Our government believes a strong, healthy Ontario includes strong, healthy rural communities. Our government is committed to working with municipalities on the siting of wind turbines—

Interjections.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's enough.

Answer, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, don't start right as soon as I stop.

Hon. Jeff Leal: —with rural municipalities and stakeholders, and we'll continue to advocate for them as we move forward on this very important issue.

CASINOS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Finance. It is now being reported that the OLG has a funding formula for a Toronto casino. OLG is telling people they have provided that formula to the Premier's office. Will the government come clean and tell Ontarians if OLG has provided the funding formula to this government?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have transformational changes happening at the OLG. We've made a commitment that we will also revise the funding formula to be equitable and equal throughout the province. We're taking the steps necessary to reflect those issues and to ensure that everyone is treated equally.

But I think what the matter that the member is asking is the decision that has to be now made by those municipalities and, in this case, Toronto. Toronto has before them a decision to make with regard to proponents who are looking to invest over \$3 billion in capital infusion. Regardless of the hosting fee, they have to make a determination if they are interested in having a casino and, for that matter, all the other aspects that they're proposing to bring forward.

I will say this: We will release the formula when we are comfortable that it does, in fact, allow for equity and fairness throughout the entire province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: It's absolutely clear now that the government has the formula and that they refuse, and have refused, to release it. The government needs to be transparent about its plans for a Toronto casino. They need to be transparent with this Legislature. They need to be transparent with the city council, and most importantly they need to be transparent with all Ontarians.

OLG says it has provided the government with the funding formula for the Toronto casino. Will the finance minister come clean with Ontarians and stop hiding the new casino funding formula?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The formula already exists. What we're looking for is alternatives to actually enhance the valuations of these hosting fees right across the province. It's not going to be unique to Toronto; it's going to be for the entire province. We have alternatives that we're reviewing. When we are comfortable with those reviews, when we are comfortable with how best to address the needs of the entire province, not just one municipality, we will release it.

We're not hiding anything; it's already there to be seen. What is necessary, though, is that the municipalities and those that have the funding formulas before us now make a determination if, in fact, they want to even entertain the notion of having a casino in their respective municipality.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Research and Innovation. I

know our province has made significant employment gains since the end of the recession. Our government has invested in programs and initiatives that increase employment and grow our economy. But while important gains have been made, our youth employment rate simply needs to be better.

When I speak to young people in my riding of Oakville and around Ontario, they say the government needs to continue taking action and needs to continue to invest in programs that increase employment opportunities for young people.

Ontario's young people are highly educated. They're very talented. They're very capable. It's important that we provide them with the opportunities that they need to succeed.

Speaker, through you to the minister: What is this government doing to improve employment opportunities for young people in the province?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member from Oakville for that question. Creating opportunities for Ontario's youth is a priority for our government. I am proud to say that our budget reaffirms this commitment. With an investment of \$295 million, our government's comprehensive youth jobs strategy will help promote employment opportunities, entrepreneurship and innovation for youth in this province of Ontario.

As the Minister of Research and Innovation, I have a first-hand opportunity to see the effect of entrepreneurship and innovation in the production of results. Through entrepreneurship and innovation, jobs are created, economic growth is possible, and also, solutions to our challenges can be found.

Mr. Speaker, our government's youth jobs strategy recognizes the importance of supporting entrepreneurship and innovation in this province. They are the driving force for our future and the foundation for our knowledge-based economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'm glad to hear we are continuing to make those investments in programs that support our youth.

Our budget commitment of \$295 million to Ontario's Youth Jobs Strategy, I think, is an important step in improving youth employment. It's an investment that I'm proud to tell my constituents about in Oakville. By investing in initiatives that support youth employment opportunities, entrepreneurship and innovation, our province will be able to compete and succeed in today's global knowledge-based economy.

With increasing competition and an aging population, it's more important than ever that we provide our youth with the training, the tools and the skills that they need to succeed. Ontario's success, obviously, is directly linked to the success of our youth.

Through you, Speaker: Can the Minister of Innovation please tell us more about the youth jobs strategy in the province?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Again, I thank the member from Oakville for that question.

Our youth jobs strategy will bring together youth, young professionals and community leaders to help develop training and employment opportunities. Through the youth jobs strategy, our government has committed \$45 million to the Ontario Youth Entrepreneurship Fund. This fund will help generate nearly 6,000 mentorship and job opportunities.

Our government will also invest \$30 million in the Ontario Youth Innovation Fund. This fund will support our youth to develop the skills they need to conduct research and commercialize their innovation. It will also support young entrepreneurs at universities and colleges.

By investing in initiatives that support employment, entrepreneurship and innovation, our youth will have the opportunity to succeed and ensure that our province of Ontario will remain as a leader in the global market.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing 38(a), the member for Huron–Bruce has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Energy concerning the working group on siting industrial wind turbines. This matter will—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All day.

This matter will be debated Thursday, May 28, at 6 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have some sad news. This is the last day for our pages. We want to thank them for the wonderful work that they have done and wish them well back at school.

Applause.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment has indicated he's going to double their pay.

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

The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Michael Harris: I would like to welcome, in the members' gallery, members from the Progressive Contractors Association, the Christian Labour Association of Canada, Merit Ontario and the Ontario Road Builders' Association here to Queen's Park as I present my bill, the Fair and Open Tendering Act. Thank you very much, gentlemen, for coming.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Introduction of guests.

Mr. John O'Toole: As we are all celebrating today wearing the carnations for the MS Society, I'm very pleased to introduce three members from the MS organ-

ization, whom I met with at break: Carolyn Allman, an ambassador for MS, from Peterborough; Michael Roche, the social action director for MS, from Whitby—I've known Michael for a long time; and Fanuel Ephraim, an MS ambassador from Oshawa. They bring forward a very important argument.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

POWER PLANTS

Mr. John O'Toole: This government's response to the Mississauga and Oakville gas plants scandal has finally led to a public apology, but not an accurate public apology. As Vic Fedeli said today, they should say, "I'm sorry for breaking the window"; not "I'm sorry the window is broken." Do you understand? Take ownership for your own actions, or lack of them. Given the government's history of delays and denial, the apology is simply too little, too insincere and too late.

Many Ontarians see the apology as yet another attempt at crisis management—and they've got lots of them. Most constituents of mine feel the McGuinty-Wynne government has reached the point where it will say anything to make this \$600-million scandal go away.

The government can show it is sincere in its apology by agreeing to a judicial hearing into what went wrong and who knew what when. This government could have proven its sincerity by submitting to a confidence debate which was called for by our leader, Tim Hudak.

Stand up and do the right thing. Bring some transparency and accountability to this Legislature.

I can only say that this government has come full circle, from denial to a public apology, and there's nothing to indicate anything has substantially changed. It's a shame.

CONCESSION STREETFEST

Miss Monique Taylor: It's a pleasure that I rise today in support of an annual festival in my riding of Hamilton Mountain. On Saturday, June 1, the Concession Street BIA will be hosting Hamilton's biggest single-day festival, the Concession StreetFest.

This festival has become a hallmark of my community. In fact, this is the 17th year that the BIA will organize this one-day festival. It has free admission, and it offers entertainment, including petting zoos, face painting, inflatable bouncers, live entertainment, cultural variety shows and several art exhibits.

This year, we will try to break the Guinness world record to have the most people blowing bubbles at the same time. Last year, we tried kazooos. Unfortunately, we were not successful. So I encourage all Hamilton residents and those from around the area to come out and participate in StreetFest and assist in our quest to break the Guinness world record.

The volunteers from the BIA have not gone unrecognized. This year, Concession StreetFest has been nominated for the Hamilton Spectator's 2013 Reader's Choice Awards for best entertainment—favourite event or festival.

On behalf of my many constituents, I wish to thank the many volunteers of the Concession Street BIA who have worked hard over the past 17 years. Each year the festival gets bigger and better, and we owe it to these volunteers who commit so much of their time and energy.

I look forward to seeing everyone there on June 1.

AHMADIYYA MUSLIM COMMUNITY

Mr. Steven Del Duca: As the MPP for Vaughan, I am proud to recognize the contributions of my local Ahmadiyya Muslim community, which continues to show great dedication both in their yearly organization of interfaith events and in their dutiful promotion of peace and harmony in my riding.

This Saturday, May 18, marks the opening ceremony and inauguration of the Bait ur Rahman Mosque in Vancouver, British Columbia. This mosque will be the largest of its kind in British Columbia, and we have a number of members from my community of Vaughan and from the greater Ontario Ahmadiyya community travelling to Vancouver to attend this important event.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at was founded in 1889 and currently has over 15,000 mosques, 500 schools and 30 hospitals serving communities all over the world. Membership in the Ahmadiyya community exceeds tens of millions of individuals, each promoting the Ahmadiyya values of "love for all and hatred for none." Of equal importance to the community is their emphasis on interfaith harmony and integration, both of which are fundamental values that we can all stand by and support.

Islam places great importance and emphasis on the building of mosques, therefore the inauguration at the Bait ur Rahman Mosque is no small achievement. The Ahmadiyya community of Ontario, led by their national president, Lal Khan Malik—who happens to be a resident of my riding—has truly contributed to the success of our province. I am thankful to them and to those individuals from their community who are active in Vaughan.

I want to send my sincerest thanks and congratulations to those celebrating the opening of the new Bait ur Rahman Mosque both in Vaughan and in the province of Ontario generally.

ASSISTANCE TO FLOOD VICTIMS

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Today, I wish to share with this House one of the reasons why I take great pride in representing the beautiful riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. My constituents have always stepped up to help people in need, and once again, the city of Cornwall has added a new chapter to this proud history.

Recently, disastrous flooding in northern and central Ontario has forced many residents out of their homes—

among them, the residents of the remote Kashechewan First Nations community on the shores of James Bay, who required temporary accommodations. Cornwall did not hesitate to welcome them with open arms, under the program run by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. Kashechewan residents were welcomed in Cornwall during the state of emergency and housed in Cornwall's largest, state-of-the-art hospitality facility, the Nav Centre, on the shores of the St. Lawrence River.

I'm proud to tell this House that local residents contacted city hall offering any and all assistance that may be required for the displaced First Nations residents, some of whom already had the opportunity to experience Cornwall's welcome in 2005 due to a similar natural event.

I congratulate the city of Cornwall, Nav Canada, and my local residents for stepping up when help for fellow Ontarians was needed, and to take the opportunity to highlight our region's potential. The displaced Kashechewan residents flew into Summerstown Regional Airport, only a few kilometres east of the city, in South Glengarry. The Nav Centre provided outstanding hospitality, catering, training and conference space, and has recently undergone renovations to enhance its already superior accommodations. Our region has much to offer and a warm welcome will always be there for you whether in times of need, on business, or just visiting.

SCHOOLS IN TORONTO—DANFORTH

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my honour to recognize two schools in my riding that are celebrating great anniversaries the weekend of May 25. Holy Name Catholic School is located at Carlaw and Danforth. It first opened its doors to elementary students in 1913. Today, it has 350 students from every part of Toronto's multicultural mosaic. It reflects the history of the area. The Holy Name community has changed over the years, just as the Danforth has, from predominantly Irish in the early decades, with a strong Italian community in the 1950s and 1960s, and finally, to the multicultural community that populates the school today. It's a great school, a key part of the community.

On the north side of the Danforth, Jackman school, appropriately, on Jackman Avenue, is holding its 50th anniversary celebration on Saturday, the 25th. With 700 students, Jackman has roughly half its students in French immersion. It's a platinum eco-school with a green roof—the only school that has one in my riding—and is home to a beloved child care centre, Jackman Community Daycare.

Speaker, the weekend of May 25 is a big weekend for these two schools and for my community. I wish them all the best of success and many more years to come.

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ROBBIE'S RAINBOW

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a real pleasure to stand in the Legislature today to tell you about the inspirational

efforts made by a young man in my community whose name is Robbie Murray. He's a nine-year-old boy, and he lives in Oakville, and he has Crohn's disease.

Crohn's is a destructive disease that eats away sections of the intestinal lining of your digestive tract. Robbie has been battling Crohn's disease since he was six years old. Traditional treatment, in his case, was not successful, but a new drug called Remicade has helped Robbie fight back.

It has now become Robbie's mission to help other children struggling with severe Crohn's disease receive the biologic drug treatments they desperately need but sometimes can't afford. So Robbie and his mother, Kate, created Robbie's Rainbow. It's a charitable organization that's dedicated to improving the health and quality of life of children who are living with Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.

Robbie's Rainbow has raised funds with candy sales and fundraising parties with silent auctions, and they had a great gala last Saturday evening. Since 2010, they've helped over 20 other children access critical drug care.

I'd like to applaud Kate, Robbie and all the ambassadors from Robbie's Rainbow for the inspirational efforts to commit their time and skills to make a difference in the lives of children who are living with Crohn's disease.

BRUCE POWER

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today to congratulate the largest operating nuclear facility in the world, Bruce Power, on their 12th anniversary, which was celebrated this past week.

Not only were they celebrating their anniversary, but they also launched their free iPad application to provide people in Ontario with an interactive tool which has an energy calculator to better understand the cost of their energy bills. This feature allows users to input their monthly electricity use and compare the costs of the different sources of energy generation, the average percentage cost impact from each source and the amount of CO₂ produced.

The app also provides extensive information on the role Bruce Power plays in Ontario to provide a safe, reliable source of affordable electricity, through videos, news feeds and interactive figures. The app also features Bruce Power's extensive engagement efforts to improve the lives of people in communities it serves, and it also provides user tips on things we can do to conserve electricity.

Bruce Power has always been at the front of innovation, and this is no exception. The free app can be downloaded at www.brucepowerapp.com. We look forward to their future BlackBerry application as well. Users who download the application before June 15 have the opportunity to enter a draw to win free electricity for a year.

I want to congratulate Bruce Power and their president and CEO, Duncan Hawthorne for their 12 years of innovation, community dedication and clean, affordable energy production.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member's statement? The member for Pickering-Ajax.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Pickering-Ajax is fine, Mr. Speaker; it is listed as Ajax-Pickering.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Ajax-Pickering.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member from Ajax-Pickering, I would like to take this opportunity today to bring to the Legislature's attention the initiatives taken on ability and access in Ontario.

In 2005, our government passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, the AODA, to provide accessibility standards to achieve a barrier-free Ontario by 2025. Ontario now has accessibility standards mandated in five key areas: customer service, employment, information and communication, transportation, and the design of public spaces.

But expanding and improving accessibility is an ongoing process that demands co-operation. My hometown, the municipality of Ajax, has established a 10-member accessibility advisory committee to provide advice to council on specific initiatives to be undertaken by the town to remove barriers, as intended by the AODA.

In 1987, Rick Hansen's Man in Motion tour brought issues of ability and access into the national spotlight. In response, National Access Awareness Week was formally recognized across Canada. It is in support of the initiatives like those of the town of Ajax, and at their humble request, that I formally announce May 26 to June 1, 2013, as National Access Awareness Week. NAAW celebrates the achievements made by and for people with disabilities, with the intention of public awareness. This noble campaign is yet another step in creating a more accessible Ontario.

As a colleague of mine once said, "At the end of the day, a more accessible Ontario is a stronger, healthier and fairer Ontario."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member from Ajax-Pickering for his statement.

COBOURG COUGARS

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Today I'm pleased to rise and congratulate the Cobourg Lakeland Multitrade Cougars hockey team on winning the Ontario Minor Hockey Association minor bantam A championships. In recent years, the Cougars have made it to the semifinals and even the finals but were, sadly, robbed of the championship—but not this year. This year the Cougars won the championship with a commanding 7-3 victory over the Burlington Eagles.

I want to extend congratulations to the dedicated coaching staff: Joe Ferguson, Gord Oosterhof, Mike Ainsworth, Jeff Snyder and head coach, Rick Ainsworth. Your dedication to youth hockey is an inspiration.

I especially want to thank the Cougars players—Max Carlson, Jeff Scott, Kavan Dobos, Kyle Snyder, Sean Hill, Brayden McGregor, Corey Saman, Nikolas Van Laren, Tanner Sheppard, Nicholas Ainsworth, Jarret Desormeaux, Jacob Massie, Noah Dickinson, David Torrie, Nicholas Oosterhof, Greg Peters and Jacob Kellar—for an outstanding season of hockey. You gentlemen worked hard and brought an OHA championship home to Cobourg. Congratulations.

I also want to thank Lakeland Multitrade for their continued support of the Cougars. The tremendous impact your sponsorship has on the families and the community of Cobourg cannot be overstated.

I look forward to cheering on the Cougars in the 2013-14 season. Go, Cougars.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FAIR AND OPEN TENDERING ACT (LABOUR RELATIONS FOR CERTAIN PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYERS IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY), 2013

LOI DE 2013 POUR DES APPELS D'OFFRES ÉQUITABLES ET OUVERTS (RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL CHEZ CERTAINS EMPLOYEURS DU SECTEUR PUBLIC DANS L'INDUSTRIE DE LA CONSTRUCTION)

Mr. Harris moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 73, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 with respect to certain public sector employers in the construction industry / Projet de loi 73, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail en ce qui concerne certains employeurs du secteur public dans l'industrie de la construction.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: The Fair and Open Tendering Act would prevent municipalities and school boards from becoming trapped in labour monopolies by exempting them from the construction sector provisions in the Labour Relations Act.

For years, certain unions have successfully exploited a legal loophole in Ontario's labour laws that allows them to certify municipalities and school boards as though they were construction companies. If organized, these public sector employers are forced to accept a collective agreement that is bargained at a provincial level on behalf of all construction employers and which contains stringent contracting-out restrictions. This bill would end this practice by exempting municipalities and school boards

from province-wide bargaining in the construction industry.

TRIPLE “D” HOLDINGS LTD. ACT, 2013

Mr. Colle moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr17, An Act to revive Triple “D” Holdings Ltd.

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): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

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FAIRNESS AND COMPETITIVENESS IN ONTARIO’S CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR L’ÉQUITÉ ET LA COMPÉTITIVITÉ DANS L’INDUSTRIE ONTARIENNE DE LA CONSTRUCTION

Mr. McNaughton moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 74, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 to alter bargaining rights conferred by pre-1980 working agreements in the construction industry / Projet de loi 74, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail pour modifier le droit de négocier conféré par des accords de fait conclus avant 1980 dans l’industrie de la construction.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I’m pleased to introduce my bill, the Fairness and Competitiveness in Ontario’s Construction Industry Act. Quite simply, a newly uncovered wrinkle in Ontario’s construction labour laws means that an established Ontario construction company is now being forced to increase its use of unionized labour while new, and often foreign, competition is not. This puts the Ontario company at a crippling disadvantage and has created an uneven playing field that mainly benefits out-of-province competitors who are not impacted by the same outdated law from 1958. This act will fix a problem and save thousands of Ontario jobs. I ask my colleagues here today to join me in supporting this important bill and supporting Ontario jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I move to introduction of bills for the next round, I remind all members that reading the explanatory note of the bill is the common practice. If that is indeed a part of the explanatory note, I accept that. Just as a reminder.

Introduction of bills. Introduction of bills. Last call for introduction of bills.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SOUTH ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Hon. Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, the month of May is South Asian Heritage Month, and each year since it was proclaimed in the House in 2001, it has become our tradition to observe this month and recognize a community that has helped build this province. I invite all honourable members to join me in acknowledging the significant contributions Ontario’s South Asian community has made and continues to make in our great province.

This year marks the 175th anniversary of the arrival of the first immigrants from the Indian subcontinent. On May 5, 1838, hundreds of South Asians arrived and began to settle in the Americas. More than a century later, many migrated to Canada and to Ontario.

Today, Ontario’s South Asian community is more than a million strong and extremely diverse in culture, religion, language, heritage and tradition. They have roots in countries such as India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Uganda, Kenya and several countries throughout the Caribbean. Here in Ontario they have made a significant impact—culturally, socially and economically.

We are proud of the many achievements South Asian Canadians have made in the fields of education, health care, arts, business, science and, of course, politics. One just looks around this room and you can recognize that contribution. We are proud of their success. Canadians of South Asian heritage help make our province stronger and a more wonderful place for all of us to live.

This month, let us join in festivities being held across the province to celebrate the rich South Asian culture, and let us also take time to recognize how diversity has helped shape this great province we call home.

POWERLINE SAFETY WEEK

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I rise in the House today to mark the province’s first ever Powerline Safety Week. The theme this year is “Look Up, Look Out and Locate!”

Over the past 10 years, Speaker, 28 people across the province have been fatally injured after coming in contact with live power lines. That’s why Ontario’s Electrical Safety Authority, the ESA, is focused on raising awareness about how people across Ontario can keep safe at work, at home and in their communities.

Speaker, and honourable members of this House, by working together with its partners, the ESA is on track to reduce the number of electrical fatalities, injuries and accidents, and they’re one step closer to accomplishing their ultimate goal, which is having zero electrical fatalities and injuries in Ontario.

We know that we still have work to do when it comes to electrical safety, especially in the workplace. Some 73% of known electrical incidents occur in the construction sector, where heavy equipment such as cranes

and dump trucks can often hit power lines, particularly when there are no dedicated staff that are spotting on these sites. In fact, over 60% of electrical fatalities on the job can be attributed to improper procedures. We also know that electrical tradespeople account for 29% of all electrical-related fatalities in the workplace. These are serious and sobering figures.

Etched in my mind, and I'm sure in the minds of many people in Elora, Ontario, is a horrifying example of a workplace incident that occurred in December 2011. A 29-year-old man working for a private company was killed when the aluminum pole he was using to string Christmas lights outside a home in Elora came into contact with an overhead power line. The young man collapsed and was pronounced dead at the scene. The incident was especially upsetting because it occurred just a few weeks before the holiday season. Hearing about preventable accidents like this one serves as an important reminder that in addition to the workplace, safety at home and in the community is also important.

This is a very interesting statistic, Speaker: 75% of all fatalities outside the workplace happen around the home or in public places. That's why Powerline Safety Week, the first ever in Ontario, strives to put electrical safety top of mind, so people are aware of what to look for and how to protect themselves.

As we mark this very first week of power line safety, I ask all honourable members of the House to keep these safety tips in mind, and I ask this of all Ontarians as well. Share them with your family and your friends; members can share them with their constituents as well.

If you work on a construction site, always have a spotter to make sure equipment is placed well away from power lines. Also, be sure to remove or prepare for any hazards before beginning a job on a job site.

Check all power lines before cleaning eavestroughs or pruning trees. When digging in your yard, call your local utility company to check for underground cables. Most importantly, use a licensed electrical contractor for any electrical work that needs to be done at home. Finally, if you do see a downed power line, stay back from it and call 911 immediately.

I encourage everyone to visit the ESA's website at esasafe.com for information and tips about staying safe from electrical hazards. Let's all work together to keep our families, friends, communities and workplaces safe.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

SOUTH ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. It is with great pleasure that I rise on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, to recognize South Asian Heritage Month.

This annual tradition began through legislation crafted by a former member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, Ontario PC Raminder Gill, who I believe had the distinction of being Ontario's first South Asian MPP.

Raminder understood the importance of recognizing Ontario's South Asian community, and that belief led to the creation of this month, a month that showcases the accomplishments of the South Asian community, commemorates the history of South Asian Canadians and honours their ongoing legacy. That legacy is deep and wide, drawing as it does on direct and indirect migrants—people who trace their roots to not just India and Pakistan but also Bangladesh, Nepal, Afghanistan, Uganda, Kenya, South Africa, Singapore, Malaysia, Fiji, the United Kingdom, the Caribbean and beyond. That diversity is a great blessing.

All of these things enrich the culture and economy of this province and are all important elements in making Ontario one of the best places in the world to live, work and raise a family.

My riding of Burlington is located in the region of Halton, whose dynamic communities owe a great deal to the South Asian community. India is the top source country for newcomers to Halton. In Milton, the fastest-growing community in not just the province but also the country, Urdu is the most popular non-official language.

Since arriving here at Queen's Park, I have had the opportunity to spend time with leaders in the South Asian community, celebrating the achievements of individuals like Halton Police Constable Hardy Singh, and to take part in outstanding events like Diwali in Brampton, Khalsa Day festivals in Toronto and this weekend's Punjabi International Film Festival.

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The South Asian community is an integral part of a diverse society whose people are bound together by respect for our varied backgrounds and experiences. Their story of creativity, industry, passion and perseverance is one that all Ontarians should celebrate, not just in South Asian Heritage Month, but all year round.

POWERLINE SAFETY WEEK

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'm pleased to stand in the House today to recognize Powerline Safety Week. I'd like to commend the minister, in following her and her remarks. I'd like to take this opportunity, as well, to congratulate the Electrical Safety Authority and the newly formed Community Powerline Safety Alliance for the development and promotion of this important public awareness. At home or on the job site, it is important that workers are aware of the dangers that exist in their environment and are vigilant in their efforts to reduce their exposure to those risks.

The importance of power line awareness cannot be overstated. The existing network of power lines crisscrossing Ontario touches virtually every single home, business and building in Ontario. Everyone working at elevation or digging into the ground needs to be fully aware of the location of power lines before they begin any projects.

Unfortunately, as long as people continue to ignore these risks of operating in close proximity to power lines

without full awareness of their location, workers and homeowners in Ontario will continue to suffer serious injury and/or death. Working around power lines must be done with extreme caution and precision.

Prior to representing Sarnia–Lambton at Queen’s Park, I worked for over 30 years in Sarnia–Lambton’s world-class petrochemical industry. For a number of years during that period, I worked as an industrial crane operator. Job one as a crane operator was always to locate the potential hazards, like power lines, in the vicinity of a job site, or as the Electrical Safety Authority puts it, “Look up, look out and locate!”

In the same spirit of Powerline Safety Week, last June this Legislature took action to create a province-wide notification system for the location of underground utilities, to remind people to always call before they dig. By June 19, 2014, all owners of underground infrastructure in the province will actively be participating in the location of utilities, with the intent of reducing dangerous accidental strikes when digging and excavating.

It is my hope that Powerline Safety Week will generate that same outpouring of support from stakeholders as Ontario One Call, and will grow to have the same positive impact on homeowners for workers’ safety across the province.

In closing, let me reiterate the message of Powerline Safety Week: When working outside, always look up, look out and locate.

SOUTH ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I am proud to rise on behalf of the NDP caucus and our leader, Andrea Horwath, to join in celebrating South Asian Heritage Month. I think it’s a great time to celebrate the unique diversity that we have here that makes up the Canadian mosaic, and the Ontarian mosaic, as well.

One of the unique and very important aspects of South Asian Heritage Month is, while there are eight countries represented by the region, each country has a unique and vibrant culture within that country, and there are numerous languages and cultures spoken. I’m going to try to talk about and quickly address each, or many, of the ones that I can, and I apologize for not being able to cover them all.

The countries have been listed—Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Myanmar—but within each country there is a myriad of other communities as well. For example, there is Gujarati, Bengali, Punjabi, Sindhi, Tamil, Sinhalese, Telugu, Malayali, Marathi, Pashto, Balochi, Hakka, Rajasthani, Hyderabad, Goan, and Manglorean. There is a multitude of languages spoken, like Hindi, Urdu and Farsi, as well as others which represent a community and a culture as well as a language.

There’s such diversity, and one of the beauties is that when we celebrate the diversity of communities, we do two things: One is that we celebrate the importance of having a unique culture and a value, but also we see that

there are so many similarities, despite our differences. Despite the unique, diverse elements of various communities and cultures, there is always that underlying commonality that we all share. I think that that’s something that we should all celebrate; when we celebrate our diversity, we also celebrate our commonality as well.

I am very excited and very honoured to rise today to celebrate this month. I think it recognizes the contributions that South Asians have made in Canada and Ontario. One of the most important things that we can do as politicians, as elected officials, is we can recognize the great work of other communities and other people. That’s one of the great honours that I think we all have in this honourable House, that we can go to events and recognize the great work that volunteers, activists and community organizers do to add to the beauty and the vibrant nature of our communities and our cultures and our societies. I think that’s a great, great thing we can do, and I encourage everyone to take part in the various events that are going on in your ridings across Ontario to celebrate our diversity, to celebrate those unique communities that bring so much to where we live and add such a distinct flavour and value to our lives and to our society.

Thank you so much, on behalf of the New Democratic Party. We join everyone in celebrating South Asian Heritage Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses? Member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton, carry on.

POWERLINE SAFETY WEEK

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I also am proud, as part of the New Democratic Party and as the critic for consumer services, to join with the minister in celebrating this week being the first-ever Powerline Safety Week; it runs until May 19.

As stated by colleagues from both parties, this week is essentially about spreading awareness that could potentially save a life. Any time we can spread awareness and spread knowledge that can help in saving lives, I think we need to take that opportunity to do so.

I support this initiative because over the decade, 28 Ontarians have died due to contact with live power lines. Sadly, the reality is that these deaths could have been prevented. Most of these incidents occurred around the construction sector, where heavy equipment such as cranes and dump trucks can hit a power line, and it’s on busy sites where there are no dedicated spotters that this becomes a particular concern. A large factor in how these accidents happen can be attributed to improper procedure. If it’s improper procedure that causes these accidents, then it’s proper procedure that can prevent them.

We as a society have an obligation to ensure that our work environments are safe for employees, and one way to ensure they are safe is to have proper procedures and guidelines in place. The Community Powerline Safety Alliance, a group formed by the Electrical Safety Authority, ESA, a safety organization of educational institutions and local utilities, including PowerStream,

has used a slogan—the slogan has been repeated, and I think it assists to repeat it again, “Look up, look out and locate!” when it comes to power lines near their homes, in their communities or where they work. This is a basic step and a very powerful slogan that can assist in preventing very preventable deaths in our society.

Also, when digging in your garden or for fence posts or deck supports, please make sure you call Ontario One Call at 1-800-400-2255 to check for all marked underground cables.

Children, obviously, should not be playing around power lines or electrical equipment.

I think we can all do our part to ensure we prevent these deaths. I’m happy that in my riding, Hydro One Brampton has been using this slogan in their industry updates. Again, “Look up, look out and locate!”

PETITIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I feel a need to ask us to get back into some kind of normalcy for petitions. I’m going to ask the member from Durham to start us off.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O’Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased to lead off the parade here this afternoon.

“Whereas the Ministry of Health is planning major changes” to the provision of OHIP physiotherapy services “as of August 1st ... ; and

“Whereas this will drastically reduce the number of allowable treatments to 12 per year for people who are currently eligible for 100 treatments annually; and

“Whereas funding for physiotherapy services to seniors in long-term-care homes would be cut by almost 50%, from an estimated \$110 million per year to \$58.5 million per year; and

“Whereas ambulatory seniors in retirement homes would have to travel offsite for physiotherapy; and

“Whereas under the changes scheduled for August 1, the cost of visits under the CCAC (community care access centre) model will rise to”—listen to this one—“\$120 per visit, rather than the current fee of \$12.20 per visit through OHIP physiotherapy providers; and

“Whereas these changes will deprive seniors and other eligible clients from the many health and mobility benefits of physiotherapy;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the de-listing of OHIP physiotherapy clinics as of August 1st not proceed and that the provincial government guarantee there will be no reduction in services currently available for seniors, children and youths, people with disabilities and all those who are currently eligible for OHIP-funded physiotherapy.”

I’m pleased to sign this and ask John Yakabuski to be quiet.

1340

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from all over Ontario, including the Minister of Education’s riding.

“Whereas agencies that support individuals with a developmental disability and their families have for several years (beginning in 2010) faced a decline in provincial funding for programs that support people with developmental and other related disabilities; and

“Whereas because this level of provincial funding is far less than the rate of inflation and operational costs, and does not account for providing services to a growing and aging number of individuals with complex needs, developmental service agencies are being forced into deficit; and

“Whereas today over 30% of developmental service agencies are in deficit; and

“Whereas lowered provincial funding has resulted in agencies being forced to cut programs and services that enable people with a developmental disability to participate in their community and enjoy the best quality of life possible; and

“Whereas in some cases services once focused on community inclusion and quality of life for individuals have been reduced to a ‘custodial’ care arrangement; and

“Whereas lower provincial funding means a poorer quality of life for people with a developmental disability and their families and increasingly difficult working conditions for the direct care staff who support them; and

“Whereas there are thousands of people waiting for residential supports, day program supports and other programs province-wide;

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

“(1) To eliminate the deficits of developmental service agencies and provide adequate new funding to restore services and programs that have in effect been cut;

“(2) To protect existing services and supports by providing an overall increase in funding for agencies that is at least equal to inflationary costs that include among other operational costs, utilities, food and compensation increases to ensure staff retention;

“(3) To fund pay equity obligations for a predominantly female workforce;

“(4) To provide adequate new funding to agencies to ensure that the growing number of families on wait-lists have access to accommodation supports and day supports and services.”

I couldn’t agree more. I’m going to sign it and give it to Kelly to be delivered.

AIR QUALITY

Mrs. Julia Munro: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s Drive Clean program was implemented as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and vehicle emissions have declined significantly from 1998 to 2010; and

“Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

“Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

“Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

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

“That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program.”

As I am in favour, I have affixed my signature and give it to page Ethan.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition that’s signed by a substantial number of my constituents and people who live in Guelph as well, and it’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas agencies that support individuals with a developmental disability and their families have for several years (beginning in 2010) faced a decline in provincial funding for programs that support people with developmental and other related disabilities; and

“Whereas because this level of provincial funding is far less than the rate of inflation and operational costs, and does not account for providing services to a growing and aging number of individuals with complex needs, developmental service agencies are being forced into deficit; and

“Whereas today over 30% of developmental service agencies are in deficit; and

“Whereas lowered provincial funding has resulted in agencies being forced to cut programs and services that enable people with a developmental disability to participate in their community and enjoy the best quality of life possible; and

“Whereas in some cases services once focused on community inclusion and quality of life for individuals have been reduced to a ‘custodial’ care arrangement; and

“Whereas lower provincial funding means a poorer quality of life for people with a developmental disability and their families and increasingly difficult working conditions for the direct care staff who support them; and

“Whereas there are thousands of people waiting for residential supports, day program supports and other programs province-wide;

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

“(1) To eliminate the deficits of developmental service agencies and provide adequate new funding to restore services and programs that have in effect been cut;

“(2) To protect existing services and supports by providing an overall increase in funding for agencies that is at least equal to inflationary costs that include among other operational costs, utilities, food and compensation increases to ensure staff retention;

“(3) To fund pay equity obligations for a predominantly female workforce;

“(4) To provide adequate new funding to agencies to ensure that the growing number of families on wait-lists have access to accommodation supports and day supports and services.”

I have affixed my signature to the petition.

PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKERS

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

“Whereas current community care access centre and personal support worker guidelines do not provide a clear indication of whether PSWs are allowed to support patients’ activities outside the home; and

“Whereas patient health is best ensured through an active, healthy lifestyle that may involve activities outside the patient’s home; and

“Whereas the spirit of community care includes patient access to their community’s healthy lifestyle resources;

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

“To enact all necessary statutes that would allow personal support workers and other community care access centre staff to support their patients and clients both in the home and in necessary activities in their communities.”

I support this with the many petitions I have and will be passing it off to page Brigid.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Frank Klees: A number of my constituents from Newmarket and Aurora have signed this petition. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Health is planning to delist OHIP physiotherapy clinics as of August 1st, 2013, which represents cuts in physiotherapy services to seniors, children and people with disabilities who currently receive care at designated OHIP physiotherapy clinics; and

“Whereas people who are currently eligible for OHIP physiotherapy treatments can receive 100 treatments per year plus an additional 50 treatments annually if medically necessary. The proposed change will reduce the number of allowable treatments to 12 per year; while

enhancing geographical access is positive, the actual physiotherapy that any individual receives will be greatly reduced; and

“Whereas the current OHIP physiotherapy providers have been providing seniors, children and people with disabilities with individualized treatments for over 48 years, and these services have been proven to help improve function, mobility, activities of daily living, pain, and falls risk;

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

“To review and reverse the decision to drastically cut OHIP physiotherapy services to our most vulnerable population—seniors, children and people with disabilities; and to maintain the policy that seniors, children and people with disabilities continue to receive up to 100 treatments per year at eligible clinics, with a mechanism to access an additional 50 treatments when medically necessary.”

I’m pleased to affix my signature to this petition in support.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the proposed closure of the Sarnia Jail will impact” at least “76 employees and result in a loss of over \$6 million” in payroll “to the local Sarnia–Lambton community; and

“Whereas the” McGuinty-Wynne “government states that the Sarnia Jail is underutilized while in fact it is currently at 105% capacity; and

“Whereas there are no costs currently associated with transporting inmates from the Sarnia Jail to the Sarnia courthouse, and transporting inmates from Windsor to Sarnia will greatly increase costs, costs which may become a burden to the city of Sarnia and thus local taxpayers; and

“Whereas the mayor, local OPP, the Sarnia police chief, the RCMP, aboriginal police, First Nations chiefs and the Canadian border services were not consulted prior to the Sarnia Jail closure announcement, and if closed, Sarnia would become the busiest border crossing in Ontario without a jail;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the” McGuinty-Wynne “Liberal government immediately conduct a public review of the Sarnia Jail and make that cost-benefit analysis available to the public prior to its closure.”

I agree with this petition and will send it down with Brendan.

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ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mrs. Julia Munro: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, as I’m in agreement with this, I will affix my signature and give it to page Kelly.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s Drive Clean program was implemented as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and vehicle emissions have declined significantly from 1998 to 2010; and

“Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

“Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

“Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error;

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

“That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program.”

I agree with this petition and will be passing it off to page Chedi.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Frank Klees: This petition relates to a private member’s bill that I had the honour of presenting and I look forward to having dealt with by the general government committee soon. It reads as follows:

“Whereas municipalities are required to produce official plans that are compliant with the Places to Grow Act and the provincial growth plan; and

“Whereas the province of Ontario prescribes population growth and intensification targets through the

provincial growth plan that must be met by municipalities; and

“Whereas even if the designated growth and intensification numbers are met, they are deemed to be minimum numbers; and

“Whereas the Ontario Municipal Board may approve densities to be located in areas not identified in the official plan, resulting in significant additional costs to the municipality because of required changes to long-term infrastructure plans, and also disrupts the character of existing communities;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Preserving Existing Communities Act, 2013 ... that amends the Places to Grow Act, 2005 to provide that a decision made by a municipal council is final and may not be appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board if the following conditions are satisfied:

“(1) The decision is to refuse a request to amend the municipality’s official plan with respect to land that is designated for one or more of the following: stable residential area and parks and open space.

“(2) The municipal council has passed a resolution stating that the requested official plan amendment would not be in the best interests of the municipality.”

I’m pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition and, of course, in support of the private member’s bill to which it refers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

SIKH HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE SIKH

Mr. Singh moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 52, An Act to proclaim the month of April as Sikh Heritage Month / Projet de loi 52, Loi proclamant le mois d’avril Mois du patrimoine sikh.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It’s with great honour and great pride that I rise today to address the House on this bill. For the House’s information, this would be the first permanent Sikh Heritage Month in all of Canada, so we would be making history here in Ontario, if enacted. This would be, again, the first ongoing celebration of the Sikh heritage, the contributions of Sikh Canadians in Ontario for the first time in Canada. So it’s quite historic, and I’m quite proud to rise and introduce this bill.

As we’re aware, the Sikh community represents a significant population within the South Asian community that have come to make Canada and Ontario their home. Sikh Canadians have been in Canada for over 100 years.

More than half of the new immigrants and new Canadians who settle in Canada make Ontario their home.

As a province, we celebrate a great number of communities, ethnicities and religions in the form of heritage months. These include Jewish Heritage Month, and Italian, Asian, Tamil, to name a few. I think it’s a great occasion for us to celebrate the contribution of Sikh Canadians, but I want to put it into a context of why it’s so important.

One of the things I said earlier today is that when we talk about celebrating the diversity of Ontario and the diversity of Canada, it provides us with an opportunity to do two things. One is, we celebrate the unique culture and value and principles of these various communities, but it also gives us a chance that, in celebrating diversity, we see the commonality that we all share. We see the common struggle and beliefs in shared values that we all have. So there’s a twofold purpose to celebrating diverse communities in our society.

The Sikh community has a particularly unique position in being such a visible community. With the visible principles of faith or articles of faith, Sikhs are quite visible. This can sometimes work in a negative manner for the Sikh community and there is still, despite the fact that Sikh Canadians have contributed so much to Ontario and Canada, the fact that they’re involved in all ranges of fields, including technical, skilled trades, science, medical, legal, entrepreneurial and political, as we can look around the House and see—that despite these contributions, despite the fact that Sikhs are active members of society, there’s still a significant amount of prejudice, there’s still a number of areas of systemic racism and barriers to access that Sikh Canadians face.

Very recently in the past year in my riding, there was a hate crime that impacted the Sikh Khalsa school in my community, and there was a YouTube video that went viral that talked about people who wear turbans as being terrorists. There is still a climate of hatred that exists in our society. There is still a negative and fearful climate that exists.

What I’ve said before, and what I truly believe, is that the breeding ground for hatred is ignorance. If we lack knowledge, if we’re not aware of another community, their values, what they believe in, if we don’t know about them, that is a breeding ground for fear and fear creates hatred.

To replace that, to get rid of that climate of hatred, I propose that we replace that climate of ignorance and lack of knowledge with understanding, with knowledge, and that will create a climate of compassion. People will start to feel for another one—if you understand them, you know where they’re coming from—and that can create what we want in our society, which is a climate of acceptance. We want everyone in our society to be accepted.

That’s why I think this Sikh Heritage Month is so important. It gives us a platform so that we can talk about the contributions that Sikh Canadians have made. We can talk about what they are about, their beliefs and values,

so that we can share in celebrating their diversity and create a society that is more accepting. It should be one of our goals as parliamentarians, to make sure we create a society that is accepting of all people, and this could be one step towards creating a more accepting society for Sikh Canadians.

I think about my childhood. I grew up in Windsor, and while Windsor is a beautiful community, it was a difficult time for a young boy with long hair and a funny-sounding name. I think of the Sikh Heritage Month as a way I can reach back in time and give my nine- or 10-year-old self a hug and say, "Listen, things will be better for you." We can create a society that's more accepting. So I'm hoping that the other little Jagmeets who are around Ontario and—my sister, her name's Manjot—the little Manjots who may have faced some racism at school or may have faced some difficult times, they can have this as a platform to share their values and their beliefs, and one of the beauties is that we have a lot of shared values.

Some of the essential principles of the Sikh faith I want to tell you about—people see Sikhs and they know about the five Ks, which are the five symbols or articles of faith, but I want to talk to you a little bit about some of the principles and values that we all share and some of the deep philosophical ideas that are actually Sikh values but are shared values as Canadians.

1400

One of our concepts in the Sikh faith is this idea of equality, but our principle of equality is much deeper than just the fact that we are all equal. In the Sikh context, our differences—our bodies, what we look like—are just an illusion. Our differences are an illusion and underneath our differences there is a common energy that we all share, and that common energy lives and exists within us and within all society. So when we talk about equality, we're saying that really the differences between us are an illusion, and we can celebrate our diversity, but underneath those differences is the reality that we are all one and we are connected. We share a connection—we share the same planet, the same life, the same world—and that's what we celebrate in terms of equality. It's a deep principle of equality founded on this principle that we're all really just the same energy in different forms.

One of the other principles in the Sikh spiritual tradition that's a hallmark of the Sikh faith is that while our goal as Sikhs is to reach a state of enlightenment where we tear down the barrier between our energy and all the energies around us—we call that tearing down the me and going towards we—our concept of "me" limits our ability to connect with the people around us. When we focus on the me, we lose the fact that we're all just people connected together on this planet. That is our spiritual goal, to reach enlightenment, but alongside that goal of reaching enlightenment and connecting all of us together is an obligation. As Sikhs, we have an obligation to struggle and work towards social justice for all.

Every day, when we complete our prayers, we talk about a concept of sarbat da bhalla, which means that we

wish wellness and success and happiness for all people on this earth and that it's one of our fundamental principles that we struggle every day in whatever way we can to create more social justice for all people. One of the essential founders of the Sikh faith used a symbol—the symbols of authority at that time were swords, and to convey the importance of both your spiritual life and your political life, he wore two swords. People asked him, "Why do you wear the two?" He said, "I want to convey the importance that in our lives we are going to commit ourselves to improving ourselves personally, but not only should we commit to performing duties and daily activities that improve us as human beings, we should also recognize that as human beings we have a duty, an obligation, to help out our fellow human beings, to help out our neighbours, to help out our society, to make our communities better. And it's not enough just to make an improvement in your own life, but you have to, as a social obligation, as a human being, contribute to the wellness of all people." That's a Sikh value. That's also a Canadian value, the idea that we want to make sure that everyone in our society does better, succeeds, feels better.

There are three pillars or fundamental aspects of the Sikh faith. We talk about naam japo, kirat kamao and vand keh chakko. The three ideas are that you meditate in your life to achieve that connection with all people, so meditation is important; the idea that you should earn your living through honest work and that we have a responsibility to share our resources with the people around us; the vand keh chakko—that's a Canadian value and, proudly, that's also an NDP value, the idea of sharing what we have with those around us, to make sure that it's not just about maintaining success and wealth for one person, but we're never going to succeed as a society until we uplift all people around us, until all of society improves. That makes a society that's truly fair and truly recognizes the inherent value of all human beings.

I want to share with you two greetings that we do in the Sikh community, and these greetings are said by many politicians when you attend an event. Often I've heard MPs and MPPs and city councillors share these greetings, but many people don't know what they mean, so I want to share with you what our day-to-day greetings mean. There are two forms of greetings. The one that people commonly use is "Sat sri akal," and what "Sat sri akal" means—it's a very interesting thing. When we talk to each other and we say "Hi," or you greet someone, "Good morning" or "Good evening," "Sat sri akal" is actually quite different. I'll break down the three words. "Sat" means truth or true; "sri" means respected or honoured, and "akal" means infinite. "Kal" means ending and "a" means not, so unending. So "Sat sri akal," when we meet someone, we're not saying "Good morning," "Good evening," "Good day," or "Hello"; we're saying, "Truth is that which is infinite," or "Truth is infinite," so that's the way we greet people, and when you get up and say "Sat sri akal" to the congregation in your communities or to the Sikh community, you're actually

saying “Truth is infinite.” What a powerful idea to say, truth is infinite, or infinite is that which is true. That’s a beautiful idea, and you say that every time when you say “Sat sri akal.” I wanted to share that with you.

Another greeting often we hear people say is “Vaheguru ji ka khalsa; Vaheguru ji ke fateh.” That is a very powerful greeting as well. Again, it’s another greeting, and it’s not a “Hello” or a “Good day” or “Good morning” or “Good evening.” “Vaheguru” is the word for the universal energy, that which connects us and is around us and surrounds us. “Khalsa” is the word for sovereign: It depicts the idea we are all sovereign; we’re all free as human beings. The idea is that as human beings, as sovereign people, as free people, we all belong to the energy that connects and binds us. “Fateh” is a word of success, and all success or all positivity or all goodness flows from the fact we are all, as sovereign, free human beings, connected and united by this energy all around us. That’s what you say every time you greet a congregation.

I want to share that with you because that’s a powerful message of the shared values we have as Canadians. We are free people, and we are entitled to our freedoms. We believe in protecting the rights of all people, and we believe that we are all connected in some way, in some form, that there is a connection that we all share.

These are Sikh values, but they’re also Canadian values and Ontarian values. I’m very proud today that we can make this a month that is historic, a month that would be the first of its kind in Canada, and hopefully provinces across this country will follow with this idea so that we can have a society that is more accepting and we can combat some of the racism that sometimes exists.

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

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I rise in support of this motion recognizing the month of April as Sikh Heritage Month. Sikhs first settled in Canada more than a century ago, and they have contributed to the growth and development of our country. The Ontario Sikh community continues to play a vital role across this province. Just last night, I was in Brantford and met members of the community at an event. Sikh Canadians living in Ontario represent a growing and a dynamic population and have made significant contributions to the growth and the prosperity of Ontario.

One of the main principles of Sikhism is the value of volunteering, charity work and giving back to the needy. I see it full force in my community of Brampton–Springdale. From blood donation camps to hospital fundraisers to food banks like the Seva Food Bank in my community, the Sikh community is always taking the lead. The spirit of volunteerism and civic engagement has been passed on and embraced by the youth of the Sikh community.

This Sunday, members of the Sikh youth from the Guru Gobind Singh Children’s Foundation will be hosting a run-a-thon with world record holder and Olympic torchbearer Fauja Singh. The funds raised will be used to sponsor children in need all over the world. They’ve done this many years in a row.

People of Sikh descent play a significant role in my riding of Brampton–Springdale and, indeed, as I’ve mentioned, across Ontario, both economically and socially. As a former city councillor and now as a member of provincial Parliament, I’ve seen the community grow and mature over the years. I’m proud to have worked with them on a number of initiatives, and I’m honoured over the years that I have been able to build long friendships with many members of the Sikh faith.

April is an important month. It’s in this month that Sikh Canadians celebrate Vaisakhi, which marks the creation of the Khalsa. Vaisakhi, also known as Khalsa Day, is celebrated across Ontario, from Windsor to Ottawa. Every year, I participate in Khalsa Day celebrations by walking alongside thousands of members of the Sikh community in the procession route. This year was a very special year. It was a unique year, as I was pleased to be joined by my colleagues from Mississauga East–Cooksville, Brampton West, and this year, for the first time, the Premier of Ontario. It marks the very first time in the event’s history that the Premier joined the procession.

I believe that education and awareness are absolutely crucial to ensure that we work together to protect the vibrant, diverse and multicultural society that we all live in. By proclaiming the month of April as Sikh Heritage Month, the province of Ontario recognizes the important contributions that Sikh Canadians make to Ontario’s social, economic, political and cultural fabric.

Sikh Heritage Month is an opportunity to remember, to celebrate and to educate future generations about Sikh Canadians and the important and valuable role that they have played and continue to play in communities across Ontario.

1410

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

Mr. Todd Smith: I’d like to congratulate the member from the NDP, my friend Mr. Singh, for bringing forward this bill today, Bill 52, An Act to proclaim the month of April as Sikh Heritage Month. Obviously, he knows what he’s talking about. He’s a member of that community. I’ve had the opportunity to get to know that community extremely well over the last several months as well.

I recall the first time I walked into a gurdwara. It was almost a year ago today. It was a hot summer day in early July. I have two little girls and a wife who’s a high school teacher, so they were just starting their summer holidays. They thought, “What does daddy do in his new job as a politician at Queen’s Park?” I said, “Well, why don’t you come along with me?”

So we were doing a tour through the Brampton area. I took the entire family. Keep in mind we’re from Prince Edward–Hastings and we have not one single gurdwara in Prince Edward–Hastings, although we do have a Sikh community in the area. I can tell you that it was an eye-opening experience not just for me but for my two little girls and my wife as well, the exposure to the Sikh religion and the Sikh culture that the member from

Bramalea–Gore–Malton explained just a few minutes ago.

In the almost two hours that I spent at this gurdwara in Brampton, my family and I were given an education into the tenets of the Sikh faith and the value of Sikh culture as well. We were welcomed in with open arms into this community. We had the opportunity to participate in their prayers and sample some food from the kitchen at the mission of the gurdwara as well. It was that afternoon that I learned that a hungry person in that community is always given a meal from the kitchen of a Sikh temple. They're open 24 hours a day and they're always there. It doesn't matter if you're a member of the Sikh community or if you're a member of Prince Edward–Hastings; if you need help, you can find help in a gurdwara.

In the year since that visit, I've had the opportunity to take in a lot more events through different interactions in the Sikh community here in the GTA in particular. A few weeks ago, recent census data indicated that our Sikh community, which is already a very sizable one in the province of Ontario, is only going to grow. It's going to continue to get bigger. Indeed, in my riding of Prince Edward–Hastings we do have that small but growing Sikh community up in the Bancroft area, which is in cottage country. I would welcome any members of the Sikh community who want to get out of the gridlock of the GTA to come on up to North Hastings. We would gladly have you up in cottage country.

I had the opportunity to organize a buffet dinner at one of the local motels in Bancroft about three months ago. I was surprised how many members of the community were there. There were probably about 40, 50, maybe 60 members of the local Sikh community that came out to the event. I can tell you they occupy all kinds of different professions—veterinarians, chiropractors, accountants; they operate the local stores, the gas stations in the community. Every segment—it's very important in a rural community, because those rural communities are losing jobs, to have people coming into the community and fulfilling those jobs and providing those services that we need. So it was a great event and it was wonderful to meet all the people that live there in the Bancroft area. Again, I would encourage anybody who wants to get out of the rat race to join us in North Hastings.

Last fall, I had the chance to meet with much of the community during the celebration of Diwali here in the GTA. It's a community that has valued education. They've uprooted their families to a small community with a slower pace of life in order to pursue the education. As a result, Sikh bank tellers, engineers and students are now part of the community in a town of about 4,000 tucked into the Opeongo Hills in North Hastings.

Over the last year I've had the great pleasure to walk in the big Khalsa Day event here in Toronto. That was just an incredible experience—tens of thousands of people walking from the Exhibition grounds to Nathan Phillips Square to celebrate, and the food was pretty good too that day, I must say. As I say, we've celebrated Diwali, we've celebrated Vaisakhi, and I've had the op-

portunity to celebrate different birthdays and anniversaries on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC caucus in the Sikh community as well.

We need Sikh Heritage Month in Ontario to recognize a community that has become an integral part of our identity as a province. I'm also very grateful for the teachings of the Sikh religion as they promote values that help create a positive, open, honest and compassionate society.

When I met with hundreds of members of the Sikh faith, one value they all shared was community service. In Punjabi, they call it seva: helping those that are in need; helping them get back up on their feet; helping them become productive members of our communities; helping them to rise to their potential. That's something that's very admirable about this community. This was one of their main principles that various Sikh gurus have taught, whether it was Guru Nanak Dev Ji or Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

By proclaiming April as Sikh Heritage Month, we'll also be educating our communities about not only the contributions that the Sikh community has made but what it means to be Sikh. Over the last decade, Sikhs have been targeted for their differences, whether it's vandalism in their schools or the tragic shootings that took place in Wisconsin. By educating, we can overcome these differences, as the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton mentioned near the end of his remarks on this bill that he's presented today.

I've come to know the Sikh community, and they're peaceful, hard-working individuals. They want to create a better life for their children, as we all do. We need to put an end to the discrimination; we need to put an end to hate-fuelled attacks.

I'm proud to stand here today as an Ontario PC MPP and support the bill put forward by Mr. Singh. Sat sri akal—truth is infinite. All the best, and we support you wholeheartedly with this bill.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure, actually, to stand in this House on this day in support of the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton. He is indeed a champion of social justice and, indeed, access to justice for all.

Sikh Heritage Month offers us all an opportunity to remember, to celebrate and to educate future generations about Sikh Canadians and the important role they have played and continue to play in communities across Ontario, in my riding of Kitchener–Waterloo and every other riding in this province.

I would like to share with you an example of a contribution that a Sikh man made to Ontario and to Canada. On November 4 last year, I attended the Sikh Remembrance Day in Kitchener; this was the fifth anniversary of the event, which began after the grave of Buckam Singh was discovered in Mount Hope Cemetery in Kitchener in 2007. Private Buckam Singh's grave in Kitchener is the only known World War I Sikh Canadian soldier's grave in Canada.

Private Singh came to Canada from Punjab in 1907 at the age of 14. He volunteered for the Canadian Expeditionary Force in the spring of 1915. He's one of the earliest known Sikhs living in Ontario at the time, as well as one of only nine Sikhs that we know of that served with the Canadian troops in World War I.

Private Singh served with the 20th Canadian Infantry Battalion in the battlefields of Flanders in 1916. He was wounded twice in two separate battles. He received treatment at a hospital run by one of Canada's most famous soldiers, poet and doctor Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae.

I would like to read into the record the news of his first wounding, as it was reported on August 9, 1916, in the *Toronto Daily Star*:

"Private [Buckam] Singh, the first Sikh to enlist with an Ontario battalion, has been twice wounded since he went to the front. He was engaged as a farmhand for W.H. Moore of Rosebank, Ontario, when the call came for active service. He was reported injured for the first time two months ago. His name appears among the wounded in today's list. Bukum Singh came to Canada from Punjab in 1907. After mining in British Columbia, he came to Toronto about two years ago. He went overseas with a Kingston battalion."

While recovering from his wounds, Private Singh contracted tuberculosis and spent his final days in a military hospital in Kitchener, dying at the age of 25 in 1919. He never got to see his family again and he died, forgotten, almost 90 years ago.

It is not well known that Sikh Canadians served with the Canadian army in the First World War. Ten such men have been found among the military records of the Great War—all volunteers to fight for a country that denied them the rights of citizenship.

That is worth reiterating: These men gave their lives for a country that at the time still denied them the rights of citizenship.

Thankfully, Private Singh's heroic story is now being reclaimed and celebrated at events like Sikh Remembrance Day in Kitchener, organized by Sikh communities across Ontario.

It's very powerful to be in this House and to be able to relate that story on this day.

Sikh Heritage Month should be added to the list of heritage months already celebrated in Ontario—to name a few: Jewish, Italian, Asian and Tamil. These months are important for the opportunities they provide for the entire province to recognize the contributions of those significant communities to our collective experience as Ontarians.

1420

Michael Tibollo, president of the National Congress of Italian Canadians, said this about Italian Heritage Month, celebrated each June: "Canadians of Italian heritage are but one strand of the Canadian mosaic and together with the others, weave the very fabric of who we are."

I believe the fabric of who we are binds us and we should take the time to acknowledge each strand.

It's actually very difficult for me not to think of the importance and the weight of Sikh Heritage Month inside the education system and what the potential of that could be. You know, it's quite powerful to hear the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton talk about his own experience growing up in Windsor and what he experienced in that community and how far we've come but how far we still need to go. Indeed, in the education system, the potential and power of that system is that we can grow our understanding and we can grow our compassion, because I hope we all agree that we need to aim at more than tolerance to truly be a strong community.

Certainly—and this is what I've said all along, throughout the years in the education system—each month you take an opportunity to honour the people who are actually in your community. Sikh Heritage Month would indeed provide an opportunity to do that.

I'd also just like to quickly mention the important principles of Sikhism that are surely worth reflecting on.

Equality: Sikhism is one of the few spiritual faiths that extol absolute spiritual and social equality in terms of practice and leadership within a spiritual context or a social context.

Responsibility for social justice: Sikhs are obligated, in addition to the pursuit of spiritual improvement of Sikhs, to work for the betterment of all humankind.

As a New Democrat, these are values we're thinking about, not just for one month, but every single day.

We have to remember that Ontario encompasses over 100 ethnic cultures, represented within a province of over 13 million people. More than half of all new Canadians settle in Ontario and contribute to the richness of Ontario's culture. Every member of this Legislature has a Sikh community that should be recognized each April.

I hope this entire Legislature will support Sikh Heritage Month, the first of its kind in Canada. Let us lead, not follow, because our diversity is indeed our strength.

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

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I rise today to share my thoughts on Canadian Sikh heritage.

First of all, I would like to recognize my colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton for his initiative in bringing forward Bill 52, the Sikh Heritage Month Act, 2013. As the first South Asian and Sikh woman elected to the Ontario Parliament, I'm proud to support Bill 52.

The first Sikh set his foot on Canadian soil in about 1889. Today, there are more than 450,000 Sikhs in Canada, and about 175,000 of them have made Ontario their home. The Sikhs have toiled, along with other Canadians, building railways and working on farms and in mines and sawmills, ushering in a modern Canada. The contributions made by Sikhs to Ontario's economic, political, social and culture fabric are significant.

On April 13, 1699, known today as Vaisakhi Day, the 10th Guru of the Sikhs proclaimed the Panth Khalsa, baptized Sikhs. The holy book of the Sikhs, the *Guru Granth*, teaches a healthy way of life and incorporates

many liberal values, such as equality, tolerance, fairness, justice for all, respect for difference, protection of the persecuted, and a caring, compassionate and inclusive society.

Our government also shares many of those values and believes in dignity, peace and prosperity for all Ontarians. For example, our government tabled a budget, which is being debated in this House. The budget aspires to create a prosperous and fair Ontario, and it contains provisions that will give more dignity to the poor and ensure prosperity for all through job creation and other initiatives. I hope the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton and his party will vote in favour of the budget and avoid an expensive \$92-million election, which Ontarians do not want.

The designation of April as Sikh Heritage Month will give an opportunity to all to celebrate with Sikh Ontarians their religious and cultural values, and further educate our future generations about the important role the Sikhs have played and will continue to play in enriching our great province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a distinct honour to stand and speak to this act, to Bill 52. It's not often we get a chance to stand in the Legislature and speak in commonality with one another, with all three parties. This is something that, certainly, we are able to stand in unity in support of. Thank you to the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton for bringing it forward.

I had the distinct honour and privilege of living overseas for several years. I'm fully aware of what it takes to pick up, move somewhere else and start to learn a different culture, to try to become a part of it and to try to be accepted, even though you're different. Many of us who were born and raised here often forget that when we go somewhere else, we are that different culture. The whole world isn't like what we see, especially in this bubble or in this city or even the cities that we all represent. Any opportunity that we have to learn about each other's culture is fantastic.

I also want to say, and be clear, that we are lucky that we live in a place that allows us to stand and talk about our differences and actually celebrate the differences that we have, and realize that despite some of those differences, the important things are what we really have in common. Although we may have different paths to get to one spot, I think that one spot is what we do all have in common. It's that we need to trust each other, respect each other, have more than tolerance for each other, but moreover help each other, help each other achieve all the things we need to achieve in life. The important things, like getting fed, having a home to live in, living in peace and living in a culture that allows us to live in absolute peace without discrimination against us despite our race, religion, culture, creed, sexual orientation—any of those things—we all have those basic human rights and we are very lucky to live in a place like Canada and Ontario where we are free to exercise all of those things. It

shouldn't go without saying that we are lucky that we have this opportunity to stand here and actually talk about having a day like this for Sikh heritage.

We need to talk about some of the things that the Sikh faith and culture has brought to us in Ontario. It's brought a lot of prosperity; it's brought a lot of caring; it's brought a lot of lessons.

I had the pleasure of going to a gurdwara in Scarborough for the first time. I was really surprised—and maybe I'm ashamed to say I was surprised at this—at the warmth that I was shown and the generosity that I was shown. I really, really enjoyed being there and learning more about this culture, the warmth and the tolerance they showed towards me and some of my ignorance that I had towards some of their cultural aspects. Admittedly, when I walked in, I was little bit intimidated at first, with all the different rules and cultural things that I had to learn so quickly. But the patience that they showed me and the tolerance that they showed me is something that I think we all need to show back.

This bill is a great reminder of how we can show our respect for the Sikh culture and religion for what they've given to Ontario, and give that back and work in unison so we can have a better Ontario and better communities altogether.

1430

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

Mr. Michael Prue: Welcome to all of our guests in the audience today who are here to witness this debate and hopefully the passage at second reading of this bill.

I have a long history of experience with the Sikh people, going back to my time when I worked in the immigration department of Canada. Over those years, a great many people came from India, and most of them in those years were Sikhs.

I learned a lot about the religion, about the culture, because I got to witness it each and every day. We learned about Guru Nanak, the first of the 10 gurus. We learned about the founding of the Khalsa, about the pure. We learned about the beliefs that Sikhs have in terms of their religion; God, known as Naam. We learned that Naam is ineffable and one. We learned about the centre of Sikhism at the holy shrine in Amritsar and watched in some horror over the years when it was invaded. We watched some of the things that happened to Sikhs in India following the death of the Prime Minister. We watched some of the riots. We watched as Sikhs, in even greater numbers, attempted to leave India and find some peace and tranquility here in Canada.

The Sikhs, indeed, have had a very turbulent history over a very short period of time. Sikhism is one of the newest religions on earth; it's only 400 or 500 years old. In that period, it has been misunderstood, not only in Canada, but even in India. It has been misunderstood by people who saw the Sikhs as somehow being different, even though it may have been originally an offshoot, sort of a combination of the ideals and thoughts of two other great religions, of Hinduism and Islam.

But the Sikhs developed something absolutely unique in their religion. What that uniqueness was, was equality—equality in a place like India, which had the caste system at the time, where people were born into a system and could never escape that system. Sikhism gave the first opportunity to treat everyone as exactly the same.

Many Sikhs, like my friend from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, use the last name Singh. I know that others use a sub-caste name because in immigration we used to ask for those as well. But Singh means lion; it means that strong, male person. They use that name, and he uses that name, with some considerable pride.

Sikhs have lived in Canada for a long time, and I heard my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo talk about a soldier in the First World War. But Sikhs were not always welcome in this country. In immigration, they taught us about the voyage of a ship, called the Komagata Maru, which left India with a boatload of Sikh migrants who came and tried to get off the boat in Vancouver. They thought they would be welcomed, because Canada at that time was open to any British person. Anyone who was a member of the British Empire could literally come and live in Canada. There were no immigration rules in those days; in fact, Canada didn't have an immigration act for some considerable time after that period. They came, and they were not allowed off the boat. They sat in that harbour for weeks or months, trying to get access into Canada, into a land that should have welcomed them, but which did not. In the end, they were forced to sail away and back to India, from whence they had come.

It is a lesson to all of us, and we have witnessed it before with other peoples and other cultures that we did not know well. We have witnessed it with the Chinese, with the head tax to make sure that there was an impediment put upon them so they couldn't bring their families. We learned it with the Sikhs, even though they were British subjects. We learned it with the Jews later on, just prior to the Second World War. Canada, to its shame, did those things. But to Canada's credit, we recognize them today. We recognize them as having been wrong.

From the early 1970s until this point, large numbers of Sikhs have come to Ontario. They have taught us all about equality, selfless service and love of humanity.

As some of my colleagues have said, when you go to a gurdwara, you actually experience equality. At most, but not all, of the gurdwaras I have been to, there are no chairs. Everybody sits on the floor. Everybody is at the same height. Everybody is treated at the same level. Everybody is given the same food. Everybody is respected in exactly the same way. Whether you are a Sikh or whether you are someone like me who goes there, you are treated in such an excellent fashion.

We need to recognize Sikh Heritage Month. We need to tell people of Sikh heritage that they are welcome in this country, that we recognize their contributions and that this country is theirs too.

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

Mr. Vic Dhillon: It's a pleasure and an honour to rise in the Ontario Legislature and speak to Bill 52, which would proclaim the month of April as Sikh Heritage Month.

I, too, have a story to share. I came to Canada in the mid-1970s. I wore a turban, but I was the only student at my school who had a turban. Becoming accepted as someone who had a turban was quite difficult. It created quite a few problems, because students didn't know what this thing was that was on top of my head.

My family had no choice, literally, at that time but to have my hair cut. But all that has changed. I'm happy to report and see, like many of my other colleagues, that we have come a long way. Like a lot of you, we visit schools. I know that in my riding of Brampton West, when I go to schools, I see many young students who are the same age as I was when I came to Canada wearing a turban. That's nice to see, as it shows that we've come a long way in tolerance and acceptance.

The other example that sticks out in my mind is that prior to 1989—I can remember the time, because I was going to university at that time—turbaned Sikhs were not allowed in our Royal Canadian Mounted Police. I remember the fellow—his last name was the same as mine—Baltej Singh Dhillon. He was battling to become a constable in the RCMP, and it took quite a few challenges in the courts to finally have that issue resolved.

I'm very happy to tell the Legislature, as many of you probably know, that most of our police forces now—the metro police, the Peel Regional Police—have many turbaned Sikhs, because the turban, it was proven, was not a hindrance to their ability to carry out their duties as a police officer. As a matter of fact, the Peel Regional Police use a picture of one of their turbaned police officers on their promotional material to reach out to ethnic communities in their recruitment drives. That's really good to see.

I'm really proud, as a Sikh, to say that our community has come a long way. There is still much more that can be done. The community is assimilating into our Canadian and Ontario society quite well. What I mean to say by that is that the community has gotten so much, and I feel so honoured to call Ontario and Canada my home because I have gotten so much—me and my family and my Sikh community—and the community is giving back.

A couple of years ago, Brampton Civic Hospital opened up. I remember that on one of the Punjabi radio shows, in less than an hour and a half, the community raised over \$1 million for the hospital. The hospital has a—I don't know which wing it is, but it's named after our first guru, Guru Nanak Dev Ji, so that's very nice to see. As a matter of fact, when I walk in the hospital, I see many rooms for which families have paid a big sum of money to have rooms named after their loved ones who may have passed away or their loved ones who might have gotten care at the hospital. It's an excellent signal of giving back.

1440

As well, many of my colleagues spoke about Seva Food Bank. "Seva" means "service." It's such a tre-

mendous organization, and I want to give a shout-out to Kulvir Gill, who single-handedly started this wonderful organization which does many food drives throughout the year. As a matter of fact, I'll be having my 10th annual barbecue this summer, and every year since Seva has started up, all I ask from people who attend is if they can bring a food item so we can donate to Seva. Because it's not just the Sikh community that benefits from it; it's all the people who live in the Mississauga and Brampton area who use the Seva Food Bank who benefit from it. That's a really, really great cause.

As well, I'm very proud of the Guru Gobind Singh Children's Foundation, again an excellent, excellent way of showing that the Sikh community is part of the broader community, where the kids do marathons—many, many fundraising drives to help children in need. Again, these aren't necessarily Sikh children or Indian children. They find different projects that they want to support and they get a huge amount of goodwill and support from the Sikh community. I'm very proud of them.

As well, I want to give a shout-out to a good friend of mine, Prabhjot Dhanoa, who is a pharmacist and a businessman. He, many years ago, signed up to be a reservist in our Canadian army. He's encouraged, and has been a role model for, other Sikhs to do the same. What he's trying to do is show, "I've gotten everything that I have in this world because of Canada and Ontario. This is a little way of giving back." I believe it goes very far in becoming accepted into this great land.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I first want to thank formally Mr. Singh, the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton. He has done much to educate we members who are ignorant of what he brings to this Legislature. In fact, this issue today is really about educating us.

I want to thank our member from Prince Edward–Hastings, who has gone out of his way to embrace, understand and appreciate, and eliminate ignorance of, a group within our community. I welcome members of the Sikh community here today as well.

Really, this bill—and I did have a look at it and I've had a couple of letters on it. I do have members of the Sikh community in my family. The bill explains pretty much what we should learn from today's debate. It says, "... Vaisakhi, which marks the creation of the Khalsa and the Sikh articles of faith. Sikh Canadians widely celebrate Vaisakhi, also known as Khalsa Day, across Ontario." It speaks to the idea of educating future generations about Sikh Canadians and the important role they play.

Even in his remarks, in everything he does here, sort of embracing the issues that all of us as constituent members face, says a lot. And his greeting that he said towards the end of his remarks, "Sat sri akal", which he went on to say says more than just "Hello"; it's really talking about celebrating the freedom of people, the energy and the protection of rights, as well as we're all

sort of connected in the human journey—which I don't think anyone here could find fault with.

Where the barriers are is, in fact, the ignorance. Debating these things within the Legislature and giving voice to the differences encourages understanding and therefore acceptance. Mr. Dhillon's remarks do remind me of how far we in the past, through ignorance, misunderstood some of the symbols and rituals of each other's cultures.

I appreciate very much what you said this afternoon. I would be supportive of the bill. Thank you for bringing it here.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'd like to welcome some of the supporters here from my riding and from across Ontario.

I got a little emotional when I was concluding my remarks because I was thinking about what this means, and what this could mean, for many people across Ontario, and particularly a lot of young people. I know it's difficult to be different and it's difficult to fit in, and that difference and that difficulty are based on the fact that people don't know why you're different and why you look the way you do. Hearing so many people share their stories from their ridings, from their communities, about what they have learned from the Sikh community has made me feel a lot of encouragement, a lot of confidence that we can improve as a society and we can move towards a society that will accept all people. Hearing the stories from each and every one of you has touched me, and I know it has touched the people listening today. It means a lot, because the reality is that there is still a lot of racism; there's a lot of difficulty that people face.

I grew up in Windsor, like I said, and I can tell you just very briefly that it was a rough childhood. Being a kid who looked different, having a funny-sounding name, and having a turban and a beard was tough. All of you sharing your stories and sharing your support means a lot, because there are other young children out there who want to embrace their community and embrace their culture, and sometimes feel it is difficult to do so. Having a platform where we can talk about the values of what the Sikh community and principles are about, the fact that we stand for equality for all and we want social justice and to improve the lives of all people, that we believe that every human being is sovereign and free by their birth, that we have gone through a lot of struggles as the Sikh community—genocide, oppression, misunderstandings—and to be here today, the first turbaned Sikh in the Ontario Legislature, the first Sikh to graduate from Osgoode Hall Law School, shows that we can break these barriers.

I'm going to ask for your indulgence. This is the chant of victory: Bolay so nihal!

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): For those in the audience, we will take the vote at the end of regular business.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I move that, in the opinion of this House, a select committee should be established immediately to develop a comprehensive developmental services strategy for Ontarians; and

That in developing its strategy and recommendations, the committee shall focus on the following issues: the urgent need for a comprehensive developmental services strategy to address 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 to coordinate the delivery of developmental programs and services across many provincial ministries in addition to the Ministry of Community and Social Services, taking into consideration the following:

- the elementary and secondary school educational needs of children and youth;
- the educational and workplace needs of youth upon completion of secondary school;
- the need to provide social, recreational and inclusive opportunities for children, youth and adults;
- the need for a range of available and affordable housing options for youth and adults;
- the respite and support needs of families;
- how government should most appropriately support these needs and provide these opportunities.

That the committee shall have the authority to conduct hearings and undertake research, and generally shall have such powers and duties as are required to develop recommendations on a comprehensive developmental services strategy to address 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

That the committee shall present an interim report to the House no later than October 31, 2013, and a final report no later than April 30, 2014.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mrs. Elliott has moved private member's notice of motion number 29. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I really do appreciate the opportunity to speak to this resolution this afternoon. As you will know, this is the second time I've introduced this resolution in the House, the first time being September 20, 2012, when it was unanimously passed. Unfortunately, that ended with prorogation, and so I'm bringing it forward today. It's my sincere hope that it will again be approved unanimously, and I have received indications that it likely will, because the issues that the committee is addressing are serious and pressing.

We have many guests in our galleries today, Mr. Speaker, as you can see, and I'm extremely grateful for the people who have provided support to me in bringing this resolution forward. People who are watching today in their homes, thank you for your support as well. I know that you're counting on all of us to do the right

things, that you need our help as legislators, you need us to develop a strategy for the some 100,000 to 200,000 people in Ontario who are living with an intellectual challenge or who are dually diagnosed with both an intellectual disability and a mental illness.

1450

We need to remember the individuals, of course, but we also need to remember their caregivers, who need support so that they in turn they can continue to provide care to their loved ones. If there was ever a question whether action needed to be taken in this sector, Mr. Speaker, it became painfully clear several weeks ago when an Ottawa family, the Telfords, were forced to leave their 19-year-old son at a developmental services office because they were no longer able to provide care for him and keep him safe. Mrs. Telford's son Philippe has autism and functions at the level of a two-year-old. He also has Tourette's syndrome and insulin-dependent diabetes. Mrs. Telford and her husband had begged for help and had been sitting on wait-lists for a number of years, but nothing was happening; there was no success in this regard. Absolutely desperate and overwhelmed, they concluded they had no option but to give their son over to the government in order to get him the services that he needed and in order to keep him safe.

I think that's something all of us as parents in this Legislature consider to be unimaginable, to feel so desperate that you would have to give up your child in order to give them the care that they need. But unfortunately, families across Ontario are contemplating the same scenario today because they feel that there's no one listening and there are no supports out there to help them.

Laurie Mawlam, who is the executive director of Autism Canada, is aware of how many families are supporting children with autism and intellectual challenges who are struggling desperately. She's noted, and I think all of us as members in this House have also heard, that support services disappear for their children when they reach age 19 or when they finish high school at age 21. As Ms. Mawlam states, "It's every parent's nightmare—what's going to happen as they age and can no longer care for their children?"

I'd like to take a moment to read a statement from Judy, a member of our Durham region community who has a 21-year-old son with autism. Judy's statement clearly articulates the concerns that she has as a parent.

"My son turns 21 next week. And he'll be out of school in the middle of June—for good.

"[My son] is autistic, with very little functional speech and challenging behaviours. He requires constant care.

"He's been in a segregated classroom since he was 10—with six students, one teacher and four teaching assistants.

"[My son]'s a big guy now, six foot two inches, 190 pounds. And although he's actually quite gentle when he's getting his own way, he can be quite intimidating and difficult when he's not.

"During the first 10 years of his life, we spent mortgages chasing therapies and treatments.

"In the last 10 years, life took on a bit of a routine getting him off to school in the morning, arranging care for the four-hour spread between when he got home from school and when I got home from work.

"When school is done, his life will get very small very quickly.

"There are no post-secondary options and there are [no] vocational or volunteer positions that he could manage. There are no spots in existing day programs.

"He's on a number of wait-lists, but there's no guarantee that he'll ever get in and no assumption that a placement would work out if he did. Without an environment of intuitive, informed supporters, his behaviours escalate.

"It's an isolated existence with very few options for us.

"I've watched relationships with friends and family dwindle under the weight of autism. There are places we can't go and things (most things, really) that we can't do socially, so it's tough to contribute to a friendship.

"We can go to the park so he can play on the swings for an hour or two. But while we're there, I'm sitting by myself and he's by himself.

"So here's how the future looks, come June.

"If I work full-time, I'll need to pay caregivers 10 hours every workday. Even at today's minimum wage, that's nearly \$40,000 in care expense every year until I retire.

"Or I guess I can quit working to care for him, but then we'd both become dependent on social assistance.

"Or I can deliver his care to the public trustee, where cost to provide 24-hour care triples.

"Most importantly, I don't know what that would mean for his quality of life. And my own guilt and despair might actually drown me.

"I love my son. I want only happiness for him.

"They say it takes a village.

"You are our village.

"We need help; we need a solution."

Currently there are over 12,000 Ontarians with an intellectual disability or who are dually diagnosed who are waiting for a residential placement. Many have been on the wait-list for a number of years because there are simply no openings.

But housing isn't the only concern for families, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of other issues in the developmental sector that require supports, in addition to a lack of residential placements.

Many concerns have been expressed about a lack of community supports and services to allow young people to participate fully in our communities. A recent letter from the Thames Valley District School Board dated February 13, 2013, addressed to the Minister of Community and Social Services and the Minister of Education clearly outlines these concerns, and I'd like to quote a bit from this letter as well.

"Dear Ministers:

"The Thames Valley District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) and board of trustees are concerned about the transition from school to

adult services for students with developmental disabilities. In particular, we are concerned that there is confusion about the Development Services of Ontario agency (DSO) process and that funding of services for people with developmental disabilities is inadequate. We agree with many of the issues raised by colleagues across the province. Inter-ministry and inter-agency co-operation in creating transitions which help individuals and families move seamlessly between children's and adult services is imperative.

"There is a great deal of confusion about the transition process concerning how families, caregivers, guardians and individuals will learn about DSO, when families should initiate application process and what documentation or assessments are required. Families continue to report that processes are inconsistent and the criteria remains unclear."

Again, moving forward, "The bigger concern shared by families and the Thames Valley District School Board is that funding for adult services is inadequate and many young people face years of waiting for services and supports when they turn 18 years of age or leave school. The gap is exacerbated for individuals who turn 18 years of age and are no longer eligible for special services at home (SSAH) funding. As these individuals age out of school, the need for access to community opportunities and service is far greater.

"The Thames Valley District School Board has approximately 1,000 students aged 16 to 20 who are enrolled and who have been identified as having a developmental disabilities exceptionality. Some of these students may be moving to employment or post-secondary education with varying support needs, but the majority will require significant supports to be able to live and participate in the community, to be employed or to enjoy volunteer opportunities.

"The families of these young people are very concerned about the transition out of school and about what supports will be available. For some students with high needs or requiring constant supervision, their future is very bleak. Some families may have to reduce or end their employment to stay home and provide care, and those individuals who don't have family supports in place are in even more precarious life situations as they age out of children's services."

The letter goes on to speak about the investigation that's being conducted by the Ombudsman. Certainly, that's very welcome; the Ombudsman, as I understand it, has heard from over 730 families. But I still believe that a select committee is necessary in order to explore some of those areas where the Ombudsman perhaps doesn't have jurisdiction, and also to suggest some solutions to get us out of this situation. The good news is that there are some very interesting and innovative proposals that are out there, and some operations are already in place to assist people in this respect.

The other good news is that many of these programs could be rolled out across Ontario at a relatively modest cost, so I would like to spend the very few minutes

remaining to me just speaking about some of these innovative programs and how it's something that I believe we might take a look at in the committee if it's established.

I've had the chance to visit a number of service providers across the province, and there are some great ones out there. At the risk of being exclusive, I will mention one in particular, and that's a program that's being operated by Community Living Peterborough—the Minister of Rural Affairs is probably quite familiar with it. It's led by a team led by Jack Gillan, and they have a number of housing programs in place where both seniors and also groups of young people are living as independently as possible.

I can tell you only that the sense of home and pride of place in these homes is something to behold. Even as the surroundings are beautiful, comfortable and warm, people are proud to show you their homes, and that's what I think we need to look at, to establish that kind of scenario for people across the province of Ontario.

1500

We also need to take a look at educational workplace opportunities. I'm very pleased to say that there are a number of community colleges across Ontario—including my own community college in my area, Durham College, that has rolled out a program called CICE, Community Integration through Co-operative Education—where students with intellectual disabilities, a small number of them, are placed in the college every year. They can study a program of their choice. It's modified so they'll be successful. When they graduate they get a CICE diploma and job skills. They are employable; they want to work. Some can't, but a lot of them can and want to.

On the other hand of the equation, we need to take a look at employers, educating employers about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. I know that action has been taken on both the federal and provincial levels. Federally, there has been a report called *Rethinking Disability in the Private Sector: We All Have Abilities; Some Are Just More Apparent Than Others*. I understand there's also some work that's being done at the provincial level, with our Lieutenant Governor, Mr. Onley, taking the lead.

I would like to go on, if I could add one more thing. Ultimately, the idea for this committee is to assist us in making a society that is truly inclusionary, where everyone's abilities are celebrated, where everyone has a place. That's why I'm sincerely hopeful that we will be able to move this forward into committee and that we will be able to work together to help all of the people who need our help in this.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a privilege to stand and to speak to this bill, put forth by my friend in the Progressive Conservative Party from Whitby—Oshawa. We were on Evan Solomon's show, *Power and Politics*, when the tragic case of the Telford family broke into the news,

speaking about the complete inadequacy of our system in dealing with folk who have to deal with members of their family who have severe disabilities. Truly, if there is one plea that goes out of this House this day, it is this: Do something. Move forward in some way.

I absolutely support the member's bill. We will be voting for it. There's no issue there, although I have to say, there was a Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions on which the member herself sat, and our health critic sat as well. They came up with some 23—I think it was—recommendations. Let me tell you what that committee did. They were struck, the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions; they worked for 18 months, 30 days of hearings, 230 presenters, 300 submissions—all-party, remember, on this—and came up with a number of excellent recommendations, upon which everyone agreed, and it now sits collecting dust on a shelf, except for three of those recommendations.

I guess what I'm saying is the caveat: I want to see this move forward, but if the government is not going to work on the recommendations that this committee comes up with, then it will be a great deal of time wasted, a great deal of money wasted for naught. Really, I'm appealing to our Liberal government that if this is passed—and I hope that it will be—that when this committee is struck—and I hope that it will be—the recommendations from such a committee will actually be put into effect. On the record: just saying that.

Let's talk about the background a little bit of where we are in this province on this file. Many people don't realize, who aren't dealing with this, that there was a huge upheaval in the last year. Special Services at Home, a program that used to provide service to children and adults, as of April 2012 only provides services to children. Hence, there's a massive wait-list at the transition point: 8,500 children on the wait-list versus the 13,000 receiving service. Currently, almost 14,000 adults with developmental disabilities are receiving care under the SSAH, with 300 on the wait-list.

Passport: I'm very familiar with that; a program for adults that transfers funding directly to them or their families. It currently serves around 4,000, but there are more than 4,500 families on the wait-list. You would have to double the capacity just to eliminate the wait-list. There are 2,700 people who've had their eligibility for developmental services confirmed and an additional 2,500 who are currently being assessed for services.

When we look at residential services, the numbers just get worse. Today, there are just 17,500 people served in five different forms of accommodation. Let's just sum it all up. Community Living says it best. They say, "Nearly 23,000 people are languishing on waiting lists. Decades of chronic underfunding of the developmental services sector is placing in peril children and adults who have an intellectual disability, their families and the agencies that support them." That's 23,000. That's black; that's sad. Those are real lives. Those are people like the Telfords, every single one of them.

I remember very well in the last sitting of this Legislature bringing in a family from my riding, the Patersons. I

think they came in five times. They sat through five question periods. Five times I asked the minister of the day—Meilleur, she was at that time—“Do something. Help this family.” Eventually they got help. Can we do that for every one of the 23,000? No, we cannot. Something systemic has to change; something systemic has to be done to address this.

And it’s only going to get worse because over 50—here’s more stats, scary ones: 1,450 parents over the age of 70 are still providing primary care to their adult child or family member; 80% of those parents are between 70 to 79 years of age; 17% of the parents are between 80 to 89 years of age, and 3% of the parents are over the age of 90. What is going to happen to their family members when the inevitable happens to them? Are we prepared for this? As we age as a community, this figure will only go up, again, unless something systemic, something dramatic is done. I know, for example, that 30% of our agencies that deal with folk who have a disability are in permanent deficits right now. So again, the answer has to be pretty serious and pretty systemic.

My friend’s bill is a start, but again it’s the start. The recommendations that would emerge from this would have a dollar figure attached to them, one hopes, one suspects, one can predict. Will this government have the backbone to step up to the plate and do what’s necessary?

We were talking about the workers and the programs that train the workers. The actual reality right now is that enrolment in college programs that train people to provide support in this sector is dropping and some programs have been suspended. Why? Because the pay is so low, because there’s not enough money in the sector to encourage people to take this up as a living.

I just want to give you an example of another jurisdiction that does things way better. My husband and I travelled to Sweden. That’s as close to heaven as it gets for a social democrat. We met with people across the political spectrum in Sweden, and one of them raised this issue. They had a very novel program. It didn’t work for everybody. It worked for a significant number of families, however, and that is, families who had a member who had a disability that was going to require constant care could go and be trained at the state’s expense, become part of a union—they were unionized and therefore supervised, so there was some supervision of what happened in the homes—and then go back into their homes and look after their members for a union salary. They said it was cheaper than institutionalization. It was cheaper than the programs that they were running before, and their whole move, like ours in some ways, has been to deinstitutionalize, move away from that and move into providing care in flexible ways. Now, it didn’t work for everybody. Not everybody has a relative who wants to do that, but in fact they said most did. It’s still less expensive and one could argue more humane, and they did not have these kinds of figures. They didn’t have these kinds of waiting lists. They were dealing. If Sweden, a community smaller than Ontario, with nine million people, can afford to do that, we can too.

1510

I point to why we should do it: The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Article 27 states that signing countries—we are one—will recognize the rights of persons with disabilities to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions, and shall take appropriate steps to safeguard and promote the realization of this right without discrimination on the basis of disability.

One can only ask: Are we living up to that in Ontario? The answer is an unequivocal no. We are not. We are in breach of that decision made at the UN. Despite the fact that our country has signed on to that, in this province we are in breach of living up to that.

The Ontario Disability Support Program: We saw some modest increases to that program in the budget, and for that we applaud the government. However, if you look at the long term for people who are living on ODSP, here’s what you find: Since 1993, those who live on ODSP are living on—this is of course comparing to inflation—18% lower supports than they were in 1993. We are asking people with disabilities to live in poverty for their entire lives. That’s in essence what we’re saying: “You’re going to live in poverty for your entire life.”

I had a call, after the budget was tabled, from one of my constituents. He had seen the budget. He suffers from many disabilities—they’re not cognitive disabilities. He said, “I see that there’s a 1% increase on ODSP.” I said, “Yes.” And he said, “Well, my rent just went up 2.5%.” He said, “I see that I can keep \$200 more of the money I earn or receive, but I cannot work; I can’t leave the house,” in his case, “so I’m not going to be eligible for that.” So I ask you: What have we done for him?

This is so systemic; it’s such a problem—\$42 million that has been allocated in the budget would represent about 14% of the waiting list. So, again, it’s not the answer, obviously. It’s better than nothing. I’m not complaining. It’s better than nothing, but not the answer.

The reason we need to support this bill is that we do need some answers. We need to look at this area systemically. We need to look at how we can fix it, not just by throwing money at it over here, and not just by tinkering with the system over there, but actually look at something that might work for the vast majority of folk, and to make it happen. Not only do the economics of the situation demand it but, my goodness, our very souls, our ethics, our morals and our ability to call ourselves human demand it. Before another Telford case happens, before another family is injured in that way and before another child suffers, it is incumbent upon us to do something. This is the beginning of that. Thank you.

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

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to begin by thanking the honourable member opposite for her motion. There are few people in this Legislative Assembly for whom I have more respect than the member opposite, so thank you.

What I'm particularly pleased about is the member opposite's history of doing good things. The standing committee on mental health was a great example of that—I think everyone would agree with that initiative—and her inclination to point direction rather than fingers, I think, is helpful.

The developmental services sector has a long history over several governments, but I'm not going to go there today. I'm going to speak more to the high ground of where we can go. Every year more children with developmental disabilities become adults and look to the adult developmental services system for support. More and more elderly parents caring for children at home are having increased difficulties coping. I've been the Minister of Community and Social Services for three months. It has been a roller-coaster ride, I can tell you, particularly as we prepare for a budget and try to fight as best we can to get allocations for the folk that we're most concerned about.

I certainly understand, based on a number of conversations that I've been privileged to have with groups, for which I would say there's a shared sense of purpose on some of these issues. Over the last three months, I have had a chance to meet with:

- a couple of school boards, including my own Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board;
- the ODSP Action Coalition;
- the Ontario Association of Residences Treating Youth;
- People First Ontario, a self-advocacy group run by and for people with developmental disabilities;
- Christian Horizons, the largest single provider, in terms of numbers, of services;
- Reena, one of the largest providers here in Toronto; I was visiting there just last week;
- Community Living Ontario, which is a province-wide federation of families who support the full participation and inclusion of people with development challenges; we also hosted the Community Living Day last week and were pleased to do so;
- also with ODEN, the Ontario Disability Employment Network;
- and most recently—I think it was yesterday—the Family Alliance of Ontario, which are strong advocates for the expansion of direct funding.

Many of these folk, and many of the families that are facing significant pressures, have been kind enough to be in touch with us. I said this morning that I think we need to work on this issue together, all members of this House, and I want to repeat that. In fact, let me really emphasize that, because I want to speak to the values that I think underlie the need for this committee.

I believe that all members of this House can, and indeed should, be united in understanding that caring for our most vulnerable members of society, which surely includes people with developmental disabilities, is more than just a sacred duty, although it is clearly that. It is also part of what we must do to build a society in which any one of us would want to live.

As legislators, our response to this issue is surely one of the criteria on which history will judge us. Simply put, we need better answers. I think the member opposite has highlighted our need to be creative and entrepreneurial and innovative in this regard, and I agree with her. So I believe that this truly is an issue on which we can work together in the service of the people of Ontario, and I'm happy to provide my commitment to working constructively with you and all members, member opposite.

I don't want to prejudge what a standing committee of this Legislative Assembly might do. I think it's too shaky to do that. But I do want to say, on a personal basis, that I'm not the kind of person who wants to champion something and is going to sit around and let something gather dust. Let me just put that on the record. If I thought that, I'd just move on and do something else with my life. There's lots of challenges out there.

Now, I imagine some of you may have expected me to spend more time here talking about all the wonderful things our government has done to help people with developmental disabilities. We certainly have done that, and on another occasion, I'd be happy to supply details, but that would take longer than the seven minutes I've self-allocated myself here today.

I certainly hope to see members of the opposition supporting our budget, by the way, which proposes to add almost \$43 million and will help an additional 1,000 adults and their families with new or additional supports. Assuming the budget passes, this would bring our total increase in spending for this area to more than \$620 million a year. That's a 60% increase in funding since 2003. Is it enough? No, it's not. It's a 60% increase. I am proud of what we've achieved so far, but like my friend from Whitby-Oshawa, I know there is still so much, so very much more work that needs to be done.

I met with the Ombudsman a couple of weeks ago. We had a good chat about some of the issues. I really appreciate the fact that he's looking into some of the case-specific issues. I heard him on the CBC saying that this is a complex problem; that there are no easy or fast solutions; that it's going to take time. We're going to need to do some long-term planning in co-operation with each other here, the various parties, and obviously with the families involved.

1520

While government definitely has a role to play, I also believe we need to do more as a society. True inclusion and citizenship can't be bought. It doesn't stem from government funding alone; it comes from the ground up, from the community, the individuals and the families, and from each and every one of us. That's why I welcome this resolution and look forward to seeing a commitment from all parties, including all colleagues on my side of the House, please note, to tackle this challenge and to build a better system of supports for people with developmental disabilities.

I know, Mr. Speaker, you can't refer to a member of this assembly using any other moniker except their riding, but I want to just close by saying, thanks, Christine.

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

Mr. Jack MacLaren: My colleague from Whitby–Oshawa is requesting the members of this House support establishing a select committee to develop a comprehensive developmental services strategy for all Ontarians.

Children, youth and adults in Ontario with an intellectual disability or an intellectual disability and mental illness need our help. They are not getting the care or treatment that they need. As a caring society, we have a moral obligation to help those who cannot help themselves. This includes people with developmental disabilities.

I have learned from the parents of children with autism who have come into my office how stressful it is for their families to cope with caring for their children emotionally, physically and financially. They tell me their stories of how they are on their own, that there is very little help from government, both financially and treatment-wise. The help is slow to access because of confusing red tape and waiting lines, when early treatment is crucial to improving the long-term developmental health of the child.

They tell me of very good care and treatment that is offered by the private sector, but the high cost is ruinous for most families or beyond the means of low-income families. They tell me of how they buckle down and accept the responsibility of care and cost, as all family members, including grandparents, pitch in and do their best to look after their child. I have met many brave and strong families for whom I have the highest respect, but they get tired and they become poor and they get worn out.

Last week in Ottawa, a mother left her 19-year-old son at a government office because she was at her wits' end. She couldn't do it any longer. Those of us who have healthy children can hardly imagine making such a difficult decision. The poor woman was tired and stressed to the limit. What a heartbreaking story.

Parents from Stittsville told me of their 21-year-old son who has severe autism. The walls in their home are covered with plywood instead of drywall because their son would put his fist or his head through the drywall. The father said he is strong enough to wrestle his son to the floor when he gets violent, which is about every two weeks, but the mother has trouble restraining her son, particularly when he head-butts or bites her. She wears long-sleeved shirts to work to cover up the black bruises on her arms.

They have found excellent private daycare and rehabilitation services at Main Street Community Services for their son, but they are worried about who will take care of their son when they get older, and they are getting tired.

But there are several good news stories of parents of children who are developmentally disabled who are aggressively advocating to government for more and better care and treatment for children who need help. Anne Rahming and Mick Kitor have children with autism

and they have come to my office several times, are part of Autism Ontario, have met with the CEO of the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario in Ottawa and with our member from Whitby–Oshawa, who is our health critic.

There are two private care and treatment providers in my riding who are doing a great job.

Jennifer and Deborah Wyatt founded TIPES, which provides care and treatment for children who are developmentally disabled. They have a high level of education, training and experience, and have come to my office and the office of our health critic with great ideas on how government can do a better job of helping these children and their parents.

Main Street Community Services in Stittsville is a not-for-profit charity that was started by Shelley Steinberg and Erica Rinfret. It offers care and treatment for 250 children and young adults who are developmentally disabled, at six locations in west Ottawa. They provide a much-appreciated service and they are growing rapidly.

But there is always a need for more money to fund these valuable services. That is government's job. So government must set spending priorities and focus on the top priorities, which are health care and education. Lower-priority activities will have funding reduced to create the money we need. Here is a list of things that the government should do: We should cancel the Green Energy Act and reduce spending over the next 20 years by up to \$50 billion; we should postpone the implementation of all-day kindergarten to save \$1.5 billion a year; we should sell crown corporations like the Liquor Control Board of Ontario and the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.; we should reduce budgets in other lower-priority ministries; and we should have no more scandals like eHealth, Ornge, Presto or the gas plant cancellations, which amount to \$5 billion, which would have provided a lot of care for the people who need it.

Government has lost its way. Government should be about helping people, not things. Mr. Speaker, we need this select committee to help develop a strategy to help people.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: The Callaghans are here today for this debate: Dave, Tim, Kim; I see Leo and Kathy and, of course, Anna, who was mentioned during question period today.

With this resolution from the member for Whitby, Christine Elliott, we do have an opportunity now to refocus, to set priorities, to wake up Ontario's social system through approaches and programs laden with fresh, cost-effective ideas to address the complex problems we're hearing about today. We can address these problems through flexibility and choice.

There are many things that need to be done differently, and there are a great number of things that can be done better; of course they can be done more efficiently, but most importantly, they have to be done effectively.

I continue to advocate that it's those on the front lines and clients themselves who should continue to be invited

to tell us what needs to be done before a committee, as proposed this afternoon, on how our system can work smarter and more productively. To that end, I note Community Living Ontario's proposal for a person-centred plan for parents over 65 supporting developmentally disabled sons and daughters, and funding supports when the parent is no longer able to provide care.

The vision remains an effective, affordable, accountable system that supports and invests in families and in their communities, where adults are as independent as they can be. Support is provided to people most in need, as we just heard. There's \$10 billion in the social services budget. There's obviously the opportunity and the clear responsibility to better serve those who are disabled and those who are truly disadvantaged. That's the point of this motion as I see it, Speaker.

More and more, we're hearing stories of parents, often in their 60s or 70s or 80s, who are desperate for help for their loved ones. They're terrified about what will happen to their child when they are gone. They're concerned that there are no appropriate housing options available for their children, little chance of employment and no opportunities to have a life like everyone else.

1530

Beyond the co-morbidity, the dual diagnosis, of intellectual disability and mental illness, as we see in this motion, we are seeing the advent of a public health epidemic, if you will: young people with severe physical, mental and developmental disabilities now entering adulthood. We must find a path, we must show the way—a committee can show the way—for this cadre of young people. They're no longer part of the school system and now require that additional family support, respite programs, home care services and perhaps residential programs. There is a gap in communities. For example, Community Living Ontario is not capable, in many cases, of adequately dealing with individuals previously in institutional centres.

I do meet with families. A family in my riding, the Callaghans, one of many families in desperate need of assistance for loved ones who are severely disabled—the Callaghans' 20-year-old daughter Anna is in the Speaker's gallery. The Callaghan family tell me of the extreme difficulty they and countless other families have in planning for physically and mentally disabled loved ones, in particular as they exit the school system.

My question, Speaker: How can families like the Callaghans appropriately care for their loved ones when government is not in a position or refuses to properly address this issue? Hence our call for a more routinized structure—a select committee—to look at this. They need somewhere to turn. It's time this government offered that place to turn.

Today's motion will help to address this growing crisis. It will provide assistance to families like the Callaghans—assistance for Anna—and countless families like theirs across the province, and provide the support they require and most surely deserve in our very

rich province of Ontario. As such, I call on all members of all parties to support the motion.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This is something I'm quite happy and glad to support.

I was really disturbed by the comments of the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills, which I thought were really rather disingenuous. There is a certain non-partisanship in here that happens—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to withdraw.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I withdraw. Suggests that they were unfair.

Michael Wilson, who has been a lifelong advocate—now the chancellor of the University of Toronto, who is a dear friend—advocated for this in the 1990s and at the beginning of this decade.

I would like to draw the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills's conclusion—from a fellow Conservative, of the state of these services for his family and for families like mine when your government was in power. I say this very sincerely, because I believe you are sincere. If you believe those things, then please stop demanding tax cuts at any price and ask yourself why you're a member of a party that did some of the things your government did to families like mine and some of the people living in my constituency who had the most basic things taken away from them when they lived in poverty. It meant that some of the crises you talked about legitimately in some of the families that come from your riding were greatly worsened. Go back and look at what Mr. Wilson said of that period of time in Ontario's history.

I have great, great respect for the member from Whitby–Oshawa. She is one of the most non-partisan and thoughtful people in this House. I fully support what she's doing, and I give her huge credit for it.

Interjection.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I have a fairly small-conservative view. I have foster-parented children and I have adopted children with severe disabilities. My son Michael, who is my personal hero, has fetal alcohol syndrome. He's HIV-positive. He had his leg broken when he was two years old. His mother gave him alcohol when he was 11 to make him quiet; this is a kid with FAS.

I've had foster parents come to me and say, "I can't take care of the child anymore," because the child is 18 or 21. "I have to give them up." I said, "Why?" Michael is still my son. Every child that I and the support group of parents worked with—continued caring after government support stopped. One of the things I feel very strongly about is that all of us who have means, as I do—much greater means than my parents had, and much greater means than my grandparents had—have some simple responsibility as parents.

The state must play its role—\$620 million more. We have more capacity, more children’s mental health services, than any other generation of Ontarians ever had. This government is investing in it. While our overall per capita spending is lower than any other province, we are at historic highs in spending.

But my view of this is that there’s also a parental responsibility. There are all kinds of children out there that simply need a safe place. There are so many of us who could adopt or foster a child.

This province has few rivals in Canada in providing mental health services. When I was in Manitoba, at the time the only way my child could get mental health services while he was living in the community, in a loving family, was to be institutionalized. They would have to lock him up so that he could get the proper psychological supports.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: We don’t do that anymore.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We don’t do that here in Ontario. While there are shortcomings, and there is a need for this committee, I am very disappointed if we don’t at least recognize that the record of this government is pretty unprecedented.

I am glad to keep this nonpartisan and to support my colleague from Whitby-Oshawa, because I think it’s good leadership.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Whitby–Oshawa, you have about 50 seconds left from your party, and two minutes for your response.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Okay. I’d like to start by thanking the member from Parkdale–High Park, the Minister of Community and Social Services, the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, the member from Haldimand–Norfolk and the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure for their comments today. I think we’ve had a very good airing, a very good discussion, of the issues and I would just like to comment on a couple of the themes that I heard.

The member from Parkdale–High Park talked about the need to make some systemic changes and that we can’t keep doing things the same old way. We really do need to make changes, and we need to look at the system across many ministries, because it’s not just about community and social services. There are many other ministries that will have input into this: health, education, and children and youth, among others. We need to take a look at that and figure out how we can coordinate the response.

The Minister of Community and Social Services, as well as the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, talked about the moral obligation that we have to help people who need our help. The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills I know has a strong commitment to this issue. I’ve had the opportunity to visit his riding. He is working very hard with his constituents to try and provide individual supports and services where he is able to, but he recognizes that we need to do more.

Ultimately, we have all been talking about priorities—priorities in government and priorities in spending. This

is not an area that has traditionally been a priority, and I think the time has come where we need to make it a priority, because families are exhausted, caregivers are exhausted and we have a rapidly aging population. So as bad as the situation is now, it’s only going to get worse in the near future, and we need to be able to plan for that, because it is about people. It’s about young people having an opportunity to have lives of purpose and dignity in our communities, to have the opportunity to work, to have the opportunity to be included, to be able to have the same social and recreational opportunities that all of us take for granted.

Similarly with their caregivers, they need to have a life too. Many of them can barely get out of their own homes except for the few hours a week when they may have someone offer them some respite to get out and do basic things like grocery shopping or maybe seeing a movie with their other children—just basic life. We owe that to the people of Ontario. We owe it to all the people who are here today and the people who are watching.

Thank you very much to everyone who contributed to the debate today.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We’ll take the vote at the end of private members’ business.

PROMPT PAYMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES PAIEMENTS RAPIDES

Mr. Del Duca moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 69, An Act respecting payments made under contracts and subcontracts in the construction industry /
Projet de loi 69, Loi concernant les paiements effectués aux termes de contrats et de contrats de sous-traitance dans l’industrie de la construction.

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

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It is a tremendous pleasure for me to be standing in my place in this House today to speak to my very first private member’s bill. In particular, I’m delighted that this proposed legislation is something that relates to Ontario’s construction industry. This is an industry that’s near and dear to my own upbringing, in my own life. I can tell many, many stories—though I won’t necessarily bore everyone here in the chamber today, I can tell many stories about times spent working summers in construction, how my father virtually, since he arrived in Canada in 1958 from Italy, within a couple of years with his engineering background was able to establish himself and has worked consistently in Ontario’s construction industry, both in the ICI sector and the residential sector and who, I might add, after several decades—he might get a little bit annoyed at me for saying “several decades,” but it remains true. After several decades of working in the industry, he continues

to work in Ontario's construction industry, as did many other members of my family.

As some in the chamber will know, I was elected back on September 6, and I can remember, not that many weeks after first arriving here as an MPP representing Vaughan, having the opportunity to meet with some representatives from various associations and organizations from within the industry, some of whom are here with us today. I will be recognizing them in just a quick second. These individuals came and talked to me about an issue, and it was an issue that I'd heard about before, having spent some time, as I said, working in the industry and near the industry.

It was an issue that I'd heard about before with respect to prompt payment, which is at the very heart and in fact what this particular proposed bill is all about. They came to speak with me and made an impassioned pitch—and I know they'd done this over the course of meeting with many other members from all sides of this House to talk about the importance of this particular issue and how inactivity or inaction on this particular issue over the last number of years had been hampering or hindering the industry's effectiveness.

I listened to the story. I listened to their input. Working very closely with a number of them over the last number of weeks and, frankly, now months, we are at the point where we have introduced this particular legislation, Bill 69, which I think speaks to some of the very valid concerns that these associations have and will help move this industry forward and certainly make sure that we don't continue to allow a system to exist in Ontario where this particular industry, which is of such crucial importance to Ontario's economy, is hampered or hindered.

I think it's really important to note as well that within the industry itself, before I had the opportunity to speak with them and learn more about the issue of prompt payment, there was a great deal of work that took place. I think members on all sides here will understand that the construction industry is complex; it's diverse. There are a lot of competing ideas and demands, and that's fantastic. That's what helps make it the energetic, dynamic sector or industry that it is, that employs so many people right around the province.

But I think there's a certain tribute that is deserved or should be paid to those associations within the industry that had worked very hard for a number of months trying to get to a point where there was broader consensus around the importance of moving forward with this kind of legislation. I know, Mr. Speaker, that there are some people in the members' gallery here representing various associations that had played a very constructive and very important role with respect to making sure that this item moved forward.

If I could take just a moment to recognize—and I hope that I don't miss anyone in particular, but in terms of the associations themselves, we have folks representing the Ontario Road Builders' Association, and individuals representing the Council of Ontario Construction Associ-

ations, specifically Mr. Ian Cunningham and Mr. Ashley De Souza from COCA.

I can remember the day that I mentioned a second ago—that first meeting that I had. I can remember that Eryl Roberts, from the Electrical Contractors Association of Ontario, was one of the individuals who came into my office and, along with some others from the Electrical Contractors Association of Ontario—folks like Tom Vivian, Jeff Lyons, Jim Kellett and Lucy Roberts, some of whom are here today—made an impassioned pitch, as I said earlier, about the importance of making sure that we move forward with this.

I do believe I missed one individual, and I shouldn't have missed this individual. He's actually a former member from this House. That would be Mr. Ron Johnson, who was the former member from Brant, who also serves in many capacities—many extraordinary capacities—within Ontario's construction industry and has a great deal of knowledge and expertise. In addition to his role in advocating for this particular legislation, he also serves as the chair, and is doing a fantastic job as the chair of Ontario's College of Trades.

These individuals came and met with me. We had the discussion and we had the conversation. They made their pitch, and as I said earlier, it was very, very effective.

But before we all worked together to come up with this particular legislation, there were others. There were others who were doing work on this as well; there were others who came before me. So when I introduced this bill at first reading a number of days ago, I did mention two individuals and I want to highlight their contribution to this entire process.

One is our current Speaker, the current member from Brant, who, back in 2011, I believe, introduced Bill 211, which was a bill protecting contractors through prompt payment, a bill that didn't successfully navigate its way through this particular Legislature but certainly a very earnest effort on the part of current Speaker Levac.

I also want to pay tribute to and thank my colleague from Mississauga East–Cooksville, with whom I've worked fairly closely on this. I know that she had been in touch with representatives from the Ontario General Contractors Association, another important association within our province's construction industry that had worked very closely with the others who are here today in our gallery, and also with the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville, to make sure that we were able to take some kind of positive action and deliver positive results for the industry on this particular legislation.

If I could take just a very quick moment before I get into a heartier discussion about the content of the bill itself—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Get to the content—

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I'm getting there. I'm getting there.

I just wanted to pay tribute very quickly to some folks who have worked very hard on this particular bill from my end. I have a couple of interns. Andrea Ernesaks and Neville Brito—I hope I pronounced that correctly—are

here in the gallery as well and have done some fantastic work along with my executive assistant, Taleen Balian. They have done some exceptional work on this.

Lastly, I will say, with respect to some members from the other side of the House that I've had a chance to speak with around this—the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and the member from Leeds–Grenville—I know I've had some fantastic conversations with them about the importance of this, and I believe I had the opportunity to take some constructive advice back. I think this is the kind of legislation that presents this Legislature, this chamber—all of us—with the opportunity to work together.

With my remaining time, Speaker, I'm going to try to talk about the bill itself. As I said earlier, the importance of the construction industry in Ontario cannot be overstated. This industry, in 2012, employed over 400,000 Ontario workers and represented 6.4% of Ontario's entire employment number. It's also the largest investor in apprenticeships, which is so crucial to the future of our province, accounting for roughly 40% of all active apprenticeships in the province of Ontario.

With respect to prompt payment legislation, currently the majority of US states, the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Europe Union, Australia and New Zealand all have forms of prompt payment legislation. That's why, among many other reasons, I thought it was important to introduce this legislation. It is high time that Ontario should too.

I don't want to spend too much time going through every single aspect of what happens in the construction industry, but if I can, I'll very quickly mention that most construction projects follow contract templates that are either a standard industry contract or a contract that has been developed specifically.

Depending on the type of contract that's being used, very often there are certain clauses within these contracts that are known in the industry as “pay when paid” clauses or “pay if paid” clauses that essentially can allow contractors to delay payment to a subcontractor, without recourse or damage, if payment to that contractor is being delayed, or can absolve the contractor of any liability towards subcontractors in the event of a default higher up the vertical structure.

1550

Late payment essentially occurs when an owner or the payer does not abide by their contracts and does not pay their contractors or subcontractors in an agreed-upon timely fashion. Owners are not required to pay a fee for delaying payment. Therefore, there's no obligation to them to make payments on time. In addition, pay-when-paid and pay-if-paid clauses provide a loophole for owners in situations where they cannot make payment.

In a nutshell, Bill 69, the Prompt Payment Act, is being proposed to set out minimum norms for payment schedules in the construction industry. This will ensure that contractors and subcontractors have a predictable flow of funds for satisfactorily performed work on a construction project.

At its most simple, this bill sets out minimum rules and requirements for payments and invoicing made under construction contracts. More specifically:

It entitles every contractor and subcontractor to be paid progress payments in a timely fashion.

It entitles every contractor and subcontractor to be paid a final payment when work is completed in accordance with the contract.

It provides contractors and subcontractors with a right to suspend work or terminate a contract if they are not paid their progress payments.

It places an obligation on the payer to pay interest on any unpaid amount of progress payment or final payment.

It ensures that owners provide certain financial information to contractors before entering into a contract to prove that they can make their payments on time.

This also entitles subcontractors to receive certain financial information through written request.

There's a great deal of additional information that's contained in this bill, and I know that there's going to be debate back and forth here today, which is fantastic, and I look forward to listening to that. I know that there are some associations within the industry that, after reviewing this legislation, in discussions with me and I'm sure with other members from all sides of this House, have expressed—I wouldn't use the word “concerns.” They've asked questions and they've sought clarity. In particular, I want to mention the Ontario Home Builders' Association, a fantastic component of Ontario's construction industry. I think it's important to recognize—and I believe they corresponded with most members, if not all members of the House over the last day or two. In particular, some of the concerns, questions or requests for clarity that they brought forward I think in their own words demonstrate that this is the kind of bill that is needed, the kind of legislation that's needed in the province of Ontario. Whatever questions or points of clarity that particular association is perhaps rightly seeking can be dealt with at legislative committee should this bill move on from second reading today.

As I wrap up, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say again, it's a privilege for me to stand in the House to deliver these remarks regarding my very first private member's bill on an industry that is of crucial importance to Ontario's economy and of great personal significance to me.

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

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a pleasure to stand and speak to Bill 69 and congratulate the member for his first private member's bill introduction.

I think that the intention of this bill is quite—I'll say it right off the bat: I intend to support bill. But there are some concerns, and I would categorize them as concerns, that I think can be addressed fairly easily.

I think it is important to have a balance. We need to make sure that the issue of late payments in the construction industry certainly is addressed. I do know that that's

an issue and it's something that deserves attention, and this bill certainly attempts to do that. But I believe that Bill 69, in its current form, may actually do more harm than good and may beg for counterbalance to be sought after the fact. I'd love to see it go to the committee and have some of these concerns addressed with stakeholders at the table as well. So more consultation with the construction industry and certainly some input from customers as well.

The concept of progress payments is definitely worthy of consideration, perhaps even promotion, but I believe that it should always be agreed upon between the two parties in question. Currently Bill 69, I believe, goes a little bit too far because it mandates that an individual must pay progress payments if requested by a contractor even if they never agreed to pay in such a fashion in the original contract. Bill 69 also forces individuals to disclose personal information, financial information to contractors to prove they can afford to hire them, which is a serious privacy concern and certainly will be brought up by other stakeholders in the marketplace if this bill goes through in its current form.

I'm very familiar with other industries where they require certain financial information. Usually that's for when there's financing involved, for example, when you're buying a car or a home. There are a little bit different circumstances if I'm hiring someone to maybe do some contract work on my house or a property I have, or any number of contracts that could be sought.

The bottom line is, I think Bill 69 is a step in the right direction for sure. There are still some serious concerns that must be addressed, I think, at the committee stage, and hopefully the member is amenable to some of these ideas, and certainly the industry stakeholders' input would be welcome as well.

In conclusion—I know that some of my colleagues would like to speak to this as well—I think we really need to be sure that, again, we're fair to everybody, we're fair to consumers out there as well, but at the same time, it is critical that we address the issue of late payments, or even non-payments in some cases, to contractors. There needs to be a better balance, I think. I know that this bill has probably been around a little bit in different forms and has been refined, but certainly it can benefit from the discussions and conversations that we can have in consultation with stakeholders and also with many of the consumers who may have an interest in having input on this bill.

I do believe that the bill is well intended and actually really attempts to address this very serious problem within the industry, and I think good debate would be welcome on this. It's something that I think all three parties can agree needs to be addressed. So congratulations for bringing it forward—your first bill, too. It's got substance, and that's what we like to see.

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

Mr. Jonah Schein: It's a pleasure to stand up and speak to Bill 69, the Prompt Payment Act, and welcome our guests in the gallery today, too.

I'll gladly support this bill. I think it's a concept we should all get behind. If you work a hard day's work, you should get paid for it at the end of the day. Unfortunately, that's something that we don't see every day in Ontario, and that's not acceptable.

What this bill does is it sets minimum norms for payment schedules in the construction industry so that contractors and subcontractors receive a predictable flow of funds for the work that they perform on a construction project. It gives contractors and subcontractors the option to suspend work or terminate their contracts, allowing them to deal with payment delays, and finally, it places an obligation on the payor to pay interest on any unpaid payments. This gives the owners incentive to pay their bills on time. Bill 69 addresses a widespread problem of late payments to contractors and subcontractors in the construction industry.

In my riding of Davenport, we have a lot of people who work in the trades. This is an issue that affects our community. We know that in the trades community we have people of all ages. Young people are getting their first jobs—they're vulnerable because they haven't been at work sites before; we have new Canadians who are getting jobs, and we have an industry that by nature puts people in precarious situations. I see people in our office who have come in because they've been injured at work and so forth. So there's a kind of inherent precarity around the trades, but it's absolutely unacceptable that it's made more precarious because people can't depend on getting paid at the end of the day.

Why do these late payments occur? Well, construction contracts have what we have heard here is called "pay when paid" or "pay if paid" clauses that put no obligation on the owner to pay on time. The "pay when paid" clause allows a contractor to delay payment to a subcontractor without any recourse or damage if payment to that contractor has been delayed. The "pay if paid" absolves the contractor of any liability towards subcontractors in the event of a default higher up the vertical structure.

Currently, there are no additional fees or punishments when a payor is late making a payment. Late payment has become the industry norm, and many are forced to adopt the lesser standards of those using payment delays to conserve their own financing costs.

Construction projects are, like many things, vertical structures with the owner on top and the contractors and subcontractors below, and when the flow of funds is limited at any level, the people affected are always down at the bottom of the ladder. This means that the costs of late payment are often shouldered by those who are least able to carry that risk and the people who are most vulnerable.

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As I mentioned, I think the trades are in a particularly precarious situation, but if you look at our workforce in Ontario, and particularly in the GTA right now, we're seeing an entire workforce that is vulnerable. We had a United Way report that came out that shows that almost half of workers in the GTA are working in situations that

are uncertain, that are precarious. The report talks about some of the implications that has on a family, on a worker. It talks about the stress that families are under when you don't know if you're going to get paid from day to day, from week to week, from month to month. What does that mean if you're trying to put your kids in camp next summer, even if you have money one year but you don't have money the next? There's a huge amount of stress this puts on people. I think, unfortunately, this is true in too many jobs right now.

We also know that right now we're facing a strike in the LCBO tonight. This is another example of precarious work and the gendered nature of wage discrimination and racialized poverty and racialized vulnerability. This is something that needs to be addressed from sector to sector. I think people understand from one workplace to another that we all work one way or another and we all deserve fair compensation at the end of the day.

It's obvious that the government has a role to play to make sure that people do receive fairness in their workplace. We need to deliver some of that stability and some of that security to folks in the construction field.

Late payment can have extremely negative consequences, not only on individuals, I'd say, but also on the construction industry and on the Ontario economy. Consequences include reduced employment in the industry, because there's always a risk of late payment. We see contractors, especially trades contractors, limit their payroll commitments to manage this risk, and this means less employment opportunities for tradespeople. This risk of late payment also means less investment in apprenticeships generally and greater reliance on independent operators, because contractors may not be able to afford to hire as many people who are paid, hourly workers. So we create even more precarious work.

There's no legislation that currently exists in Ontario to provide a remedy to contractors and subcontractors when they're subjected to late-payment practices, even though other jurisdictions have this legislation. It's time that Ontario does this as well.

I welcome Bill 69. I congratulate the member from Vaughan on his first private member's bill. I would encourage him to talk to cabinet and make sure that this is a government bill so this actually comes into being and it passes.

This is something that should happen now. It should have happened a long time ago. We've heard this for a long time. Just in general, we have a lot of work to do to enforce good labour practices in this province, and we expect this government to step up to the plate—the social justice Premier—to make sure that we have social justice in all of our workplaces.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Jackson assumes ballot item number 39 and Mr. Milligan assumes ballot item number 40.

Further debate?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'm so pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 69, An Act respecting payments made under contracts and subcontracts in the construction industry.

I'd like to begin by first welcoming, in the visitors' gallery, representatives from the Ontario Road Builders' Association, the Council of Ontario Construction Associations and the Electrical Contractors Association of Ontario, as well as Ron Johnson.

This bill is particularly important for me, Speaker, because I have spent some time researching this issue myself. I was actually planning to introduce it as a private member's bill myself this session. As it happens, a good idea has many suitors, so it turned out that my colleague the member from Vaughan was working on the idea as well. Since the rules do not allow two members from the same party to co-sponsor a bill, I'm delighted today to stand up and support my friend and colleague from Vaughan in this worthy endeavour.

The Prompt Payment Act is about sound business practices and it is about fairness. It is about having the right to be paid for a service rendered in a timely fashion, something I am sure each of us can relate to. After all, I cannot tell my phone company, "Listen, I am not paying you this month, because I did not get paid my salary," and I cannot tell my landlord I'm not paying my rent until my subtenant pays me, yet this is exactly what takes place in the construction industry.

An owner can say to a subcontractor, "I will pay you as and when I get paid," or worse, he can say, "I will pay if I get paid." That's because current construction contracts often have pay-when-paid and pay-if-paid clauses in their contracts. Essentially, what all this means is that I will pay the guy below me if and when the guy above me pays.

Such clauses are not only unfair to the small contractor, but they are also bad for business. If subcontractors are not getting paid in a timely fashion, it means they face cash flow problems. Most of all, it inserts uncertainty into the construction business. With cash flow uncertain and a cash flow crunch, they're able to bid on fewer jobs and employ fewer people. It also means less ability to invest in modern equipment.

Finally, what contractors do is they start to factor the cost of late payment into their business. And guess what? This means that the cost of building that school or the cost to build that highway just went up. And guess who pays for this in the end? Why, Speaker, that would be you and I with our taxes.

The Prompt Payment Act is much-needed and would address this issue. What it will do is it will set out minimum guidelines for payment timelines that will ensure that contractors and subcontractors receive a predictable flow of funds for the work they perform. The bill will also allow contractors and subcontractors to suspend work or terminate their contracts if they are not paid in a timely fashion.

I'd like to acknowledge the Ontario General Contractors Association, as well as the Council of Ontario Construction Associations and many others for educating me

on this topic and for their ongoing advocacy on this very important issue.

Mr. Speaker, to me, this is a common-sense bill. It's about fairness, it's about reducing the cost of doing business, it's about supporting the construction business in Ontario. I hope that all members in this Legislature will find it in themselves to support this worthy bill.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to respond to the act here. I really like the title on it; it's the Prompt Payment Act. I would find it hard for anyone to somehow disagree with that.

I think the Prompt Payment Act does point out a very important problem. I've heard about it, not overwhelmingly, but I think largely in the more complex funding of "Who is the developer, who is the funder of it all, and who ultimately gets paid?"

When you have a delinquent general contractor type of person, which there may be, as there are MPPs who are delinquent sometimes—I just leave that to the viewer to determine. I think really what is important is that I'm in support of the principle of the bill. I am in support of the bill certainly going toward second reading. The reason I do is because Ontario really is dependent, first of all, on the industry itself. I think it should work in partnership with the industry and the various trade groups within the industry to make sure we get it right. But at the end of the day, a fair day's work for a fair day's pay.

This idea, for instance, at a condo, I've been told—I'm no expert in this area. I've been told that there's really no money that floats down until the last few units are sold. If it's a project that's maybe overpriced or poorly marketed and the 10 last units, where all the money is, aren't sold for a year or two, the poor subtrade that put all the pipes and tiling in, and all that stuff, is liable to be out of business. They've spent the money on the salaries, the equipment and all that stuff, and it's my understanding—now, I see some of the industry people here.

We need to be informed and educated, because we're politicians. There isn't one person in this room—I'm sure you helped the member draft the bill. I understand how it works. I encourage you to do it. I want to support it, but I would expect the industry would want this to go to committee, where the industry could make their arguments between the issues that maybe the labour market set up itself. Whether it's unionized or not, that's a whole different discussion. But I would say this: I am in support of the principle of pay promptly. We're expected to do it and, I think, that industry.

1610

Now there are some exemptions in the bill, and that should be dealt with in committee. So I would be on the record as being supportive of a very important industry to Ontario, the home builders and the construction trades industries.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I happen to think this is a good bill. I'm trying to understand the—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I do my best. I reach out as often as I can, please.

I think it's a good bill. I think the previous bills were good bills as well. I think we need to move on.

I'm trying to understand the reasoning behind the objections of the Conservative members, and I'm not sure I understand them. They haven't been clear, or at least they have not been clearly articulated today. I know the member from Barrie said, "This bill may do more harm than good." I didn't hear the arguments as to why that might be so.

The member from Durham mentions the former MPP Ron Johnson. For some reason, I suspect some of the Conservative members don't love Ron Johnson anymore the way they used to. I think you've just got to bring some love back. I don't know what Ron has done—he's a good guy. He was there in my time; I've seen him since every now and then. I have sensed a bit of tension between you and him. I think we need to resolve this conflict somehow; otherwise, we won't be able to move on. I could be wrong.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: As we come around to you again, you might explain to me what those differences may be as they relate to Ron Johnson or as they relate to the bill, in terms of how this bill might do more harm than good.

From my reading of it, the prompt payment is a widespread problem throughout the whole industry. It has been thus for quite some time. If this is true, we need to be able to do something to make sure that contractors and subcontractors get paid. It's only right that if they perform the job, that they get paid for the work.

There should be a law that the Minister of Labour should promptly take—prompt payment—promptly take and implement it. My sense is that the Minister of Labour has a good sense of the problem and a good sense of the solution—much of which is this bill—and perhaps there may be other things that the minister may want to include. But move on. Why so much delay? I don't get it.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Minister of Transportation, it's yours?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Infrastructure.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Infrastructure, all right. Minister, you were right here in the chamber—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to speak to the bill.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Take it on. Embrace it. Take it on. Or at least, I suspect your staff has a good sense of what the—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would like to have order in the House, and I'd ask the member to speak to the bill.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you, Speaker. I thought I was speaking to the bill. Please inform me from time to time when you think I'm not, but all this, Speaker, is very related to the bill.

I do believe that the ministry staff has a good sense of the issue and they've heard about these complaints for years. They probably have a good draft of the bill, and I'm saying to them, they should move on.

I heard the member from Vaughan saying that the Home Builders' Association has expressed concern. You didn't quite say what those concerns were, but they are requesting some clarity. I don't have a clue what that means, but I have a sense of the Home Builders' Association because, you see, I've been trying to change the Condominium Act for quite some time. As you might know, the developers don't like me very much, because of the work I've done in that particular area. I believe some of the developers have been building in such a hurry and so badly, with such poor quality that the consumers, the condo owners and renters—but particularly the condo owners—need a break and need consumer protection from bad development and bad developers. So when you say the Home Builders' Association expressed some concerns, I get nervous and worried, because I think we've got a problem when they say, "We have a problem." I'm hoping the minister will not be moved by those entreaties in any way, as he indicates, and hopefully we'll be able to move on.

Another concern around this issue has to do, in my mind, with the fact that at one point, developers used to have to pay for workers' compensation coverage. Then, brilliantly, they created independent contractors and subcontractors, and they are now required to have WSIB. Without getting what's called the clearance slip, which costs a heck of a lot of money, they won't be able to get that money back from the 10% they hold back.

Why can't we force the industry to have coverage, so independent contractors don't have to pay the extra to get the coverage they need, when they sometimes get so little in return by way of payments?

That's something I urge you, Minister, and the member from Vaughan to consider as we review this bill.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise in the House to speak in support of Bill 69, proposed by my colleague and seatmate, the member from Vaughan.

Bill 69, the Prompt Payment Act, is a necessary measure to help protect contractors, employees and consumers. When an individual or company enters into a contract, it is important that the contract is fulfilled. One aspect of the contract in the construction industry is the issue of payment and, more specifically, timely payment.

Late payments happen when an owner does not abide by the contract and does not pay the contractor or subcontractors in an agreed-upon, timely fashion, and this is totally unacceptable. If construction contracts are not paid in a timely manner, then the jobs and livelihoods of contractors and subcontractors and employees are put

at risk; there is less investment in apprenticeships, in new machinery and equipment; and there are higher construction costs. There need to be consequences when owners do not pay on time.

These "pay when paid" clauses would allow contractors to delay payments to subcontractors, without recourse or damage, if payment to the contractors has been delayed. Further, "pay if paid" clauses absolve a contractor of any liability towards subcontractors in the event of a default higher up in the vertical structure.

In other words, there are no additional fees when a payer is late in payment and, therefore, no punishment when someone is late. I've never heard that before in a real situation but only in the construction industry.

These types of late payments have a serious impact on the industry. When contractors are not able to consistently predict when they receive payments and outstanding revenues, these contractors, many of which are small business owners, are forced to reduce their number of employees. Employment declines because subcontractors, especially trade contractors, must limit their payroll commitments to reflect the amount of late-payment risk that they can afford to take on.

Mr. Speaker, we need to support our small business owners. I know our recent budget, proposed by the Minister of Finance, talks about supporting small businesses. Bill 69 further supports small business owners, contractors, subcontractors and all of their employees and helps bring in some kind of standards for prompt payment. I'm very, very pleased that this bill would do just that.

There are also other issues about consumer protection. When contractors are uncertain about when they will receive their payment, or they experience late payments from owners, those contractors begin to hedge the risk. This means that the costs of late payment are often included in the bids on construction contracts, thus increasing the costs to the consumers. Late-payment risk can also limit the amount of work that a contractor or a subcontractor can take on at a time, which will result in less bids being placed on a project. Fewer bids equals less competition on construction projects. Both of these factors can make construction work even more expensive.

This private member's bill from my colleague from Vaughan is an important protection for all small businesses but also the industry. This bill will set out minimum norms for payment schedules in the construction industry that will ensure that contractors and subcontractors receive a predictable flow of funds for the work they perform on a construction project.

1620

This bill also places an obligation on the payer to pay interest on any unpaid payments so that we can ensure that we are giving owners incentive to pay their bills on time.

Finally, I'm very pleased to encourage all members of the House—I know, through past experiences, that the opposition has a tendency of being a critic. Come on,

folks. This is about small businesses. We're here to support them. I'm encouraging everyone to move this to committee so that we can have final review.

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

Mr. Todd Smith: It's great to join the debate here this afternoon on Bill 69, the prompt payment bill. I'd like to clap my hands for Ian Cunningham from COCA. He's done an excellent job, because not only did we have the member from Vaughan, who wanted to put this bill forward; we had the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville as well who wanted to put it forward. The member from Leeds–Grenville wanted to put the prompt payment bill on the floor, and I did too. So you've been doing an excellent job, Mr. Cunningham from COCA.

I must say—

Interjection.

Mr. Todd Smith: Oh, and Paul Miller too? Really? Very good.

Ms. Damerla did an excellent job at explaining the details—I'm being nice—explaining the details as to what occurs—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask you to stick to riding names.

Mr. Todd Smith: Mississauga East–Cooksville; sorry. She did an excellent job in explaining why this type of a bill is needed, so I'm not going to go into all the details again as to why this type of bill is needed.

The member from Trinity–Spadina in Toronto doesn't understand exactly why there is a small issue with this bill that needs to be checked out at committee.

I know the member is from Toronto. He lives in Toronto. He's a Toronto guy. There are some privacy concerns regarding financial disclosure provisions in the bill. These are the problems—and not necessarily with the big Toronto contractors. I can tell you that, being from eastern Ontario—Prince Edward–Hastings, to be exact—there are some concerns in some of the smaller jurisdictions, let's say, in the province. While there are many large construction projects like the ones here in Toronto, there's a notable difference in scale between the capabilities of a larger contractor and some smaller subcontractors. Those differences between the size of those companies are much smaller in some of the smaller communities in the province. In a place like Bancroft or a place like Picton, for instance, in my riding, this bill might actually compel competitors to provide each other with financial information that could harm their ability to compete with each other a little further on down the line. This is something that we need to have addressed at the committee stage so that we can make sure we're bringing this bill forward in the best interests of everybody who's involved.

I should say that the biggest culprit for violating prompt payment sometimes is the government ministries and agencies. Bringing those agencies into compliance with prompt payment standards should be our goal in this bill as well, if you know what I mean, Speaker.

Listen: The bottom line is, if you do the work, you should get paid. I'm happy to support Bill 69 here at second reading. We'll get it to committee and we'll fix it for you, Ian.

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

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am very pleased to rise to speak in support of Bill 69, the Prompt Payment Act. I would also like to commend my colleague from Vaughan for his tireless work on this issue on behalf of his constituents, and I guess I will congratulate also all the other members who wanted to present this bill.

Mr. Speaker, during my tenure as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour, I was able to build fairly strong working relationships with many of the stakeholders in the construction industry who are affected by this bill. I believe that all here are well aware of the value of the construction industry in Ontario's economy. This industry employs hundreds of thousands of Ontarians and is the single largest investor in apprenticeships.

This is especially important in my riding of York South–Weston, where many people work in the trades and where many young people struggle to find good and meaningful jobs. Skilled trades and construction represent valuable opportunities for the youth in my community, and I hope that this bill will improve the opportunities that the industry offers them.

Because of my experience in the Ministry of Labour, I am also aware of some of the challenges that the industry faces, like late payments. Late payments, as we've heard, happen when an owner does not pay their contractors and subcontractors in an agreed-upon and timely fashion. This has very negative consequences not only for the industry, but for Ontario's economy as a whole. Late payment has many negative effects for the construction industry, including reduced employment, fewer apprenticeship opportunities, less investment in new equipment and higher construction costs, as contractors build uncertainty into their bids for projects, as we've heard from some of my colleagues.

Currently, there is no legislation in Ontario to protect contractors and subcontractors against late payments. Today, together, we have the opportunity to change that. As we've heard, when payment is delayed, it is the contractor or subcontractor who bears the brunt of that cost. Those who are the least able to afford the risk are the ones who are most vulnerable.

While Ontario is one of the most multicultural societies on earth—half of all immigrants to Canada settle here in Ontario and half of those settle here in the GTA and Toronto. Immigrants to Canada and Ontario have found, through the decades, many opportunities in the construction industry. I want to name the Italian community, the Portuguese community, the Chinese community, Spanish, South Asian—just to name a few.

Especially for newcomers and families who are settling in a new country, it's extremely important to receive those payments on time. They need to count on

that money that is owed to them. They need to pay their bills. They need to pay their rent. They need to feed their families. This creates uncertainty in their lives, and this bill would help them avoid that.

There is wide support for this legislation. I know that some stakeholders, like the Ontario Home Builders' Association, would like to have some clarification with regard to the level of disclosure, the right to financial information that is contained, and I think that can be done in committee.

I'm proud to support this bill and I hope that all my colleagues will as well.

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

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I'm pleased to rise to speak today on Bill 69. There's merit to discussing amendments to legislation that would promote prompt payments in the construction industry. We must ensure that there is a fair, competitive business environment.

I must remind the member from Vaughan, although progress payments sound great in principle, contracts are developed and agreed to upfront and signed by both parties, and regulations to allow for arbitrary changes to such contracts are both dangerous and prone to unintended consequences. There is a court system for righting wrongs, but the member wishes that the issue of non-payment of construction work would be taken out of that system. We can discuss that in committee.

I believe that through some work at committee, and with input from stakeholders and industry experts, we can make improvements to this bill that would alleviate the concerns of all parties. Consumers and contractors must be able to negotiate the best payment plans that suit their needs.

The second issue I have with this bill is the mandatory disclosure of financial information to the contractor, who may very well be his competitor. It is a competitive world out there, and the issues must be worked out upfront. If they can't, the contractor could take a simple pass on the project. This is a serious privacy issue and could be removed without affecting the overall main purpose of this bill.

Speaker, this is a typical Liberal assumption—that everybody operates in the same out-of-touch and irresponsible manner that they do: Contract first and ask questions later, just like at eHealth and Ornge; or contract first and negotiate later, like we've seen in the power plant cancellations.

Overall, Ontario businesses have a long record of acting responsibly, and any new legislation should be designed to weed out bad apples and leave the law-abiding businesses alone, getting out of their way and making our market competitive again so they can be successful. For, after all, when business is successful, they tend to grow, hire more employees. Speaker, is that not our goal? Everybody wins.

1630

Do you know what the real complaint of the construction industry is? It's this Wynne-McGuinty government.

Through high taxes, skyrocketing energy prices and over-regulation, it has depressed consumer spending power and contractors' bottom lines. If the member from Vaughan really cares about contractors and employees, and honest transactions, he would demand that his House leader would call our want of confidence motion.

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

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I don't have a lot of time to wrap up, and there were lots of fantastic comments made by members on all sides of the House. I want to thank the member from Barrie; the members from Davenport, Mississauga East-Cooksville, of course; the member from Durham; the member from Trinity-Spadina for his impassioned statements around this bill and some of his feelings with respect to some of the other associations that exist out there; my seatmate, the member from Scarborough-Agincourt; the member from Prince Edward-Hastings; of course, the member from York South-Weston; and the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. I also want to say thanks to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, who spent some time here with me in the chamber today and has taken a particular interest with respect to this bill. I look forward to working with members on this side and all sides of the House. I look forward to working with members of the construction industry and the minister and his ministry to see if we can move this along.

The only thing I would add is that I know that some comments and some concerns were raised by members of the official opposition. I respect their concerns, and I certainly respect the concerns articulated by the Home Builders' Association, but one thing that I would point out—and of course, this can certainly be dealt with in committee if we get past this stage today: With respect to the information that this proposed legislation seeks to have disclosed in order to make sure that payment does flow properly, I think it's important to note that that information would be under strict confidentiality rules, and anyone who sought to breach that confidentiality would be liable for damages sustained by the breach. I think that's an important thing to note.

The second thing that I would mention is I believe the member from Prince Edward-Hastings talked about how the government of Ontario, as a buyer of construction, may have some work to do with respect to prompt payment itself. I would note as well that Bill 69, as currently proposed, does include the crown itself. The crown would be bound by this bill as it's currently proposed.

I look forward, hopefully, to having this bill go to committee so that we can deal with all of these details at the committee stage, and I would thank all the members for their comments today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

SIKH HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE MOIS
DU PATRIMOINE SIKH

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 25, standing in the name of Mr. Singh.

Mr. Singh has moved second reading of Bill 52, An Act to proclaim the month of April as Sikh Heritage Month.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Can I refer this bill to social policy, please?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to social policy. Agreed? Agreed.

SERVICES FOR THE
DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mrs. Elliot has moved private member's notice of motion number 29.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PROMPT PAYMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR
LES PAIEMENTS RAPIDES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Del Duca has moved second reading of Bill 69, An Act respecting payments made under contracts and subcontracts in the construction industry.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills, please.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to regulations and private bills. Agreed? Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has requested unanimous consent to put forward a motion regarding private members' public business. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 33 be waived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has moved that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 33 be waived. Agreed? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Agreed?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until Monday, May 27, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1636.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Best, Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Millroy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	London West / London-Ouest	
Vacant	Windsor–Tecumseh	

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Vic Dhillon, Michael Harris
Rob Leone, Bill Mauro
Taras Natyshak, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Michael Prue
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Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Bill Mauro
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Dipika Damerla
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Jerry J. Ouellette, Shafiq Qadri
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Margaret R. Best, Vic Dhillon
Joe Dickson, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Monte Kwinter
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Margaret R. Best
Ted Chudleigh, Cheri DiNovo
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