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of Ontario

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

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des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 10 September 2013

Mardi 10 septembre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Tuesday 10 September 2013

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mardi 10 septembre 2013

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

**WIRELESS SERVICES
AGREEMENTS ACT, 2013**

**LOI DE 2013 SUR LES CONVENTIONS
DE SERVICES SANS FIL**

Ms. MacCharles moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 60, An Act to strengthen consumer protection with respect to consumer agreements relating to wireless services accessed from a cellular phone, smart phone or any other similar mobile device / *Projet de loi 60, Loi visant à mieux protéger les consommateurs en ce qui concerne les conventions de consommation portant sur les services sans fil accessibles au moyen d'un téléphone cellulaire, d'un téléphone intelligent ou de tout autre appareil mobile semblable.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ms. MacCharles has moved second reading of Bill 60. Ms. MacCharles.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm very pleased to rise to speak to this bill this morning. I'll be sharing my time later with the Honourable David Oraziotti, the Minister of Natural Resources.

This act, the Wireless Services Agreements Act, 2013, is a critical step forward as we strengthen protections for consumers in an area that affects more than 80% of Ontario's population.

I will begin by setting the groundwork for how far we've come in protecting consumers and the families of Ontario in the area of consumer protection. Last spring, our government introduced the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, 2013. This bill is before the House and I'm pleased that it seems to be moving forward. In fact, I think we're having a deferred vote on it later this morning. The introduction of Bill 55 met a commitment made by our government's speech from the throne, a commitment about strengthening the rights of Ontario consumers and working to ensure a fair, safe and transparent marketplace.

When introducing the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, I outlined how it proposes to address four very important areas of consumer protection. Just to

recap briefly, the bill would, first, curb aggressive high-pressure door-to-door sales tactics, especially for the sale or rental of water heaters. Secondly, it will protect vulnerable indebted consumers against misleading and abusive practices of some companies that offer debt settlement services. Third, it will provide stronger safeguards to strengthen the integrity of real estate multiple-offer practices and, fourth, give home sellers more power to negotiate flexible lower-cost arrangements when using a real estate professional. This package of consumer protection reforms addresses some key areas of Ontario's marketplace and would make the marketplace fairer, provide more choice to the people of this great province and boost consumer confidence.

Since that announcement, we've moved forward on several initiatives in this area, and we're eager to achieve the passage of the legislation to begin improving protections for Ontario consumers and to move that as quickly as possible, Speaker. But our efforts to improve consumer protection for Ontario consumers have not stopped there.

Less than two weeks after announcing the wide-ranging legislation I've just outlined, I introduced legislation to protect the rights of Ontario consumers in one more very significant sector of the marketplace: cellphones and wireless service agreements. Today, I'm leading off second reading debate on this important piece of legislation.

People in Ontario want and deserve clarity in their agreements with wireless companies. In the same spirit of clarity, we want to be clear about the protections for Ontario consumers that they would get from our proposed Wireless Services Agreements Act. We are talking about clear cellphone contracts, Speaker. We want consumers to have a clear understanding of what a cellphone contract will cost. We want wireless providers to be clear about the services their customers have signed up for. We want consumers to have a clear understanding of their rights when it comes to renewing their existing contracts, and we want consumers to know their rights when a service provider does not follow the rules. So we are being clear about the tools available to enforce the rules.

The use of cellphones and wireless communications is pervasive in the province. How pervasive? Consider the fact that over 80% of Ontario's population uses these devices for texting, talking, playing games, making plans, watching videos or sending emails. For many, they provide the comfort that a call can be made quickly in the case of an emergency.

Many of us are also responsible for paying for these cellphones and wireless devices. No doubt parents in this province pay for the cellphone contracts for many children. I know in my household, my husband and I have the responsibility of looking after cellphone bills for our two teenagers. That responsibility is highlighted at this time of year with the start of school. Many parents enter into cellphone or wireless service contracts, or people change their cellphone contracts as children head off to school—that could be middle school, secondary school, university or college—because moms and dads and caregivers recognize they want the security of knowing that they can call quickly and check in with their kids very easily.

I know in my family, it has become a way of life. I don't think there are too many of my children's friends who do not have some sort of wireless device for communication to stay in touch with parents and, of course, their friends, which sometimes is more important to them, I guess.

Just two weeks ago, my ministry offered some tips to consumers about how to protect their hard-earned money when entering into cellphone contracts in anticipation of the new school year. We received excellent coverage in the media to help spread the message.

In addition to cellphone contracts for our children, many of us are helping our aging parents with their cellphone contracts and bills, and we may be paying for those services.

We can see right here in the Legislature, Speaker, how many MPPs rely on these wireless devices. Some of us have one cellphone, some of us have two, and some of us have three cellphones, between our government-issued ones, our personal ones—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: We have too many.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: One of the members opposite said we have too many cellphones.

Some people are consolidating different cellphone accounts into one or more different types of devices. I think we can see right here in the Ontario Legislature how dependent we are on this kind of technology to do our jobs.

0910

Regardless of one's age, regardless of one's occupation, people seem to love these devices and services. What they don't love, however, are the surprises: the contract confusion and sometimes poor customer service. Just consider the results of a report released earlier in March of this year by the advocacy group called OpenMedia.ca. In an OpenMedia.ca survey, almost 3,000 cellphone users shared their views on their relationship with their cellphone provider. According to the report, entitled *Time for an Upgrade: Demanding Choice in Canada's Cell Phone Market*, a majority of Canadian respondents reported "being forced into accepting poor—often disrespectful—service." The study encouraged policy-makers to insist, among other things, that providers provide fair contracts along with transparency and service offerings, pricing and bundled services.

Consider another perspective on the level of customer service in the cellphone market. Earlier this year, the federal Commissioner for Complaints for Telecommunication Services noted a 250% rise in complaints over the past four years, with wireless sector complaints accounting for more and more of the commissioner's workload.

And while the Open Media study and the complaints commissioner's report are both national in scope, they shed light on many of the consumer concerns that have come to light in Ontario's cellphone market. In our province, people are entering into contracts thinking they've understood what they're paying for, only to gaze at their bill every month—and they do that with some confusion, Speaker. The bottom line is that many Ontario cellphone and wireless services consumers do not properly understand what they're paying for. They do not have a clear understanding of what the contract states because their contracts are confusing and unclear. We've heard that repeatedly, and we aim to change that. I know sometimes there's just too much information on a cellphone contract, so it's hard for consumers to read the most important parts of what they've signed up for in such a contract.

Ontario consumers deserve easy-to-understand cellphone contracts with no hidden costs. Only on that basis can they shop around to find the services that suit their needs best at the lowest cost. Only when consumers fully understand what they are agreeing to in their cellphone and wireless services contracts can they comparison shop and make an informed decision about the type of service or service bundles they want, and at a price they agree to. Only when our marketplace supports open, fair and transparent pricing will consumers truly be able to shop for the best deal on their cellphones and wireless services.

Our proposed legislation would help to ensure that when Ontario's consumers enter into a cellphone and wireless services contract, they are indeed fully informed. The legislation would, if passed, ensure that consumers have a number of protections: first, clear, written contracts that spell out which services come with the basic fee and which services result in extra charges. Second, it would include the right to be asked if they agree or consent to the renewal of their fixed-term agreement. Third, it would include the ability to walk away from their contracts at any time with limits on cancellation fees. Next, it would include the right to sue the supplier for three times the amount of that that is owed to the consumer, if the consumer is owed a refund and the company is refusing to pay. Finally, it would include the benefits of all-inclusive price advertising.

Consumers would receive one contract that spells out clearly the terms and costs they've agreed to, and companies would have to provide clear information on such things as roaming costs and when those costs would be incurred. Companies would need to inform consumers whether a cellphone is locked and how long it will remain locked. Suppliers would have to disclose the details of a manufacturer's warranty on a phone if the consumer is purchasing supplementary warranty coverage.

Since we announced these proposed stronger protections, many people have asked me why the government is reintroducing this legislation similar to the cellphone bill that was introduced during the last session in 2012. The answer's very simple: This was important to consumers last year and it remains important legislation this year. That's, I think, evident by what we've seen in the media and the pickup and the responses many of us have received as MPPs in support of this legislation.

I want to briefly outline the effect of the changes that are reflected in our current bill. These changes would prohibit service providers from charging consumers for calls made once a phone is reported lost or stolen. Unfortunately, that does happen. I certainly see that with my kids. They've lost control of their cellphones from time to time. Sometimes I have to impose some consequences around that, but it would be great if we had that provision that prohibits the providers from charging consumers for calls made once it's reported lost or stolen. Hopefully it's lost and it gets retrieved, and it's not stolen.

Next, the changes would allow the consumers to agree upfront to monthly extensions at the end of a fixed-term contract to avoid loss of their cellphone number.

Finally, they would provide authority for regulations to require service providers to give consumers a personalized contract summary.

We introduced our bill with these changes because we believe there is a role for the province to play. We wanted to bring this legislation forward to protect Ontarians and because we believe consumers need this protection and the strong enforcement measures and enhanced remedies that are outlined in the bill. That is something we did not see when the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, also known as the CRTC, announced its new national wireless code on June 3 of this year. That code, which strengthens consumer protection for cellphone users, will come into force in December of this year for all new contracts entered into on or after that date. It will also apply to contracts that are entered into, amended, renewed or extended on or after December 2. That implementation may be in doubt, however, as several carriers have challenged the CRTC code in court. This kind of uncertainty makes it even more important for our legislation provincially to be acted on quickly to protect consumers. We are pleased that the CRTC code takes important steps in protecting consumers in this province, and in fact across the country. The code does address some issues, for example, such as prepaid phone cards and unlocking of devices. Those are the kinds of provisions that are best suited to federal jurisdiction as opposed to provincial jurisdiction.

I want to be very clear that the province has responsibility for making sure consumer contracts are fair and transparent, and they are necessary protections that are in place for our consumers. We certainly wouldn't be the first province to implement this kind of legislation.

Our legislation addresses two areas in particular that are not dealt with by the national code. They are all-inclusive price advertising as well as restrictions on

unilateral contract amendments. Our proposed legislation would also give consumers the benefit of comprehensive Ministry of Consumer Services enforcement tools to deal with wireless providers who break the rules, unlike the CRTC approach, which is more of an individual complaint enforcement approach.

We must continue to press forward to ensure our consumers are protected. Ontario's marketplace is dominated by the big three wireless companies. As we know, there was recent speculation and media reports that Verizon might be entering the Canadian marketplace. Verizon's ultimate decision not to actually reinforces the dominance of what's happening in this marketplace, and it shows that that is probably not changing. In this environment in particular, strong consumer protections become even more important. It's also worth noting that the CRTC itself, when consulting on their draft code, was of the view that a national code could coexist with provincial legislation. So we knew that before we introduced our bill, and that premise, I understand, still exists. So we're pressing forward here in Ontario.

In a few moments my colleague will be speaking to this bill; he is the Honourable David Oraziotti. I do want to thank him publicly for the work he has done in supporting consumers in Ontario. In fact, it was David Oraziotti who brought forward earlier versions of this bill and was a tireless advocate for changing the way we protect consumers who are customers of wireless service products.

0920

Our proposed legislation, if passed, would have very strong enforcement measures and remedies for consumers when their rights have been breached. As I mentioned, these cellphone and wireless service remedies and protections are part of a broader initiative in consumer protection initiatives in Ontario. We're calling it our Ontario consumer package.

We believe our comprehensive approach will strengthen consumer protection and ensure a fair, safe and informed marketplace in Ontario. We have a responsibility to Ontario consumers, and to their families, to ensure that the millions of cellphone agreements signed by Ontario individuals and families each and every year are comprehensive and easy to understand.

This clarity is all about helping people of Ontario to make very confident decisions in the marketplace. We want Ontarians to make informed choices, spend wisely and protect their hard-earned money. I think we can all agree that when we have confident consumers, we help build a stronger Ontario economy. A stronger Ontario economy is something everyone in this province can absolutely support.

I'd like to thank you, Ms. Speaker, for allowing me to speak to this bill. At this point, I'd like to give the floor to my colleague the Honourable Minister of Natural Resources, David Oraziotti. And I'll just bridge until he arrives.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The minister may continue.

Hon. David Oraziatti: Thank you, Speaker. It's a pleasure to be here today and a pleasure to speak to Bill 60. I want to commend Minister MacCharles for her leadership on this bill, a bill that's incredibly important to Ontarians.

You've heard much about the changes that are necessary to protect consumers from charges and contracts that are unfair and one-sided. I want to continue today on that theme and also to elaborate specifically on some of these changes that would benefit consumers. We certainly welcome support from all sides of the House on this and all parties and certainly hope that they will be unequivocal in their support.

The challenges that consumers have faced—and I go back a number of years ago, when I introduced Bill 133 as a private member's bill and also Bill 5 as a private member's bill on this same issue. What we determined in the research and work that we had done at the time was that—for example, a study that was done in 2010 by the New America Foundation determined that out of 11 countries surveyed with respect to cellphone charges, when you look at the three components of your cellphone bill—your voice, your data and your texting in your cellphone—Canada had the highest costs to consumers, significantly higher than a number of other jurisdictions.

That led us to believe that contractual agreements that are signed in the province of Ontario that are clearly the jurisdiction of provincial governments are fair game for provincial legislation to protect consumers. I think that part of the issue stems from the fact that we all recognize that there is a bit of a vacuum at the federal level when it comes to this issue. The CRTC has not issued spectrum licences in a way that would allow adequate competition to take place. We have very limited competition in this country: essentially three large companies controlling 95% of the market share.

We have other brands of cellphones or contracts that individuals can sign. It creates the optics that there are all kinds of choice in the marketplace for the consumer, but the reality isn't, because when you pick up the phone and you call the customer service contact centre of one of these other companies, you're really talking to a customer centre run by one of the big three. That puts consumers at a disadvantage.

There is no reason that the contracts that have been shaped the way they've been for a number of years with the requirements and the onuses that are put on consumers—they're not reasonable. They're excessive. Most consumers understand that the practices have been unhelpful to consumers—lacking choice and punitive in many ways, when you look at some of these cancellation fees that are absolutely horrendous. What kind of environment are we in?

We're here because this issue is important to Ontarians and we're here to speak to it because at the federal level there is not the protection for consumers that there needs to be. There has not been the issuing of spectrum for licencing with respect to cellphone companies that there needs to be to allow new entrants into the market-

place to compete, to bring prices down, to make prices more cost-competitive with other jurisdictions. So Canadians and Ontarians go on and on and on paying these excessive charges.

In 2010, when I introduced this private member's bill, Bill 133, the only province that had consumer protection legislation in place for wireless devices was the province of Quebec, and it had just been passed in June 2010. Following that, Manitoba introduced and passed legislation. Following that, Newfoundland and Labrador introduced and passed legislation. So there are three other provinces in this country that obviously felt the federal government was leaving them in the lurch, so to speak, and consumers in their province needed greater protection. We've seen much conversation around this issue in recent years, as residents in this country look for ways in which their senior levels of government will step up, provide the leadership that's needed and protect them from the practices of large companies.

We talk about competition issues. We all want to see competition and a better price for consumers. What's really at stake for these companies is corporate profits. That's what's at stake. This is important, that we ensure that from our perspective there are fair and balanced contracts. It's something that I think we can all understand when it comes to the language in the contracts, for example, where the surveys that have been done with consumers indicate that more than half of consumers don't understand their contracts. They're very onerous; they're written with legal complexities to them that the average consumer struggles with. So we want to see the contracts in plain language, in simple terms for consumers to understand what is being asked of them.

We also want to see full disclosure of goods and services, various charges that may be incurred, start-up fees and other costs so consumers are certain; there's not bill shock; they're not going to get their first bill after they go to that cellphone store, purchase and sign up, they get home, another month goes by, the bill comes in and they say, "Wait a second. I didn't think it was going to be \$150 for this phone; I thought it was going to be \$49.99, like the ad said." So all-in pricing, all-inclusive pricing in the marketplace today—and you see this across all kinds of services, and why it's important. That's something we need to be bringing to this sector.

Consent is important with respect to this. We spoke to many consumers over the years on this issue, those who would indicate that they called the company up, they wanted to make a small change to the plan, they were within a few months of their plan elapsing because they entered a three-year contract and they changed jobs or they wanted to add a feature like conference calling or call display, some kind of feature; and all of a sudden they find themselves locked into another three-year term from that point on, which cancelling would be incredibly expensive. These types of tactics are not helpful for consumers. They're obviously driven by maximizing profits and extracting the most that they can from the consumer once they get them hooked: "Let's see how much we can

get out of this consumer,” and they go about doing that as best they can. I think that’s why it’s important to ensure that we have the consent piece as part of this legislation.

Cancelling agreements at any time with caps on cancellation fees: This was obviously an issue that many consumers raised, and the ministry has received countless complaints on this subject as a whole, but on this issue specifically with regard to cancellation fees. So I’m certainly pleased to see that the minister has this in here, this \$50 maximum cancellation cap. I’ve heard horror stories of individuals paying \$400 and \$500 to get out of a contract for services that they’re no longer going to need.

Prohibiting charging for services that cannot be accessed when a warranted phone is in for repairs—you don’t have your phone; you don’t have access to it; the company can’t keep billing you, as has been the practice in the past—and protection against billing when the phone is lost or stolen—I heard the minister allude to that earlier, and I think she makes an incredibly important point.

0930

With respect to the bill specifically, I think there are some fantastic protections here for consumers that are included, and I think this is something that we need to move forward with, quickly and expeditiously. Consumers have waited long enough for this type of protection to come about. As I’ve indicated, it has been passed in other provinces as long as three years ago, and yet we still have a challenge federally to see any real, tangible action on this.

When the CWTA, the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association, speaks about this issue—they have their voluntary code of conduct. That’s what they have. That’s what is supposed to protect consumers: the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association’s voluntary code of conduct. Well, folks, that’s just not good enough for consumers. It doesn’t cut it. The contracts continue to look the way they are, and consumers continue to be gouged by these large companies, so it doesn’t make sense. We obviously need to take more significant steps to protect consumers.

Would we prefer to see a universal code right across the country that creates consistency and fairness for consumers from coast to coast to coast? Yes, of course we would. But failing that, and in this absence of leadership at the federal level when it comes to this issue, we’re prepared to step up.

Again, I commend the minister for her leadership on this. She sees this as an important issue, as does our government, and we want to be protecting consumers on this issue.

Certainly, the message to the CWTA is they need to take it to another level when it comes to the protection of consumers. This voluntary code of conduct, that sees consumers disadvantaged by these contracts, is unacceptable, and that’s the message that is coming from the public. That’s the message that is coming from our government and from other governments across the country.

As far as the CRTC is concerned, they obviously play an important role in the licensing and oversight of telecommunications in this country. What I would say is that they have limited the ability for competition to thrive. They have not released the licensing spectrum that is needed to create competition. The fearmongering that is going on at the federal level about the instability and creating more of a cumbersome type of contract is completely smoke and mirrors.

That’s one of the lines that the CWTA uses: “Any type of legislation that’s passed by provinces is going to be too difficult for us to manage.” The way that they view this is that these costs will be passed on to consumers. It’s a bit of a threat, and we hear that in the language that they use about jurisdictions in this country that they feel should not be stepping into this environment, should just sort of stand down until the federal government—until they work with them to determine what’s desirable. If they don’t do that, and the provinces decide to step up and they decide to pass legislation, well, then, who knows what could happen to consumers? You could just end up driving up those bills up even further. That’s the kind of approach that the CWTA has taken. It’s unfair; it’s unfounded. It’s unrealistic that consumers should be required to continue to accept that type of approach.

The CRTC needs to move more quickly. They need to open up spectrum. They need to create some opportunities for competition.

We understand, obviously, that the CWTA membership is a powerful lobby group. Bell, Rogers and Telus are powerful players in this sector that monopolize the environment, and they create the playing field that is to their advantage.

As legislators here at Queen’s Park, it’s our obligation to make sure that we balance both the interests of the consumer and business to ensure that business can thrive, business can do well and business can turn a profit. We want to see jobs here in the country. But also, when we look at other jurisdictions and look at the comparison costs of other jurisdictions and what consumers are paying in those jurisdictions for cellphone costs—for voice, data and text, the components that make up your bill—it’s ridiculous. It is ridiculous in this province and in this country what we pay—what the costs should be. So that’s the reason, Speaker, why we’re here today supporting Bill 60.

I think that the consumer advocates that are out there who have made comments publicly around this issue—it speaks volumes. If you take a look at comments by the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, a report by Michael Janigan highlights the practice of extra charges in the Canadian telecommunications industry, whereby suppliers of consumer product and services segregate part of their costs as a separate charge and then add them to the final price paid by consumer. He speaks to the way in which these costs are manipulated. He describes these system access fees levied by the phone companies as “charges concocted by the wireless companies to appear as a government ... fee.” You have various individuals

who have come out and expressed their concern around this.

With respect to the bill, PIAC says that the “bill will help remove barriers to real competition for ordinary consumers of wireless services. It will help level the playing field for customers who ... feel trapped by onerous one-sided conditions.”

Mel Fruitman, who’s the vice president of the Consumers’ Association of Canada—here’s what he said: “For a long time consumers have been victims of the nefarious marketing practices of wireless telephone companies. This protection for consumers is necessary and long overdue. We can see no reason why this act would not receive all-party support and be quickly passed.”

Don Mercer, who is president of the Consumers Council of Canada—here’s what he said: “Contracts for cellular voice and data services and equipment rate as top-10 sources of consumer complaints in Ontario. Many consumers feel their rights are unfairly limited and find it hard to understand their responsibilities under these agreements. Now this bill in Ontario proposes action as well. Provinces across Canada should take responsibility and prompt action, and ultimately work toward a nationally harmonized approach that recognizes today’s consumers are highly mobile. The Consumers Council of Canada encourages members of the Ontario Legislature to seriously engage this bill as a practical measure.” There are all kinds of organizations that monitor practices of various companies and how they impact consumers in their daily lives, and clearly there’s consensus on this issue.

We received countless emails from individuals right across the province in our office, talking about, “It’s about time.” The flavour of the emails was that it’s about time that a government in this province stood up for consumers on wireless services and telecommunications and protected them from these contracts that are so one-sided and encouraged the federal government to create a national code that reflects what are really the true costs of delivering these services. “Stop the gouging.”

In my constituency office in Sault Ste. Marie, I’ve sat down with a host of individuals and residents in our community who have brought me examples of their cellphone contracts and their bills. They can’t understand the charges and can’t understand why they’re so significant. I’m not talking about the responsibility of an individual to know what their bill says and what they’ve agreed to and to pay in good faith that bill and be responsible. No one is excusing consumers or individuals from simply saying, “I’m going to go and I’m going to sign up for a \$500 phone, and I’m going to take that with me and I’m going to get it subsidized so I’m going to pay \$99 when I walk out the door, and two months later, I’m going to cancel my contract, and I should just be able to keep the phone.” That’s not what we’re talking about. There’s a formula in the bill for reducing and prorating that cost, what the individual would have to pay, what they would be obligated to.

We’re not talking about individuals taking advantage of companies, but when you have such a broad range—

and when you’re talking about Ontarians, 80% of Ontarians have some form of mobile device that they’re using. This is a daily feature for people. It has become much more essential than it was five or 10 years ago. This is important to the daily lives of Ontarians. We want to see contracts worded in such a way that individuals in this province can understand them, that they don’t need to go and get legal counsel to determine what their contract says. That’s not the way this should work.

0940

So, we’re slowly getting there. We’re slowly getting there. Some of these companies are starting to recognize that they can no longer take this approach: “Now, we’ll unlock your phone but it’ll cost you \$50.” You know, in some jurisdictions you can’t sell phones that are lost, as an example. There are all kinds of ways in which they can improve consumer relations that they have with customers, certainly in this province and nationally. But I think the responsibility, ultimately, with respect to the CRTC, is just greater responsibility at the federal government level and greater recognition that this is a challenge that consumers are facing.

Why should individual provinces need to debate this type of legislation at each and every—you know, at 10 legislatures across the country, and three territories—to try to provide better support for consumers, fair and balanced contracts, when one government, if they actually showed the leadership and had the guts to do something about it, would say, “This is not right. We’re going to allow more competition here. We’re going to effect change that would help to reduce cost to consumers and put these costs more in line with other jurisdictions”? Why wouldn’t they do that?

Obviously, it’s clear that they’re turning a blind eye to the issue. There are some small changes where we’re waiting for a new code to come out from the CRTC; that’s expected, I understand, in December. We’re going to be monitoring that. I know the minister is very interested to see how that lines up with our proposed legislation. I’ve heard companies that have said to me, “Look, you don’t need to do this. You don’t need to put these changes in place through legislation because we’re going to make these changes. We’re going to do all this. We’re going to help to protect consumers.” So I said, “Well okay, if you are going to do that, then you won’t mind if we pass our legislation because obviously we’re going to be on the same page.” “Well, that’s not what we are saying. That’s not what we’re saying.”

So, right away we get the backpedaling and we get, “Well, you know, just let us make the changes”—right? So that’s not acceptable. We can’t just sit here idly by while consumers are gouged in their contracts and these companies operate indiscriminately in their practices.

As I said, we’ve seen some small steps toward improvements. We have got a long way to go, they’ve got a long way to go, the CRTC has got a long way to go, and this voluntary code with the Wireless Telecom Association is pretty weak and unhelpful to consumers.

I just want to say on behalf of our government, our party completely supports this legislation. I want to

encourage all members of the Legislature to support it. Let's get this bill done and passed and out there working to help support consumers. We've been talking about this for a number of years.

I want to acknowledge the opposition members. When I introduced Bill 133 and Bill 5 and I think now Bill 60, the minister's bill or the government bill, opposition members have stood up and supported this legislation because they know; they're hearing from consumers as well and they understand that this is an issue that is not a partisan issue at all. This is an issue affecting consumers, across 13.5 million people in Ontario, 80% roughly of which have some type of device. I appreciate that you recognize that this is very important to everyone, and that your constituents in your ridings want to see you stand up and support this bill and get this passed as well so that we can support consumers.

With that, Speaker, I just want to say thank you for the opportunity to speak to this today, and I again commend the minister and her ministry for their leadership on this issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments? The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Thank you, Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to comment on this bill. I guess it has been a long time coming. We've heard that it was first introduced in 2010. The party on this side agreed with it and supported moving ahead on it. But now we're wondering—even when it was introduced last spring, we were again for it but questioning, with the federal regulation coming out, the need for it and the opportunity for really confusing regulations. Now we see those regulations come out. Really, in many ways, this bill doesn't go as far as the wireless code that was put out by the federal government. I look down and we look at some of the issues: the cooling-off period is greater in the federal bill; there is no extra charge on unlimited services—not dealt with here, as it is by the CRTC. There are a number of things like that. So really, it looks like the bill has not been updated. Of course, it was issued before. But now we're looking at legislation that's coming about on December 1.

I somewhat wonder, is this the most important legislation we have to deal with here? We have issues with jobs; we have issues with the economy. People in my riding are calling up every day wondering and worried about what they're going to do this winter with their hydro and heating bills because they know, after last year, that they had a hard time deciding what they're going to pay: their grocery bills or these mandatory bills that are going to keep them in their houses. We certainly supported this for years, but it's been years since this government first talked about putting this through. With a majority government it certainly could have been put through very quickly.

Anyway, we're pleased to see this come through. We want to bring it to committee. We're worried about some of the conflicting regulations. Maybe it's more confusing than to go with one. We look forward to debate on this.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I rose here back on October 6, 2011, and gave my maiden speech. In that speech, I said I'm going to give credit where credit is due. I will maintain that and I've done that repeatedly in this House. I want to credit the member from Sault Ste. Marie for bringing this bill forward and his tenacity to reintroduce it over the few years he has been here.

It's an important bill because it hits households. It's all about affordability, and that's a lot of what the NDP has been very diligent about, as far as pushing issues forward: making life more affordable. Absolutely, we need to do the same thing with hydro; and absolutely, we need to do the same thing with creating jobs; and absolutely, we need to do things with making this government more accountable; and absolutely, we need to do a lot of other things, but this is one of those steps that is a small step forward. He's absolutely right, when the minister made his comments—and I'm glad to have him here today. We actually made an announcement over the course of the summer—again, in White River we worked together on this, and I'm looking forward to working with you on this one. This is a measure that is absolutely needed in northern Ontario.

You need to understand something: In northern Ontario, these cellphones are becoming more of a necessity than anything else, particularly for our kids, because mom and dad are working and the line of communication is that cellphone. Those kids have that cellphone, and there are lots of surprise things that come when kids decide to press buttons without thinking about what the effect of pressing that button on the phone is.

There are a few things that I look forward to when we're talking about this in committee which aren't highlighted in this bill. The current contracts: What are we going to do about those? Also, the roaming fees. I understand and I agree with the minister that a lot of the responsibility for regulating cellphones falls with the CRTC, but it's a step forward that we take that initiative to do it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John Fraser: I'm proud to stand in support of Bill 60. The act provides for clarity and transparency in wireless contracts. It provides for fair business practices. A wireless contract is very often the first contract a young person enters into. They're vulnerable, and their families are vulnerable. This act provides for some protection.

This past summer I had the benefit and the pleasure of knocking on a lot of doors, and the message that I received when I was knocking on those doors was, "I want you to work on those things that are important to me." I think this is one of those things. I think this is one of the issues that we can all agree on, that we can all work together on, and I urge all members of the Legislature to work towards passage of this bill so we can achieve this for the people who elected us.

0950

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to stand here today and bring comments on Bill 60. I would take exception to some of the comments that have been made here. I can tell you that having gone door to door over the summer in Ottawa South and having gone door to door in Scarborough–Guildwood and, of course, spending time in Prince Edward–Hastings, the number of times I heard from a constituent who said that we need wireless telecommunication legislation came up a total of zero.

Especially now—and we have supported it; the Minister of Natural Resources is correct. The opposition has supported previous legislation on numerous occasions, and I give him credit for bringing it forward three or four years ago when he did in a private member's bill, because there wasn't federal legislation coming at the time. But now we have the CRTC working on a wireless code, and it's going to be in place on December 1; they're bringing the recommendations forward on December 1.

So I just wonder about the relevancy of this type of legislation now and, to be honest, I wonder about the relevancy of a lot of the bills that we're debating in the Legislature today. You know, the tanning bed bill is important; no question it's important. The Local Food Act: There are important aspects of that as well. Co-op housing—all of these bills are wonderful bills. Water heater sales: Yes, we want to crack down on these types of things. But what I heard about when I went door to door in Ottawa South and in Scarborough–Guildwood and in my own riding of Prince Edward–Hastings—the constituents there are phoning by the dozens daily talking about the rising cost of electricity. They're worried about being able to stay in their homes, and we're not doing anything about that, Madam Speaker. There's no legislation coming from the government on how we're going to deal with the rising cost of electricity, how we're going to allow people to stay in their homes. While it's going to be 34 degrees and 44 with the humidex today in Toronto, in a couple of months from now, it's going to be a heck of a lot colder than that, and how people are going to be able to survive, I don't—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The minister has two minutes to respond.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. Excuse me. Order.

The minister has two minutes to respond.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. I'm very encouraged to hear, I think, all-party support for this bill moving forward, as they've done in the past. I'm a little bit concerned, though, that the PC comments tend to suggest that our bill should be watered down. We think the exact opposite, Speaker. We think the exact opposite because we want to strengthen protection for consumers.

I said it before and I'll say it again: The national code, if it was perfect, sure, we'd go for it. However, it isn't. It's an individual-complaint, voluntary kind of code. Our proposed bill is much stronger for protecting Ontarians. It deals with strong enforcement. It deals with all-in-

pricing, clear pricing. At the end of the day, like other provinces, we need to go forward with strong protection for consumers in Ontario, in the absence of anything federal that is robust enough for people in this province.

Having said that, when the code evolves—we're monitoring it closely, and we certainly don't want any duplication or confusion. That's not in the interests of Ontarians; it's not in the interests of consumers.

I do want to thank the contributions and the comments by the members from Ottawa South, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Algoma–Manitoulin and last, but not least, the Minister of Natural Resources, the MPP for Sault Ste. Marie, who has been a tireless advocate for seeing this kind of protection go forward. We want to stand up for Ontarians. We want to have clear contracts. We want to have clear pricing. We want to make sure that the 80% of Ontarians who have wireless devices have good support. They have to have clear contracts. We have to have clear enforcement and strong enforcement for Ontarians, and I hope this bill will move forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I rise today to begin the leadoff for our response to the wireless bill. As I said before, I commend the minister who started this bill some time ago. I think at that time we agreed, as did all three parties in here, that it was time to move ahead with that bill. The government at that time decided not to. I believe the bill has been introduced three more times, and now we're seeing, after federal legislation was put through, an urgency to move ahead with it.

In many cases—actually, in most cases—the federal legislation actually goes further. We really question now the dual legislation and why we're going through it. In some ways, it's even more confusing. Many other provinces have moved ahead. Ontario decided—the Liberal government decided—not to do that at the time. The persistence of the member over there brought it up a number of times.

We saw that there was a true need for this; we agreed with it. We did offer some comments on it. We're glad to see that they allowed for the extension of the contract, something that we thought was really a negative—to lose your cellphone number after your contract expired. So, certainly, they moved ahead on that.

But we need to look at some broader issues that this bill hasn't talked about. I heard the comment about the spectrum. With the big three, it's interesting, because throughout the debate at the federal level, I didn't hear anything from this government that talked about the need to move ahead with the cell spectrum. As I say, 95% of it is owned by the big three. This was an opportunity to move ahead and get some other players. Granted, there was some fear that a large US supplier would come in here, but really, 95% of the market today is controlled by three companies. That doesn't sponsor competition. It's a problem. At one time, we saw that prices in Canada were some of the highest in the world. A recent study shows

that that's no longer the case. We're actually lower than most states and most provinces. That has been taken care of; I guess the threat of competition has moved that down.

Certainly, we need to do more. I don't see anything in this bill that does that. Nothing in this bill talks about the spectrum issue or talks about the competition issue. So certainly they could have gone much further.

I don't see anything in this bill that encourages rural coverage. Being from a rural area—well, you don't even have to be that rural. You can drive down the 401 and you're constantly being dropped. Service is great in the big centres. We don't see anything that has done that. I live three or four miles north of the 401: very poor service. Our township is very poorly serviced. I look at this as a missed opportunity by this government.

We are a township that benefited from the high-speed Internet program that they had a number of years ago. This government was slow to accept new technologies that came around. Today's highest and best data plans are superior to what they're rolling out for high-speed Internet in the rural areas—by far.

You also have to look at the issue of the wireless Internet that's being rolled out. Because they wouldn't allow cell companies to enter that market, it's much slower. We're looking at one-megabyte services. Current data services are approaching 20 megabytes—not even close.

I don't know what happens in four or five years, when this service is no longer viable and equipment can't be bought. Who is going to go back and replace this? This was an expensive program they brought through.

Granted, when the program started, there was a need for it. I remember speaking to the ministry. We were one of the first townships that progressed with this. I acknowledge that it was too late for our township, but in eastern Ontario, all the other counties were waiting to move ahead. The feedback was, "We can't be supporting cell companies." You look at the other side of it. What they've done is they've encouraged an obsolete technology. Equipment that was out of date was being removed from earlier installations to be moved over.

So really all we've done is we've put in an obsolete service for something that, with competition, could have been opened up. There were at least three companies—and probably more of the small companies would have moved in, because there was a plan for government help in this program—that would have put in something that would have, of course, been the latest technology, which would be much faster. It would have had an action plan to be updated when it needed to be. I mean, I'm really worried about this equipment that's out of date now.

1000

I'll go back to how in our township, where we moved ahead with the wireless service, we extended a number of towers. It's a population of about 13,000 people. The last I heard, the company had 19 customers—try to maintain something. The problem with it was that there was enough cell service when the new cell companies came through that it made it redundant. We were lucky because

we had enough service with some towns that people didn't go for it. But as you travel up through places north of the 401, as you go west, there's absolutely no cell service. This is an issue, and we see this as a problem moving forward.

As we go through this and we talk about some of the issues that were addressed in this bill—in many cases, the cooling-off period in Bill 60 is 10 days; the CRTC is 30. No extra costs for unlimited services: This bill doesn't address it; the CRTC does. Trial period regulation: They address it; this bill does not. Month-to-month extension: We're glad they listened to that, because we think that would have been very disruptive, to have your cellphone end on the date your contract ended. We had some discussion with the minister about that. I know people myself who have had plans that have been over for years, and they just don't go in to renew the phone because they're happy with what they have and happy with the bill they have. Roaming charges cap: One of the biggest issues of shellshock is not addressed here; there's a cap in the federal bill.

We see that there are lots of places here where we have redundant legislation. Really, that's confusing now, because you have two sets of rules. Of course, the feds', where it's more stringent, take effect. We think that some work with the bill—and maybe through committee, we can make sure that they do agree or at least that they're handled at the federal level; we can take them out of here.

We want something that is really going to handle or provide a needed service to consumers, that makes it clear. There's no question that of the people I know, very few of them don't have cellphones. It's an important service that 10, 15 years ago nobody would have dreamt would have been so universally adopted. As the prices come down and as people adopt it, it's become part of their lifeline and really part of the 911 system. People feel, if they don't have it, and they've got some issues—they certainly see a need for it.

I see the wireless code issued in June of this year to take effect later this year. I really wonder how quickly—we talk about rushing this through. They gave six months. Is it reasonable to assume that we can ask carriers to issue new contracts in a matter of days to beat this plan? It's just a rush.

I look at this and I look at the need for this, and I just wonder why. We've sat on this for four years now. We have an economy that's in trouble. We have 600,000 people without jobs and nothing on the docket coming. I don't see anything in what I've seen coming up in this Legislative Assembly that's going to deal with jobs. We talk about consumer sentiment, and it's not very positive in this province. People are worried about their jobs. They're worried about what they're going to do tomorrow. I guess they're worried about being able to pay for their cellphone. It's the timing of it, and it just makes you wonder where they're going with this; and why they're not talking about the real issues?

In my riding, I went around, as I'm sure most people in this House did in July. I didn't hear anybody talk about

cellphones. I heard a lot of people talking about the economy and I heard people worrying about their jobs. I heard a lot of people talking about the gas plants, accountability. I went door-to-door. This one senior I met came to the door and she seemed to be kind of apologizing to me. She said, "You know, I had to do something today I've never done in my life. I voted for the Conservatives."

"I know Dalton McGuinty, knew their family well, liked him, but they messed with the money. There's no explanation for that. They just had no regard for the money, and look at the mess we're in."

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Jim, get back on the bill. Come on.

Mr. Jim McDonell: But I'm talking about the issue of—why are we doing this now? It really makes you wonder. This is somebody—you know, I said, "You don't have to apologize to me for voting Conservative." It's accountability. Where is it? Where is the looking after what's really needed with this government? Where are we going with it?

When I review the bills, our analysis is that the federal one is a lot more stringent. It does a lot more. I'm not saying it wasn't required, but we're sitting here four years after it was introduced, and we're trying to panic it through. All it will likely do is—are we going to force cell companies to come up with a new contract that's redundant on December 1? I mean, there's a lot of ambiguity put into this. A lot of the things, as I say, are much more stringent in the federal law. We support what's in here, no question, but it's too late. You sat on it for four years. I don't know what we can say. It's hard to stand up and rally the troops around something that's already done.

Even when it was introduced last spring, we questioned the fact that going to a number, or 10 different—when the feds were talking about how they were in the midst of it, they would be introducing it. Of course, I agree that there's always that thought that we're going to put it out, and when's it going to come out? We heard this government do it for four years. I said, "Well, you know, it would be nice to think it's going to be out in the next few months," but I didn't quite believe them, either. But they didn't. They issued it on—what?—June 3? Now we're sitting here looking at trying to push our legislation, trying to beat them with a date? They gave six months for the companies to make the changes. Are we going to expect them to do it in two? There's a lot of work to be done. There's a lot of confusion with the consumers to do this. I think maybe all we're going to do is confuse them, because now we've got regulations that are superseded and more stringent.

The biggest complaint I hear is about the roaming fees. They're not even addressed here. Whereas at least here, they put a cap—the feds. It's something that we've really got to wonder where we're going. Prices, unlimited services—there are more limits put in with the CRTC one. You just go through it. The post-paid service contracts: stricter rules with the feds just all the way through, where the customers can find their information.

If you go with one—there's a benefit with going with one deal for the country, because it is seamless. People can move across the country. You don't expect your cell service to stop at the border. You expect it to move along the border. So the federal idea was something we were very much occurring—and we're disappointed that they didn't come out sooner themselves, and we were disappointed—we supported this bill in 2010. We're getting to the last half of 2013, and we're trying to ram something through. I wonder: Is it just—because it is an issue—

Interjection.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Well, but you had support from all three parties and a majority government, and you couldn't get it through, so I just wonder, were you serious about it? Was it an issue? Those are the questions I hear. Really, I don't hear anybody talking about cell service, because studies show that we have lower prices than our neighbours. So, as I say, I just wonder about where we are going. It's not what I heard when I went around the riding.

You talk about a member—calling up just last week. He came in with his hydro bill, asking how he's going to pay it. He said, "I got through last year. Hydro came out with an idea: 'Well, look, we'll let you go to two payments.'" He said, "What am I going to do? Take a mortgage out?" He said, "I can't go down to two payments. That doesn't help me at all."

We look for the reason why it's even a worry, and it's because of the mismanagement of the files—on many files. I mean, the energy file: We're adding a billion dollars a year in unnecessary costs. You look at spilling water over a dam. It's \$300 million here that our consumers pay for. The costs to get our neighbours to take our surplus power, because we have no management plan, is \$500 million, half a billion dollars. Think of what we could do with making this life affordable in Ontario. Think of the companies and the technology and the education we could provide, the nurses, the doctors. I mean, \$500 million, half a billion bucks—\$80 million to vent steam at our nuclear plants—because of our lack of plans.

1010

The Green Energy Act, it's again something—and I wonder about this bill. Is it just for show? Is it just to show that we've got something here that regardless of the costs—we're going to drive up costs getting companies now to move to legislation that is temporary because the other one takes effect December 1. I think if we sit back and look at—I'm sure there are a few issues and I think the minister—I have to commend her. There are a few issues that, of course, this CRTC code of conduct would not address and I think it's important that we do address those. But from our analysis, of the many things in this bill, it's down to one or two or three different items, really something that we'd be best to work with the feds to make sure there's a federal regulation on it.

I live in a border town and it's somewhat confusing because if you go 15 minutes to the east of us you're into Quebec and they have a different set of contracts than they do in Ontario. Of course, they'd have to produce two, depending where your residence was, but there's the

confusion. We've got Ottawa; we've got some big populations around that border. So having that national program is certainly a big benefit to us and I think a big benefit to the people right across the province.

I had the opportunity this summer to travel out to Vancouver. It's nice to be able to take your phone out there and know that the same rules apply, as opposed to if you happen to travel to the south; right away you're worried about roaming costs. Again, as I said, it's something that's not handled in this. We've heard crazy stories about people coming back from vacation and having thousands of dollars of roaming costs, which most times, I understand, have been mitigated somewhat, but certainly nobody wants to see a bill of that kind. This bill does not talk about that.

The CRTC does; they put a limit of \$50, which is probably about where we'd like to see it. There is some limit or some responsibility to the consumer but I think that's something that's a happy medium that looks after the rights of the consumer and the contracts that these companies must sign with their foreign carriers.

I had three children at home over the summer, so cell bills and data services are up. I got a warning from my supplier that I was up at 80% and then 90% and 95% of my data load. Some of those services are already coming across, so it's good to see that. With some teenagers, sometimes you have a lot of impact with just what their usage is. They've grown to use these phones like they're another appendage, and we see lots of advances in technologies.

I know there's talk about a list of services or products, but I haven't seen any products around the world—I take an interest in technology—that aren't available in Canada quickly, whether it be the iPhone or the Samsung Galaxy phones. They're all here relatively quick, so I think that that's looked after. I think that's part of the stability with a federal regulation, because one thing we have in Canada, we have a smaller market certainly than most of the larger industrialized countries. We want to make sure that we have a program, when the major carriers are coming in here, the major suppliers, that we're worthwhile to enter, and we're worthwhile to enter early. We want to make sure that we have the latest Apples or the latest Samsungs, or wherever the technology is. But to do that, you have to make it that when a company comes in, it can come in easily: They know the rules up front, they know what they have to follow and they also have access to the full 33 million people, if possible, coming in. Granted, Ontario is a large province, but we see examples in a lot of the latest pharmaceuticals, where a lot of this government regulation—the TSSA, with new equipment that doesn't come into this province because the extra cost of getting them approved in Ontario is not worth their time.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): May I ask the member—since it is time, a quarter after 10. We will be recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to welcome to the gallery today Mrs. Michelle Gallagher-Prowse, who is the mother of page James Prowse, who comes from the great riding of Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to introduce Simon Chapelle, who is here today. His son is a page in the Legislature. Welcome him to the Legislature.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to welcome the father of one of our pages, Ian Chapelle. His father's name is Simon, and he's back for a second straight day, he's enjoyed the theatre so much; and my friend and Simon's friend and Ian's friend, James O'Halloran, also from Prince Edward–Hastings riding. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'd like to welcome Paul Horning, father of Peyton Horning, who's from Leeds–Grenville. Welcome to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Today with us here in the Speaker's gallery we have the newly appointed Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany at Toronto, Mr. Walter Stechel. It's wonderful for you to be here. Congratulations on your appointment.

Also in the Speaker's gallery today we have an American delegation from the Eastern Regional Conference of the Council of State Governments, an interparliamentary association in which the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has membership. They are led here today by Assemblyman Robin Schimminger and by staff of the ERC, Wendell Hannaford and Earl Eisenhart. Welcome, and thank you for being here.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know this is something that we all look forward to. I would now ask all of our members to join me in welcoming our first group of legislative pages serving in the first session of the 40th Parliament. Please assemble.

From Whitby–Oshawa, Pratah Bhatt; from Prince Edward–Hastings, Ian Chapelle; from Huron–Bruce, Kyle Cronin; from Northumberland–Quinte West, Kieva Earle; from St. Paul's, Sean Garner; from Niagara Falls, Erica George; from Leeds–Grenville, Peyton Horning; from Eglinton–Lawrence, William Howard-Waddingham; from Mississauga–Streetsville, Massoma Kisob; from York West, Efua Mensimah Kwofie; from Don Valley East, Megan Lai; from Hamilton Mountain, Gabrielle Le Donne; from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Bridget McCann; from Mississauga–Brampton South, Aly Muhammad Mithani; from Newmarket–Aurora, James Prowse; from Scarborough Centre, Ravicha Ravinthiran; from London West, Taylor Roch; from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Jasper Ross; from Willowdale, Katherine Tom; and from Scarborough–Agincourt, Daniel Velyvis.

Welcome.

Applause.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Tim Hudak: As I begin, Speaker, I want to congratulate my new critic for finance, Vic Fedeli, and my new critic for accountability, Doug Holyday. Welcome to the new positions.

Premier, you had a press conference yesterday, and you basically said that if we don't pass legislation from the last session on tanning beds and the Local Food Act, you would call an election. Quite frankly, Premier, that's like walking in here, throwing up your hands and saying that you've got no new ideas. You've spent the last eight months in conversations. You spent the last three months of the summer on a province-wide hand-holding tour. Premier, you may have given everybody a group hug, but all you came back with was sore arms and no new ideas.

If that's the best you can do, isn't it time to actually change this government and get our province back on track?

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Yesterday's comment applied.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There were other people in your own caucus speaking.

Yesterday's comment applied, so I will start right off by going to the individual member, and a warning means the last time.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I notice—

Interjection.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: My arms are fine, actually. I've got quite strong arms. I was on a canoe trip, and it was good.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to clarify. I'm glad that the Leader of the Opposition was paying attention to my press conference. I notice that he couldn't actually deliver the question with a straight face, but I appreciate that he listened. I was using that piece of legislation, which is a very important piece of legislation—protecting kids from cancer and melanoma is very, very important, and I was using that piece of legislation among others as an example. It was an example of this: There are many things that we can work together on. There is a lot of common ground, things that the opposition party and the third party have said that they agree on. I said, "Let's work on those things together, and let's make the Legislature work."

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, when it comes to the tanning bed legislation, this is a government that wheeled out cancer patients to try to distract attention from your gas

plant scandal. So, please, don't give us any lectures on that kind of hypocrisy.

So you want to co-operate; you want to work together. Here's an idea for you, Premier, because you don't seem to have any ideas when it comes to jobs: The Green Energy Act is economic suicide. It's driving up our hydro rates. It's costing us jobs. It is tearing down communities right down the middle. If you did your big group hug across the province, I know you heard it.

Will you join with us? Will you co-operate? Will you end the Green Energy Act to bring jobs back?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We're not going to go backwards. I just came from a meeting called Meeting of the Minds; it's happening at the Brick Works in Toronto. People from all over the world have come here because Ontario is a hub of sustainability. Ontario is developing technology in clean water, in transit and in green technology for energy. We are exporting that knowledge. That is the future, Mr. Speaker.

The Leader of the Opposition seems to want to take us back. That's not where we are going. We're going forward. We're tapping into our strengths. We're tapping into our innovative culture here in Ontario. Those are the investments that we're going to make. Those are the investments we are making. We'll move ahead with him or without him, but we'd like to have him with us.

Interjections.

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

Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, you're not moving forward; you're barely treading water with your embrace of Dalton McGuinty's agenda. You know what? We're drowning in runaway hydro costs, and it's costing us jobs. I know you're stuck in the past. You want to stick to the McGuinty agenda. You won't accept our new ideas on ending the Green Energy Act.

Here's another one for you: Your College of Trades is nothing more than a giveaway to the special interests. It's going to stand in the way of young people getting good jobs. It has runaway costs that involve a new tax on anyone from electricians to hairstylists. You want to co-operate? You want good ideas? End that College of Trades boondoggle before it even gets going.

Interjections.

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

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just talk about some of the things that I've been doing since I came into this office and the investments that we've been making, investments in business: \$17.6 million to support business in regions across the province. That's leveraging \$133 million in investments and retaining and creating 2,800 jobs. That's the kind of investment we need to make—\$50 million in new venture capital.

The Leader of the Opposition talks about us not moving forward. In fact, he is stuck in the past. He does not have ideas for how to move forward, how to create entrepreneurship, how to make sure that capital gets invested in new ideas that create new business and new opportunities for people in the province. That's what \$50 million of venture capital will do. That's the kind of strategic investment that we're making to create jobs and create the conditions for jobs to be created.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Look, we've put out over 200 pages of bold new ideas in our Paths to Prosperity to turn our province around and get our economy moving again, and you can't find one single idea? You don't want to co-operate; you want to be stuck in the past of the Dalton McGuinty agenda. I've given two ideas, and you reject them out of hand. You rejected arbitration reform out of hand. You may have ridden around in your canoe, but you haven't actually brought forward one single new idea to get our economy going and to get spending under control.

Let me try one more time. I know you're running scared of the public sector union bosses. You're basically in their pockets. Why don't you stay in your place and say no and that you agree with PCs and will bring in a province-wide, across-the-board wage freeze that will save us \$2 billion a year right there?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The underpinnings of what the Leader of the Opposition is talking about today and often talks about is that we should cut services, that we should fire workers. So we should fire 10,000 education workers, we should cancel programs and reduce those programs, reduce those services to people, and that we should undermine organized labour. That is one of the pillars of his philosophy. We don't hold with that. We believe that organized labour, that workers working together, have created safe workplaces over the decades. A lot of good has been done in the name of collective bargaining. We believe in those processes, but the Leader of the Opposition does not, and that is evident from those 200 pages that he has put out, and it's evident in every question that he asks in the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Let me give another example of how the Premier is running scared when it comes to the government union bosses in our province, the very same union bosses that held our kids hostage. They cancelled after-school activities; they cancelled graduations and held our kids and our grandkids hostage. What did you do? You gave away the ship; you gave them a raise. You ran scared from them and you ran one of them as your candidate in London West. What does that say about your leadership? What does that say about your capacity to actually get the books back and balanced in the province?

You want to co-operate? You want to get things done for the people of Ontario? You want to balance the books?

Cancel that deal; we can't afford it. They shouldn't get a raise. They held our province hostage.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I go back to what I just said, that the premise of many of the Leader of the Opposition's questions is about creating discord in the public sector. It's about labour unrest. It's about breaking relationships that are in the best interests of our children and the students in our schools. It is in the best interests of the children in our schools and the students all across the province that we have a good working relationship.

We worked within the fiscal arrangement that we had put in place. There was no additional money that went into the agreements. We came up with the savings that we had identified. But what we did was we changed the relationship and what we've got is a working relationship with the education sector. We're going to maintain that because it's in the best interests of every single child who's starting school today, who's been in school, and every student in this province.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, respectfully, what we got is you gave away the store. We got the biggest deficits and debts we've ever had in the history of the province of Ontario. We can't afford it; it's got to come to an end. You want to co-operate; you want to get things done. I put idea after idea on the floor, to bring accountability for taxpayers, to get our economy moving again.

You've gone across the province now, Premier, for eight months. You've given a lot of group hugs. It's time for action. We've got ideas if you don't. We're ready to go. Let's actually put those ideas on the table and turn our province around, get our books back in balance so our great province of Ontario will lead again. That's our plan.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I spoke about a couple of the things that we have done: investing in infrastructure, investing in business, investing in people. If we do those things and if we do them strategically, as we have been—for example, the investments in infrastructure that will come from the \$100-million fund for municipal bridges, roads and important infrastructure; that's something that I heard about for a number of years when I was Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and when I was Minister of Transportation. I would think that it would be the kind of thing that the Leader of the Opposition actually would support, because it is going to support rural and northern municipalities that have aging infrastructure and that know that that infrastructure is one of the conditions to bring business to their communities. So, \$100 million a year is a significant, significant investment in that infrastructure.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's the kind of thing that I would have thought the Leader of the Opposition would have supported, and it's the kind of thing that we are going to continue to do, because that's what will

create jobs; it will create opportunity in every community across the province.

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. As the Premier knows, we expect the Legislature to deliver the results that she promised Ontarians this session. So could she just take maybe a minute or so to explain exactly what her priorities are?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think I've been doing that. I've said that investing in people, investing in business, investing in infrastructure are the priorities that I believe will get the economy going and will create jobs, and that is already happening. The investments that we are making, the support that we're putting in place and the changes that we're making are what are going to create those jobs and help people in their day-to-day lives. That's our priority. Whether it is creating more opportunities and more services in home care, whether it's the Youth Employment Fund or whether it's investments in transit, those are the kinds of things that are going to get the economy going and are going to create jobs across the province.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, media reports this week laid out some of the government's supposed priorities for this session, and they included lowering auto insurance rates, establishing a Financial Accountability Office and getting to work on putting people to work. Those are the things that topped the list.

Every one of those is a New Democrat idea, a New Democrat initiative. The Premier's own projects, like her plan to hit families with new, unfair taxes and road tolls, are nowhere to be seen.

Does the Premier have some secret priorities of her own that she hasn't yet shared with us? Or does she sincerely expect people to believe that New Democrats are trying to stop the government from implementing measures that we forced them to adopt in the first place?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You know, it's tempting to have an ongoing debate about whose idea it was to support young people getting into work, but I can tell you, that is something that we have been talking about for a long time. The leader of the third party can claim it for her own, but the fact is, it is an idea that needs to be acted on. We found common ground on it; it's in our budget—as is our commitment to investing in transit. That is an idea that I have not heard the leader of the third party talk about: investing in infrastructure, investing in transit that we know is critical to the economy of this region, but also to the economy of the province.

That's an idea that we are acting on, and that did not come from anywhere except from these benches.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, here's what people see: a government that has promised action on

jobs, but seems more interested in photo ops than job creation; a government that has promised to close corporate tax loopholes, but can't be bothered to even close any; a government that has promised to make life affordable and lower auto insurance rates, but seems more interested in protecting industry profits than drivers' wallets.

Is the Premier interested in actually delivering results, or does she just want to play the same old games that help the Ontario Liberals hold on to power and leave Ontarians falling further and further behind?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the leader of the third party understands that the 43,600 net new jobs that were created in Ontario are a result of good policies, good fundamentals and our recovery from the economic downturn. I know she will give credit to the people of Ontario and the businesses of Ontario for creating those jobs.

We're going to continue to support those businesses and to support the people of Ontario in that good work, and part of that is creating conditions so that new jobs can be created and part of that is investing in transit.

Mr. Speaker, the leader of the third party also knows that the reduction in auto insurance that we have committed to is under way. We have made that commitment. The Minister of Finance has outlined the way that we're going to get there. We're acting on that, it was in our budget, and we will continue to remove the costs from the system. That will allow those average auto insurance costs to go down.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Yesterday in this place, the Premier said she will "make sure that, as questions are asked, they get answered." But when it comes to the actions of certain senior Liberal insiders, some pretty key questions simply aren't being answered.

Does the Premier think that's acceptable?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd love to answer that question, Mr. Speaker, but I don't actually know what the leader of the third party is talking about.

I will just say that, in general, when there are questions that are asked, we want the answers to be forthcoming. That's what I've said all along. If she's talking about questions at committee, we have provided the opportunity for questions to be asked of me, many of my colleagues and the former Premier, and we will absolutely continue to answer questions as they are asked.

If the leader of the third party wants to be more specific, I'll be more specific in my answer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, the Premier can actually keep her promise. She can make sure that, when questions are asked, they get answered. She can tell her government House leader to put this on the table and make it clear that questions about emails concerning senior Liberals and their attempts to get the Speaker to fall in line are actually answered.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'd like to remind the leader of the third party that the ruling has been made and that particular reference should not be used in the House. I would ask the member to rephrase the question, please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm asking the Premier to allow questions to be asked at committee. This has nothing to do with the point of privilege, Premier. What this has to do with is making sure that your promise that people's answers will be had, that their questions will be answered, actually occurs. That's something that you have promised and it's something you can see happen: As a leader, as a Premier, make sure that the answers come to committee. That is the question.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I have been categorical in my support for an open process at committee. The committee makes its decisions; the committee works within the rules; the Chair of the committee works within the rules, the committee works with the Clerk's office, and that process has to unfold within the rules. I am completely supportive of questions that are being asked, being answered. But the committee has to operate as an entity with the advice of the Clerk, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier has a pretty easy choice: She can keep protecting Liberal insiders or she can open up the gas plant committee so that when questions are asked, they actually get answered. What is this Premier going to do? Is she going to continue to protect Liberal insiders, or is she going to take that leadership role that she likes to brag about—about transparency and openness and answering all the questions—and actually make sure that the committee is able to ask the important questions and get them answered?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will just reinforce what I said, which is that the committee has my blessing and my support and my encouragement to do its work. When I came into this office, I opened up the process. In fact, there have been 135,000 documents that have gone to committee, 32 motions, 53 witnesses, 90 hours. That committee has the right to do its work, and, as I say, I encourage that work.

What I do take some offence at is the allegation that somehow I'm protecting or obstructing that process. That is not the case. It is quite to the contrary. I have opened up the process. I want those questions answered. But you know, what I also want is for us to be able to do the work of the people of Ontario, make sure that we move forward and we make the investments and put the supports in place so we can create jobs and we can help people in their lives.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question this morning is for the Premier. Five years ago this week, the world entered its deepest financial crisis in 80 years. Families suffered and Ontario suffered. Since then, other jurisdictions made

the hard choices. They cut spending, they restored jobs and prosperity to taxpayers, but not Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The Attorney General will come to order. The member for Etobicoke North will come to order.

Continue, please.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Your government has saddled this province with over \$250 billion of debt, with no plan to balance the budget, no plan to restore lost manufacturing jobs, no plan to provide hope for Ontario's youth. Even the Toronto Star today is questioning your lack of a plan and your "piecemeal approach to governing."

Premier, here's your chance: Tell the people of Ontario which drastic cuts you plan to balance the budget.

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

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate the member on his new appointment as the critic to the finance committee. I look forward to a very collaborative approach and working on behalf of all Ontarians for the benefit of Ontarians. One of the ways we do that is to be very careful and very honest in terms of what has been achieved.

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The member talks about having a plan, which we've outlined very clearly in this budget. We have a six-point plan that talks about the path to balance.

More importantly, this afternoon, we will release at public accounts an audited statement talking about the achievements that this government has been able to do over the course of the last number of years as it relates to the budget and as it relates to the decisions that we've made—tough decisions that the opposition have not been prepared to make, but we have done so. We have done so in a very balanced approach and a very fair approach.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, let me refresh your memory. While governments around the world focused on rebuilding their economies, your government focused on keeping Liberal operatives employed, pouring \$585 million into cancelled gas plants.

While families wondered how they would plan for retirement or fund their children's education, unelected Liberals plotted to hijack an election, treating taxpayers' dollars like Liberal Party donations.

Good jobs keep leaving our province, and young people are leaving to follow that work. Your overspending is now hurting the things Ontarians care about. Look at your cuts to physiotherapy services. All your government can do—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment and the member from Peterborough, come to order—last time.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: —is simply jump from one scandal to another. Premier, level with us: Are you just too busy protecting Liberal interests to be bothered to work on creating jobs and economic growth for Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The province—and the people of Ontario, more importantly—have been working very hard to ensure its recovery. The member opposite has just contradicted himself twice. On the one hand, they want across-the-board cuts that would hamper our sensitive recovery. On the other hand, they complain when cuts occur. You can't have it both ways; you can't suck and blow. We need to ensure a balanced recovery.

As a result of those decisions, 180% of those jobs have been recovered. Some 477,000 net new jobs have occurred.

We have maintained and we have been very direct and very strategic in our investments, which have enabled us to be more competitive in the long term. That is what's important: the dividend that's going to accrue of those investments to afford the debt that has been accumulated. We are going to consider and we're going to take every action necessary to protect Ontario—

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

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Rosario Marchese: To the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure: Some \$85 million have been spent to create a transit plan for Scarborough, but last week the minister drew a line and two dots on a map and happily flushed this \$85 million down the toilet.

Will the minister tell Ontarians how much of their money he will waste, in total, as he pursues a shortened, delayed and technologically uncertain subway?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We've been working very closely with Metrolinx, with Places to Grow. We've identified, through our iCorridor system—which is now one of the most advanced planning tools—the optimal route.

Metrolinx's desire, I think, in their communications with me to this point, is to try to not change the plan again, so we're sticking with the original route.

I think there's a strong agreement that in Places to Grow, the Scarborough Town Centre is the focal point of intensification in the renewal of Scarborough and the creation of jobs. We have the Ministry of Transportation working. This is an evidence-based system. No one has drawn a line on the map. This is millions of dollars in planning, and in a plan that is on that route.

What we're doing, to comply with many of the New Democrats' and city hall's demands on us, is changing the technology and running on the same line.

I don't think this is complicated; this is pretty straightforward. This will cost about \$1.8 billion—

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

Interjections.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A responsible minister—indeed, a responsible government—would take a moment to consider their costs—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, come to order. I just want you to stop.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: —to consider the costs, delays and risks associated with a major change to an infrastructure investment, particularly after the gas plant fiasco in Mississauga and Oakville.

We know that taxpayers will be on the hook for at least \$85 million to derail transit plans in Scarborough. Can the minister tell Ontarians exactly what the total cost will be for the confusion, the chaos, the delays and the waste of the minister's transit musings?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, we have, and I think my colleagues from Scarborough will tell you, because most of them here have been working on this for over 20 years as city councillors, to deliver on the promises of many, which is to deliver a properly well-planned subway to the Scarborough Town Centre, which is what we're doing, and to do it cost-effectively and to use it.

Mr. Speaker, I would invite the member opposite to join me this afternoon at the Meeting of the Minds, where I will be outlining and demonstrating GeoPortal and iCorridor and our advance planning techniques. This government is prepared to go further into an open-data model, which my friend, Minister Milloy, is leading.

I am confused, Mr. Speaker, only by one thing here. I am confused about what the NDP is doing in Scarborough. Do you support a subway, or do you not support a subway? How would you finance it? Where is the money coming from? What is the alignment you will use? I am absolutely bewildered by the 15 different positions the NDP seems to have on this. When they have one, maybe we can have a conversation.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Education. As the new school year begins, we are reminded of our collective responsibility to ensure the safety of our students in the classroom. As a former school board trustee, I know that our school boards, principals and teachers take school safety seriously and have measures in place to make sure our students are protected.

Paul Harvey, the principal in one of my schools, Tam O'Shanter public school in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, tells me that parents who drop off their sons and daughters at their school take comfort to know that our schools are locked during school hours. This gives parents the confidence that they deserve and protects our students. Parents in my riding also want to know what our government is doing to ensure that our students are safe in a learning environment.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Education, can she please inform the House what our government is doing to ensure our schools are safe?

Hon. Liz Sandals: The member from Scarborough—Agincourt is absolutely right that the safety of our students

must be our top priority. Our government has worked very hard to make our schools some of the safest in the world.

Last year, we reopened the Safe Welcome Program with an additional investment of \$10 million to give school staff more control over who enters the school during school hours. I'm pleased to report that over 3,300 elementary schools in Ontario that have received funding from this program now have the Safe Welcome equipment installed in their schools.

Any school that received this funding locks their doors during school hours in order to restrict access through the school office and to keep their school safe. All school boards in Ontario are also required to have emergency lockdown protocols in place, which they work out with the local police force, and we've provided \$1.7 million to support—

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I want to thank the minister for her response and also congratulate her on reopening the Safe Welcome Program and all the work she has done to ensure our schools are safe.

Speaker, a comprehensive approach to school safety is very important to every member of this House. The security of schools is paramount, but we also need to have a positive school climate inside and outside the classroom, helping our students to succeed. Many parents in my community are concerned about bullying in our schools and want to ensure that students have the support they need. Internet bullying comes with harmful effects. Our students feel isolated and afraid to come to school.

Ms. Zhang, a teacher at Highland Heights public school in my riding, said, "I work" very "hard to provide a safe and encouraging" environment "for all my students to learn, because I know that when a student is bullied and is fearful, their academics and social well-being suffer."

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can she tell the House what this government is doing to combat bullying both inside and outside the classroom?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you, again, to the member for this really important question, because every student in Ontario has the right to feel safe and accepted while they're at school. That's exactly why our government passed the Accepting Schools Act just last year. For the first time ever, we have defined bullying in legislation so that every student, every teacher, every principal and every parent knows exactly what we are talking about when we say bullying is not okay in our schools.

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The definition also includes a definition of cyberbullying, because we know that bullying that takes place over the Internet, out of school, also has an impact on the school climate. So we are making sure that we build a positive school—

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

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Madam Premier, you are spending 10 billion taxpayer dollars each year paying down the debt on the interest of the runaway debt that the Liberals have run up. You say your government is committed to transit. Maybe you can tell transit riders how many kilometres of subway could be built with \$10 billion.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure who should be taking that question, so I will take the question.

I think what it's about is questioning the advisability of investing in transit. I believe and we believe on this side of the House that transit is a critical condition for economic growth in this region and, in fact, in many parts of the province, so we're not going to back away from investing in transit. We are on track to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18. The Minister of Finance is going to present the public accounts this afternoon, and the member opposite will be able to see that.

But the fact is, Mr. Speaker, if we don't make these investments, if we don't invest in transit and the other conditions for growth, then we will not grow the economy and we will not create those jobs, and I'm not willing to go there, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: Madam Premier, we can't build transit if you don't get your runaway spending under control. Without a sound plan for this province, you can't deliver the solutions Toronto so desperately needs. You and your government had 10 years to build subways in this city but you spent 10 years running up the debt instead. Now your transportation minister makes a new, confusing announcement each week. You've spent 10 years throwing away money we could have spent on subways. Why should transit riders trust you now?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the member opposite should talk to the people in Brampton and Mississauga, the people who are taking the GO train from Kitchener-Waterloo, the people who are taking the GO train from Barrie, the people who are going to be taking the subway to York University. I think the member opposite should talk to those people about the investments this government has made.

The fact is that subsequent governments, government after government in this Legislature, did not invest in transit, or started to invest in transit and then filled in the holes. The member opposite is part of a party that absolutely did that.

We have been investing in transit since we came into this office. The fact is that there are some contentious lines and we have made decisions—without the help, I must say, of any consistency from the city council of

which the member opposite was a member. Mr. Speaker, we will continue to invest in transit.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, you have recently indicated your support for a PC private member's bill that would dismantle a long-standing collective agreement between EllisDon and several building trades in this province. Your government has a record now of joining with the PCs to subvert and circumvent collective bargaining rights, as it did last year with our province's teachers with the imposition of Bill 115.

Premier, can you explain why the passage of a Conservative private member's bill, custom-built for the benefit of a single company, is one of your key priorities?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said yesterday when I was asked about this question by the press, this is an anomalous situation that arose out of a decision that was made in the 1950s. My understanding of the private member's bill is that it would rectify that situation and would actually level the playing field in terms of the construction industry in the province. To me, Mr. Speaker, it only makes sense for there to be some fairness in the system, so that's what this private member's bill would do. In fact, the Labour Relations Board gave EllisDon, I believe, two years to approach the Legislature to make this change, so it's an anomaly that needs to be fixed in order to level the playing field.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Premier, you said that your tenure as the Premier was going to be different from your predecessor, but it seems that bargaining rights in this province are no safer now than they were when Dalton McGuinty was the Premier.

Premier, the people of the province of Ontario sent us here to deliver results, and they are concerned when they see Liberals and Conservatives joining together, working overtime to pass a bill that helps one single company, especially when the women and men who work for that company have a major problem with this bill. Even the member from Lanark has a problem with this bill. Premier, why is it that you're so determined to team up with the Hudak Conservatives to ram this bill through?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand the politics of trying to make this into an ideological fight. That's not what it is; it's a practical solution to an anomalous situation that happened many, many years ago, before the member was born. I, however, was born. It needs to be corrected. We need to make sure that there's a level playing field in the construction industry.

I'm a practical politician. I'm not going to get trapped in ideological rants because when there's a practical solution to a problem, let's work on that. That's why we're supporting the private member's bill.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, as you

know, there are a great many young people in my great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham who attend post-secondary institutions across the province. Some of these individuals are in tough financial positions and rely on the support of the Ontario Student Assistance Program, or OSAP. Sometimes staying in school is still a struggle, and we need to address the changing needs of our society.

Minister, can you please tell me what steps the government is taking to increase accessibility to post-secondary education in our province to ensure all students have the opportunities they need to succeed?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for an excellent question. Our government is very committed to making sure that our post-secondary education system is accessible to all our students on the basis of ability to learn, not ability to pay. Helping Ontario students with the cost of tuition is part of our plan to keep post-secondary education accessible and affordable for all of our families. That leads, frankly, to a stronger economy, and it creates good jobs.

Since we introduced the 30% off tuition grant in January 2012, 230,000 students across Ontario of low and middle incomes have benefited. That's pretty spectacular. It's a lot of help to our students. Since 2003, our investments have more than doubled the number of students qualifying for aid, while enrolment has increased by 40%.

Despite tough fiscal times, this government will continue to ensure that our students have access to affordable and high-quality post-secondary education, for all of our students.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm pleased to hear that we are working to make post-secondary education even more financially accessible to create equal opportunities for all students across Ontario.

Each year, in my great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, there is an increasing number of students preparing to enter their final year of post-secondary education. These students need to know that, on graduation, they will have access to good jobs and have the assistance they need to pay off their loans. However, some students will still find it difficult to accomplish this promptly. Minister, what steps are being taken to support these students as they transition out of the post-secondary system and into the workforce?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Again, I want to thank the member for another good question. While our students work towards obtaining a high-quality education, it's our responsibility to ensure that we provide necessary assistance after graduation. That's why we've created the Ontario Student Opportunity Grant to limit OSAP debt and the Repayment Assistance Plan to reduce the burden on our students. This program provides young people with income-sensitive support during the repayment of their loans.

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We've also created, and we just announced this past summer, the Youth Employment Fund, to provide 25,000

young people with an entry point to long-term employment through job placements that offer a chance to learn work skills, experience the real workplace and earn an income at the same time.

Our government remains committed to supporting young people as they work to build their lives and careers debt-free in Ontario, and we're going to keep doing everything we can through our youth jobs strategy to make sure that our young people get a great start, get into that workplace and help us build a stronger economy—for those young people today and for us into the future.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is to the Premier. Premier, you can stand here in this House and say that you've learned from your mistakes, but the stark reality is that if the opportunity to cancel gas plants came along again, you'd cancel them again, stick taxpayers with the bill again and worry about the fallout afterwards.

After Liberal backroom spin-master Don Guy admitted to cancelling the Mississauga gas plant without knowing the full costs, the member from Nipissing answered, "It's ... no wonder ... Liberals continue to raise taxes." Shockingly, the member from Vaughan interjected, "And win elections." Can you believe that, Mr. Speaker? This shows exactly how little regard the member from Vaughan has for the taxpayers of this province—that pouring \$600 million down the drain is all in a day's work. This is the culture of the Liberal Party: If you win the election, nothing else matters.

Premier, since you were busy dialling up the election rhetoric yesterday, can you tell us what you have planned to buy votes in the next election?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share with members a story of what happened to me this summer. I was at a barbecue, and a constituent came up to me and said, "You know, on this gas plant issue, I was shocked to learn that both the Tories and the NDP wanted to cancel it as well. You should tell that story." So I plan to tell that story.

I have here a brochure from Mary Anne DeMonte-Whelan, the Ontario PC candidate. She said, "The only party that will stop the Sherway power plant is the Ontario PC Party. On October 6, vote Ontario PC." I have Geoff Janoscik, the candidate in Mississauga South for the Conservatives. He said, "Only Conservative leader Tim Hudak will cancel the Eastern Power gas plant slated to be built on Loreland Ave."

I can go on, and I will in the supplementary, because it was a promise they made and one that we kept.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Well, I hope the government House leader told that person at that barbecue that you sited the gas plants there that cost half a billion dollars to cancel.

But back to the Premier: Premier, your government is incapable of coming clean to the public. You're not transparent just because you use the word "transparent."

Actions speak louder than words, and yours is a government that has tried to sell a myth: a government that releases public numbers they knew to be low, while concealing the true cost; a government that says it wants to have all the answers, but then stalls and restricts what can be asked in committee; a government that says that they've released all the documents, even after systematically deleting emails so that the truth would be lost forever.

I have little interest in the number of documents you've handed over if 50 to 100 of the most incriminating have been deleted forever. Premier, how can we believe anything you say when your actions are the exact opposite of your rhetoric?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, this is one of my favourites: the text of the Mississauga South PC candidate robocalls—they know a lot about robocalls over here.

"Hi there. This is Geoff Janoscik, your Mississauga South Ontario PC candidate. I'm calling about the McGuinty-Sousa power plant that the Liberal government decided to build in your backyard. I am against this power plant, and as your MPP, I will fight to stop the power plant from being built...."

"[O]ur team has been knocking on doors every single evening for several months, talking about the power plant and making sure that we defeat the Liberals in this riding and put an end to their bad decisions."

The fact of the matter is that all parties in this House opposed that power plant. The PCs claimed that they were the only ones that would stop it. In fact, we welcome the new member to their ranks, from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, who himself opposed the power plant.

Mr. Speaker, 19 power plants were sited and 17 of them were done correctly—

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

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Premier. Children's aid societies across the province are facing deep cuts to services following a \$50-million cut by this government. For the last five months, some of our province's most vulnerable children in Hamilton, London, Thunder Bay, Niagara, Waterloo and more than a dozen other communities are facing a future without the support they need.

My question is simple: Why does the government think it's okay to throw away hundreds of millions of dollars in gas plant scandals but cut services to our most vulnerable children?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you for the question. We had this discussion in this House in the last session with respect to the funding for CASs across the province. Our funding for CASs has not been cut. We know that.

Our investments still stand at \$1.5 billion. That budget has not been cut. We know that.

We are implementing a new funding formula to make it more equitable, to make it fairer across the province. In the past, it has been based on historical expenditures. We are now basing it on community factors, socio-economic factors and variables that will make it fairer. Through this, we are doing it in a fair way. We are transitioning this across the province over the next five years. These are changes that have been recommended by a commission. These are changes that have been approved and recommended through the OACAS.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member for Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the minister as well. In my Welland riding, a regionalized specialized facility for young people in foster care will be shut down in November, resulting in the layoff of 20 of 45 staff. This 37-year-old facility has been a fixture in Welland and Niagara, and as the spokesperson for family and children's services is reported as commenting, "The centre was closed because it was not financially viable anymore." To be clear, this decision is not being made in order to improve outcomes for the 20 youth in this centre home.

What does the minister have to say to the youth, to the families, to the workers and to the local long-standing service that says it has no other choice but to close the doors?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you for that question. Let me reiterate that our priority is for our children who are in service. With respect to that, the kids are not being put at risk. Those beds are not being lost. In this case, the services and supports previously offered are going to be transferred to a nearby facility. Child protection services will not be affected. The changes in the system will help create a more viable and sustainable child welfare system, something that I think all of us are working towards.

Our overall provincial investment in this province is not changing. It remains the same. We're making it fair across the province, and we will always keep children at the centre of all the decisions we make with respect to funding in this province.

CYBERBULLYING

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Attorney General. I know that Ontario has been concerned about the non-consensual distribution of intimate images for a number of years. I also acknowledge that we've asked the federal government since 2011 to amend the Criminal Code to protect the people of Ontario from the harms of cyberbullying. Can the Attorney General please provide us an update on the issue of what improvements our government has made in criminalizing the non-consensual distribution of intimate images?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I know this member is concerned about this issue, as we all are in this House. I guess it's the result of technology that these kinds of situ-

ations are existing right now, and something definitely should be done about this.

He's quite correct that, since 2011, both the Attorney General of the day, as well as the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and the minister responsible for women's issues, have been calling upon the federal government to amend the Criminal Code to make it an offence to distribute intimate photos or video recordings of a person without that person's consent.

The issue has been raised a number of times at federal-provincial meetings. I've had recent correspondence with the Minister of the Attorney General from Nova Scotia as well. This issue will be raised again at our fall meetings, and we hope that during this session of the federal Parliament this issue will be addressed and a law will be made to make this an offence.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I thank the Attorney General for that answer. I'm happy to hear of this government's continued commitment to amend the Criminal Code in order to make it an offence to distribute non-consensual images. I know that taking action on this issue is a vital step in upholding this government's commitment to ensure our children are able to thrive in schools and communities that are safe, inclusive and accepting.

I understand that the Coordinating Committee of Senior Officials—CCSO—Cybercrime Working Group released a report along with recommendations on cyberbullying. Could the Attorney General please comment on the findings of the report?

Hon. John Gerretsen: He's quite correct. The coordinating committee is a committee of senior officials in all the various ministries of the Attorney General around this country. They've been working very diligently on behalf of the federal-provincial-territorial organization to deal with this issue. They've come up with a report that recommends that a new criminal offence be developed in order to address this issue in the Criminal Code. I intend to take up this issue with the federal Attorney General, the new Attorney General, Peter MacKay, as well, within the near future.

We hope that the federal Parliament will deal with this issue this year. I think it has support of all members of the federal House as well. It should be dealt with. It's all about protecting our children, especially in light of the tragic events that have occurred in various parts of this country over the last number of years. So hopefully a bill will be passed federally so that we can deal with this issue once and for all.

ARBITRATION

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Premier. Premier, it has been three weeks since the Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference, where municipal leaders told you loud and clear that Ontario's broken arbitration system must be fixed. Their beleaguered taxpayers can't afford a system awarding contracts that

ignore the economic realities in communities like Scugog, where firefighters received a 26.7% increase. It's the top priority for municipalities. Given the urgency, I actually expected that you would table an arbitration reform bill yesterday, on the first day that we're back in the Legislature. But just as you did when you voted against our capacity to pay act last spring, you've let our municipal partners down.

Premier, can you tell me and mayors from small and large communities, communities in every corner of our province, why arbitration reform isn't a priority for you?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for asking this very important question, an issue that I've been engaged in conversations with our municipal leaders as well all through the summer and especially at the AMO. It's important that we remember some important information that will be helpful for all members as we try a path forward on this important issue.

Interjection.

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: For the most part, the system that is in place has worked, with 97% of agreements being reached without any labour disruption. I think it's very important to remember that. We know that the majority of police and firefighter agreements are reached at the bargaining table without ever going to arbitration. That's something I think is important. We need to make sure that conditions for fair bargaining are always there at the table, where municipalities and first responders are able to negotiate an agreement and provide those vital services for our communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm sorry, Premier, and I'm sorry, Minister; that's not good enough. It's actions, not words, that count. We don't need another conversation; we need to get to work. Ontario PCs put a solution on the table in Bill 44 last spring. We handed AMO the pen, and that bill contained everything that they wanted, but you teamed up with the NDP to defeat AMO's bill. Our House leader, Mr. Wilson, has committed that if you bring forward a bill with the reforms contained in Bill 44, we'll support it. That's the arbitration bill that AMO and mayors wanted. So I ask again: Will you make it happen?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Selective memory is something that I think we all suffer in this House once in a while. I do want to remind this member that last spring, in 2012, when we brought some very specific reforms to the interest arbitration system to make it timely, fair and transparent, that party, the opposition party, teamed with the NDP and voted down those reforms. If those reforms would have been in place today, a lot of the issues they are raising would have disappeared by now.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Simcoe-Grey, come to order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: We want to move forward. We want to make sure that we are working very closely with

AMO and fire and police. We are bringing them together around the table so that we can have some healthy conversation so we can determine the right set of reforms that we can develop together and present to this House in the future.

HYDRO CHARGES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: My question is for the Minister of Energy. For more than a decade consumers across this province have felt sticker shock after signing expensive long-term energy contracts with energy retailers. Last week, it was announced that the global adjustment, which is added to consumers' bills, will double to 8.72 cents per kilowatt hour. This means that families that are already feeling cheated by the shady tactics of these companies will be paying roughly 15 cents to 17 cents per kilowatt hour 24 hours a day, nearly one third more than the peak price being charged to other consumers by Hydro One.

My question is simple: What steps will you take to help consumers?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the government of Ontario is very cognizant of pressures on the electricity rates across the province, but we've taken a number of very significant steps to protect families across the province. We've also got some very special considerations for people in the northern part of the province. The clean energy benefit generates a 10% discount off the bottom line of families' electricity bills across the province of Ontario. We actually have, as well, a northern Ontario tax credit to assist people who have challenges meeting their electricity bills.

We are cognizant of the pressures. We've taken steps. We're going to keep those programs in place, Mr. Speaker, and we'll go forward on that basis.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Minister, electricity prices are high enough for those of us paying the market rate, but for those who are stuck with energy retailers, this really could be the straw that breaks the camel's back. The government has made changes but the companies have just found new ways to break the rules. I've seen deceased customers signed up, house guests unwittingly sign up their hosts, and even an Ontario Works administrator sign up dozens of her clients. This needs to stop.

Will the minister finally take the side of vulnerable consumers and put an end to the exploitive practices of energy retailers?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Minister of consumer affairs.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member for the question. I'm always interested in hearing more about how we can protect consumers in Ontario.

I've actually been in discussions with the Minister of Energy about fair pricing for consumers and fair consumer practices so that consumers know their rights and that they know exactly what they're purchasing.

I think we have a strong record in Ontario of fair market practices in this area, but as I said, I'm always open

to hearing more suggestions and happy to talk to the member further.

GROWTH PLANNING

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. In my riding of Oakville, our constituents are starting to see the real benefits of a growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe. By implementing this growth plan, the province is creating conditions that bring a strong economy and a healthy environment.

Now, I know the challenges we face in the greater Golden Horseshoe are much different from those that are faced by Ontarians who live in northern Ontario. Last month at AMO I had the opportunity to engage with northern mayors, and we talked about the growth plan for the northern Ontario area.

Will the minister please inform the House how government is working with northerners to ensure the successful implementation of a growth plan specifically for northern Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I want to thank the member for Oakville for the question and also for joining us last month at AMO in discussions with our northern mayors.

There's no question, Mr. Speaker, that certainly the government, under Premier Wynne, wants to continue to ensure that our northern communities remain on a positive track toward prosperity and growth. When the Premier was in Thunder Bay last week, we had a great jobs round table with our leadership, talking about growth plan priorities, and certainly the engagement of our northern mayors and stakeholders is absolutely crucial. We're going to continue to work to increase regional capacity-building. That's hugely important in terms of the investment opportunities.

Specifically in terms of the investments we have made related to the growth plan, annual funding of \$100 million in the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund to support projects that create jobs and investment has been crucial. Certainly we have a regional economic opportunities partnership initiative that will be supporting collaboration between communities by providing enhanced funding to partnership proposals. We've also got the creation of the independent not-for-profit Northern Policy Institute, something that northerners called for and that became part of our growth plan implementation, as well as a multi-modal transportation strategy, which is hugely important and crucial, particularly as we work to maintain a sustainable and efficient Ontario Northland Transportation Commission.

We're very grateful for the opportunities we have to increase prosperity in northern Ontario.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Timmins-James Bay on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speaker, earlier in question period, my leader was asking a question to the Premier in regards

to expanding the scope of committee. I want to make this point: At no time in that question was she calling into question your decision of yesterday, your decision in regard to what you were deciding in regard to the discussions you had with Mr. Gene or the subject of your discussion yesterday.

It is within the purview of this House and within the purview of the standing orders by which the committees have power—the committees are able to sit and do the things that they do because they're in the standing orders, but this House has the authority to expand the scope of the committee. That falls within our right as members, and I just want to put you on notice—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You don't need to put me on notice, because—I will explain clearly to the member, because he rose when he shouldn't have risen. The matter of the alleged intimidation of the Speaker had been dealt with. My perception was that the leader of the third party was going there, and I asked her—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You can say no all you want. I had a perception, as Speaker, that the member was going there. I asked her to change or modify her question, which she did, and I'm thankful that she did do that, and that's the point at which I stopped her to do it. You do not need to put me on notice, because I made the perception that she was going down a road that was already ruled on. So I'll leave it at that.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Nepean-Carleton on a point of order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Mr. Speaker, I do notice that my friend has left the gallery, but Ed Sem is visiting from British Columbia. He is a former colleague of mine; we worked for Joe Clark many years ago—second time around, not the first.

DEFERRED VOTES

STRONGER PROTECTION FOR ONTARIO CONSUMERS ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 RENFORÇANT LA PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR ONTARIEN

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to amend the Collection Agencies Act, the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 and the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 55, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les agences de recouvrement, la Loi de 2002 sur la protection du consommateur et la Loi de 2002 sur le courtage commercial et immobilier et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1143 to 1148.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On April 23, Ms. MacCharles moved second reading of Bill 55. All those in favour, please rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

| | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Albanese, Laura | Hardeman, Ernie | Milloy, John |
| Armstrong, Teresa J. | Harris, Michael | Moridi, Reza |
| Arnott, Ted | Hatfield, Percy | Munro, Julia |
| Bailey, Robert | Hillier, Randy | Murray, Glen R. |
| Balkissoon, Bas | Horwath, Andrea | Naqvi, Yasir |
| Bartolucci, Rick | Hoskins, Eric | Natyshak, Taras |
| Berardinetti, Lorenzo | Hudak, Tim | Nicholls, Rick |
| Bisson, Gilles | Hunter, Mitzie Jacquelin | O'Toole, John |
| Bradley, James J. | Jackson, Rod | Oraziotti, David |
| Campbell, Sarah | Jaczek, Helena | Ouellette, Jerry J. |
| Chan, Michael | Jeffrey, Linda | Pettapiece, Randy |
| Chiarelli, Bob | Jones, Sylvia | Piruzza, Teresa |
| Chudleigh, Ted | Klees, Frank | Qaadri, Shafiq |
| Clark, Steve | Kwinter, Monte | Sandals, Liz |
| Coteau, Michael | Leal, Jeff | Sattler, Peggy |
| Crack, Grant | Leone, Rob | Schein, Jonah |
| Damerla, Dipika | MacCharles, Tracy | Scott, Laurie |
| Del Duca, Steven | MacLaren, Jack | Sergio, Mario |
| Delaney, Bob | MacLeod, Lisa | Singh, Jagmeet |
| Dhillon, Vic | Mangat, Amrit | Smith, Todd |
| Dickson, Joe | Mantha, Michael | Sousa, Charles |
| DiNovo, Cheri | Marchese, Rosario | Tabuns, Peter |
| Duguid, Brad | Matthews, Deborah | Taylor, Monique |
| Dunlop, Garfield | Mauro, Bill | Thompson, Lisa M. |
| Elliott, Christine | McDonell, Jim | Vanthof, John |
| Fife, Catherine | McKenna, Jane | Walker, Bill |
| Flynn, Kevin Daniel | McMeekin, Ted | Wilson, Jim |
| Forster, Cindy | McNaughton, Monte | Wong, Soo |
| Fraser, John | McNeely, Phil | Wynne, Kathleen O. |
| Gerretsen, John | Meilleur, Madeleine | Yakabuski, John |
| Gélinas, France | Miller, Norm | Yurek, Jeff |
| Gravelle, Michael | Miller, Paul | Zimmer, David |

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

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 96; the nays are 0.

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

Second reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

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

There are no further deferred votes. This House stands adjourned until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1152 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today to make the Ministers of Energy, Health and Long-Term Care as well

as Environment aware of what is happening in Port Elgin, a community that is home to an industrial wind turbine owned by the CAW. Because the approvals for this turbine began and were given prior to the Green Energy Act, there are 117 homes within 550 metres, and there are some that live as close as 200 metres from the turbine.

On August 26, six families were at the Saugeen Shores council meeting to detail their health and property-value agonies since the turbine began operation. Council passed a motion detailing their documented, reported negative health impacts and demanded that CAW shut down their turbine. It operates as a violation to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms of citizens' health and property enjoyment. I have to tell you that when you hear the mayor of Saugeen Shores talk about the tears of distinguished and well-respected citizens that were shared that evening, people have to wake up and finally get off their power trip and do what's right.

Doug Gowanlock, vice-deputy mayor of Saugeen Shores, committed to pursue the regulation of low-frequency emissions, while this Liberal government refuses to do the same.

The CAW refuses to communicate with the impacted citizens.

This government refuses to listen to impacted citizens across this province. It's time that this government accepts the Green Energy Act as failed and does right by Ontario.

EVENTS IN PARKDALE-HIGH PARK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to rise in this House and to invite all my colleagues and everyone out there in Ontario to some incredible festivals that are happening this weekend in Parkdale-High Park. Number one, the Ukrainian festival takes over all of Bloor West and Bloor West shuts down. Number two, the Polish festival takes over all of Roncesvalles and Roncesvalles shuts down. Wonderful fun.

Also, on a more serious note, there's a barbecue happening at Runnymede Collegiate called Neighbours United for Inclusion. These are the two gay women who had their house attacked with homophobic messages and had their tires slashed. Everyone is coming together to offer their support. That's going to be a barbecue going from about 11:30 till about 3 p.m.

On a final note, I want to welcome everybody back. I know we've all welcomed our new members, but I want to welcome all of our older members as well. I know that we engage in partisan warfare in this place, but none of us really want a one-party state. So just to acknowledge all of our gifts, all that we bring, the hard work that I know everyone does—I don't know any one of you who works under 60 hours a week. So thank you for what you do in service to the people of Ontario, to your constituents, and thank you so much for everything. Welcome back.

TOUR FOR HUMANITY

Mr. Mike Colle: I'm pleased to welcome the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies to Queen's Park today for a reception in honour of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. Happy new year to everybody.

The Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center is a leader in promoting tolerance and education. Their new initiative is called the Tour for Humanity. It is a mobile tolerance centre designed to spread the message of tolerance, acceptance, peace and inclusivity. The Tour for Humanity bus will be travelling to even the most remote communities in Ontario to reach students, educators, law enforcement officers and community leaders.

I invite each member of the Legislature to join us today at 5:30 to visit the Tour for Humanity mobile tolerance education centre on the south driveway at 5:30 and then afterwards join us all in the legislative dining room downstairs for a L'Chayim toast for a sweet and happy new year for all Ontarians.

We have to wish all of our incredible citizens of the Jewish faith, who have been in Ontario for over 200 years, a very healthy and prosperous new year for all their loved ones. I say to all of them, Shana Tova.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Bill Walker: Enough is enough. This government must respect the wishes of the residents in rural municipalities and support an immediate halt on any further installation of industrial wind turbines in this province.

Recently, two counties and eight municipalities in my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound declared themselves as unwilling hosts to wind turbine development. They are: Bruce county, Grey county, Arran-Elderslie, Northern Bruce Peninsula, South Bruce Peninsula, Chatsworth, Georgian Bluffs, Grey Highlands, Meaford and West Grey. They are part of a growing chorus of municipal leaders who have declared their communities unwilling hosts. Likewise, all of them have previously passed resolutions in favour of implementing an immediate freeze on the development of industrial wind turbines in Ontario. The residents and municipal leaders in my riding share a mutual understanding that wind turbines have a negative impact on the residents' health and the economic well-being of their communities.

Mr. Speaker, Premier Wynne explicitly promised she would not impose any wind project on any community that did not want it. She now has to cede planning control to local governments over whether or not new wind projects will go in their communities. Honouring that promise is her moral imperative. Our PC Party brought the moratorium vote to the floor of the Legislature on at least six occasions, but the Liberals and NDP members voted it down each time.

The wind turbines situated so close to people's homes pose serious health problems, evidenced by the Bruce

Grey public health unit's recent study that concurred with these long-standing concerns.

In Ontario, there are 64 municipalities who have declared themselves unwilling wind turbine hosts and 100 municipalities who have voted in favour of an immediate wind moratorium. We are urging her and her government to accept the municipalities' veto vote and respect that no means no.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Ms. Sarah Campbell: During the summer break, I spent my time speaking to constituents across my riding about issues that are important to them. While people in northwestern Ontario are happy with their recent victories to keep the Experimental Lakes Area open, reduce auto insurance premiums and see that much-needed investments are made in health care, they believe that much more needs to be done.

While the cost of auto insurance will go down, the price of hydro continues to rise. It's leaving seniors and hard-working families across the north fearful when they enter the winter months because they will be dreading those hydro bills that come along with the cold weather.

Communities across the northwest are waiting for this government to live up to its commitment on jobs and to make real investments in the Ring of Fire, including a long-term energy strategy that will allow our businesses to thrive and compete.

Most importantly, seniors who have seen their pensions gutted, families that are struggling to put food on the table and those looking for work are worried about the price of essential goods in their region, including the gasoline and hydro prices that may increase again to fund the Metrolinx transit strategy in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

Speaker, northerners are tapped out. It's time for the Premier to come forward with her transit plan and to assure northerners that we will not see a spike in the HST or the price of gasoline.

KRISHNA JANMASHTAMI

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: On August 29, 2013, I had the pleasure to attend the birthday celebration of Lord Krishna, an auspicious and special occasion for Hindus called Janmashtami. It was held at the residence of Naval Bajaj, president of the Indo-Canada Chamber of Commerce. There were about 200 attendees, and many of them were my constituents.

Hindus consider Lord Krishna their leader, philosopher and teacher who narrated the Bhagavad-Gita in about 3200 BC. Hindus celebrate this occasion with great pomp and show: hymns, songs, dances and ringing of bells.

Krishna Janmashtami at the Bajaj residence was truly an occasion to celebrate Ontario's diversity. I want to thank Rashi and Naval Bajaj for hosting this wonderful event at their home.

I have said it many times before and I would like to reiterate it again: I'm proud to be part of a government that encourages its citizens to protect and promote their religion, culture and heritage.

1510

BEER AND WINE SALES

Mr. Todd Smith: As the representative of Ontario's fastest-growing wine region, Prince Edward county, I can't express this more clearly: We need to improve the access to market for Ontario-grown and Ontario-produced products.

Our craft brewers and our wineries create jobs here in Ontario. They create jobs not only in the alcohol sector, but also in agriculture.

Ontario barley, Ontario grains and Ontario grapes end up on shelves in the LCBO, but if it's a holiday weekend, the average Ontarian is going to have a hard time getting their hands on them; however, in rural Ontario, you might be able to. Agency stores like those in Consecon, Thamesford or Craighleith are able to stay open on Labour Day and Canada Day to supply Ontarians whose neighbours have decided to stage an impromptu barbecue. These agency stores are another link in the jobs chain that starts in our fields, goes through our wineries and breweries, and then onto our store shelves.

In this House, we hear a lot about how we need to create jobs and grow our economy. We in the PC Party are actually committed to doing it. That's why last year we put out a policy proposal to allow the sale of beer and wine in corner stores, and yesterday at the Toronto Region Board of Trade, Mac's announced that if Ontario did that, it was prepared to invest \$55 million and open 27 new stores. With the stroke of a pen, Ontario could create hundreds of jobs and bring millions of dollars of economic activity to life. With the stroke of a pen, we would bring Ontario into the 21st century. We need some real action to create jobs, and this would create jobs in agriculture, manufacturing and the service sector, which would benefit all Ontarians.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Ms. Soo Wong: Earlier today, I was very pleased to join my colleague the member from York Centre as he announced that he would be bringing forward a motion about the importance of diversity in our province. I know that my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt is more vibrant and more prosperous because of the diversity we celebrate. So I'd like to commend my colleague from York Centre for bringing this issue forward to the House shortly.

Mr. Speaker, there are many organizations that work to preserve different cultures and promote diversity in our community. One such group is the Canadian African Caribbean Unsung Heroes Committee. This committee works to create awareness of the outstanding achievements and contributions of people of African and

Caribbean descent. This November, they will be hosting the third annual Unsung Heroes awards.

I'm thrilled to rise this afternoon to recognize one of the 2013 Unsung Heroes youth award recipients, Akehil Johnson. I've known Akehil for many years as a very dedicated volunteer in Scarborough–Agincourt. He has worked tirelessly on efforts to prevent impaired driving, promote youth empowerment, improve literacy and computer literacy, as well as a camp counsellor for some of the less fortunate families in our community. I know Akehil as a compassionate and intellectual young man who is willing to lend a helping hand to those worthy causes.

I'd like to congratulate Akehil Johnson, a very deserving recipient of the 2013 Unsung Heroes award, and express my congratulations and thanks to the Canadian African Caribbean Unsung Heroes Committee for all the great work they do in our community.

FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to take this time to recognize the efforts of some very passionate and dedicated members of my community for organizing our annual Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Awareness Day in St. Thomas.

Approximately nine out of 1,000 babies born in Canada are affected by FASD. The disorder can include physical disabilities, brain and central nervous system impairments, and behavioural or learning challenges.

Undiagnosed FASD creates problems for our children in school and can lead to other social hardships such as mental illness, criminal behaviour, homelessness and substance abuse later in life. However, the lack of a coordinated awareness, prevention and treatment strategy from our government means many FASD sufferers must cope in silence.

On Monday, September 9, yesterday, community members gathered together at city hall in St. Thomas and across the province to raise awareness of this preventable condition.

I want to thank the members of our local organizing committee, including Ethel de la Penotiere, for their commitment to preventing FASD and helping those who must deal with it every day.

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

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated September 10, 2013, from the

Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

NATURAL GAS SUPERHIGHWAY ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 SUR L'AUTOROUTE DU GAZ NATUREL

Mr. Bailey moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 97, An Act to encourage the purchase of vehicles that use natural gas as a fuel / *Projet de loi 97, Loi visant à encourager l'achat de véhicules utilisant du gaz naturel comme carburant.*

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. Robert Bailey: This bill amends the Highway Traffic Act and the Taxation Act, 2007.

Part VIII of the Highway Traffic Act currently sets out weight limits for vehicles. A new section of the act enables the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations prescribing different weight limits for vehicles that use liquefied natural gas as a fuel. The Minister of Transportation is required to table a progress report in the Legislative Assembly every year until a regulation is made.

The Taxation Act, 2007, is amended to provide for a non-refundable tax credit to taxpayers who purchase certain vehicles that use natural gas as a fuel. The tax credit would be equal to half of the Ontario portion of the HST that the taxpayer paid for the vehicle. To qualify, the HST on the vehicle must be paid within a period of seven taxation years, beginning with the first taxation year that ends after this bill receives royal assent. Any unused tax credits in the taxation year may be carried forward and deducted in the following five years.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. John Gerretsen: On this beautiful late summer afternoon, I'd like to believe that we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the House schedule.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I move that, following oral questions or deferred votes, as the case may be, on Monday, September 16, 2013, the Speaker shall adjourn

the House without motion, and the House shall stand adjourned until Wednesday, September 18, 2013; and

That no committees shall meet on either September 16 or 17, 2013.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we have an agreement? Agreed? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: As many of my colleagues in this House know, one in five young people in Ontario are dealing with mental health challenges.

We know that 70% of mental health challenges begin in childhood or adolescence, and if left untreated, they become more serious and more difficult to treat. We also know that too many young people attempt suicide. It may be surprising to know that Canada has the third-highest youth suicide rate in the industrialized world.

It is in this sober context that I'm proud to highlight the steps our government is taking to help young people with mental health challenges, specifically those in crisis. It is my hope that today, on World Suicide Prevention Day, we give the issue of youth suicide the attention it warrants.

Mr. Speaker, we want young people in crisis to know there is immediate help close by. That premise—delivering the support that kids need when they need it and as close to home as possible—is also the central theme of our Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy. It was announced in 2011 and focuses on children and youth for the first three years.

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Two years later, our efforts are making a real difference. Approximately 35,000 more children and youth, and their families, are benefiting from support and services. These supports are being provided by 770 new mental health workers. Of these, 260 are helping kids in community agencies close to home, 175 are helping students in schools, 80 aboriginal workers are providing services to children in high-needs communities, 21 mental health court workers are helping to keep youth out of the justice system, and 144 nurses are working in schools. These workers are having a real impact on communities across the province.

An area I particularly want to bring attention to is suicide among aboriginal youth. This is an area this government is very concerned about, and we are determined to be a part of the solution. The 80 new aboriginal workers I mentioned will help high-needs communities provide additional direct and culturally appropriate services to 4,000 more aboriginal children and youth each year. Our government will also develop and implement training supports for aboriginal mental health

and addictions workers, to increase the supply of trained workers in communities.

Another important focus of our government's plan is to increase access to mental health services for the province's rural, remote and underserved communities. I'm also pleased that Ontario is enhancing its tele-psychiatry model so an additional 800 children and youth in these areas can have access to mental health consultations and expertise through video conferencing. Starting this fall, all professionals providing mental health services to children and youth can refer them to the new service.

We need to continue to sustain the momentum we have built. We're working in communities across the province with our partners in schools and the health and post-secondary sectors. We're doing this so we can continue transforming and improving the child and youth mental health system. While we are proud of all of the achievements we have made in communities across Ontario, we know there is more work to do. We will continue working diligently with all of our partners to help all young people in Ontario enjoy the bright futures they deserve.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am honoured to rise today on behalf of the PC caucus to raise awareness and to speak about World Suicide Prevention Day. The International Association for Suicide Prevention, the World Health Organization, as well as the World Federation for Mental Health, continue to promote and raise awareness of World Suicide Prevention Day; last year, over 40 countries participated in the day.

Almost all of us, in our lifetimes, will be affected by suicide or know someone who has lost a loved one to suicide. Unfortunately, suicide still continues to carry a stigma, which makes it very difficult for people to talk about it. The Ontario PC Party wants to raise awareness of this very serious issue and to ensure that assistance is given to prevent these tragedies.

It seems that every week we hear of another suicide in our communities. Heartbreaking stories about teenagers who are being bullied at school or individuals with a mental illness who feel that they have no other alternative but suicide fill the media weekly. In Canada, there is an average of 4,000 deaths by suicide every year, making suicide the 11th-leading cause of death for Canadians.

In Ontario, there are roughly three suicides per day. Certain groups, as the minister mentioned, are also more susceptible to suicide than others. First Nation communities have higher suicide rates than the rest of Canada. Youth, the elderly, inmates in correctional facilities and those living with mental illness are also more likely to attempt suicide.

Tragically, suicide is the second-leading cause of death for youth between the ages of 10 to 24. Teens who have been the victims of bullying and those who suffer from depression are at a greater risk of attempting suicide or considering it as an option.

Vulnerable individuals are also at a higher risk of suicide. Statistics show that over 90% of suicide victims

have a diagnosable psychiatric illness. Major depression and bipolar disorder account for roughly 25% of all deaths by suicide.

Clearly, as the minister said, there is much work that remains to be done. We need to make sure that we get prompt treatment for those people with mental illnesses, and we need to work towards eliminating the stigma associated with mental health so that, at some point, we will see mental health as being equally important in being treated as physical health.

Now, the minister mentioned the mental health strategy that was implemented by the government, and I do commend them for commencing the strategy. It is great that we are doing more to diagnose young people with mental illness and to provide treatment for them. The diagnosis part of it is working very well, but I would urge the government to really look at putting more resources into the actual treatment, because we still have youth that are waiting on lists up to two years for treatment. Clearly, we've heard from families—I think everyone in this Legislature has heard from families—that when you're dealing with a teenager who is in crisis, you can't wait two years for treatment. So I think we're all working towards the same goal and we certainly stand ready to work with the government on this important initiative.

Finally, I would just like to say that in my own local community I would commend the great work that's being done by Distress Centre Durham, who have been providing residents of my riding with an opportunity to get help when suicide seems like the only option. In fact, I know that over this past weekend they had a walk to raise funds for the important work that they're doing, as I know many organizations across Ontario have been doing.

So I would just like to say to all of the staff, to all of the volunteers and all the people that support these organizations and groups, thank you very much for all of the work that you're doing in our communities. Please know that, in doing so, you are saving lives. Thank you.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm honoured to stand in my place today speaking on behalf of the NDP caucus and adding my voice in support of World Suicide Prevention Day. I'm honoured to have the privilege of this platform to speak about something that we as a society and as individuals do not discuss enough.

The theme for this year's World Suicide Prevention Day is "Stigma," the stigma attached to mental health and suicide, which is a major barrier to suicide prevention. But by speaking about it, by being willing to overcome our initial discomfort and by opening ourselves so that others may find it easier to speak to us, we can start to break down that barrier. We can start to gain some insight and have a better understanding of just what a person who is thinking of suicide is dealing with. But more importantly, we can open doors for those people to help them find and feel comfortable seeking the help that they need without the burden of stigma.

The Suicide Prevention Community Council of Hamilton has shared some startling figures with me. In

Hamilton alone, someone dies by suicide every nine days. Around the world, approximately one million people die every year from suicide. That's one every 40 seconds—more than the number that are lost due to homicide and war combined.

As the NDP critic for children and youth services, I'm well aware of the particular problem of suicide among our youth. We have all heard the tragic, heartbreaking stories of young people who have ended their own lives, often as a result of bullying, and particularly, in this age of immediate mass communication, bullying that is done online. But we must be equally aware of the fact that these are not isolated cases. In fact, suicide is the second-leading cause of death among Canadians between the ages of 15 and 24. So we have some different figures there but the numbers, regardless, speak for themselves.

On this day, as we speak about suicide prevention, it is impossible not to talk about the plight of our First Nations, because First Nation communities are particularly vulnerable, with suicide rates for youth being five to seven times greater than those for non-aboriginal youth. These communities are dealing with many complex issues, including the lack of access to basic health or mental health services. The plague of addictions and pain in too many First Nation communities is well documented. These factors result in what can only be described as a catastrophic level of suicide. We have seen coroner's inquests, states of emergency declared, and endless newspaper articles, all calling for urgent and real action. Today, let's remember the work that we need to do to address these horrific statistics and the real people who are suffering by our inaction.

1530

I stand here as one voice, but it is a voice that has the privilege to speak in this House, a privilege that is not shared by the vast majority who have been affected, who are affected and will be affected by suicide. With that privilege comes an added responsibility—a responsibility, in this case, to promote the open discussion of mental health and suicide.

Ignorance is one of the causes of stigma, and open discussion can only help in that regard.

With events and conversations happening in communities all across this province, I encourage all members to do what they can to promote these activities.

A large proportion of people who die by suicide suffer from mental illness. The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health estimates that 90% suffered from at least one mental health disorder.

The fact is that the stigma associated with mental health, in many, many cases, stops people from seeking the help they need. They feel alone in their struggle, unable to cope. Only one in three people will seek help for symptoms of mental illness because of the fear of stigma.

As I said earlier, it's a privilege to speak here, and it gives us that added responsibility. But we all have an added responsibility to understand and to share with

others that mental illness is a real medical illness and not a character flaw.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, we could all go on for an endless time here, but I'm happy that I had the privilege to be able to speak to this very important matter.

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

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL PARKING FEES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas thousands of Ontarians have expressed concerns over the high costs of parking at hospitals in Ontario and cannot afford these extra fees; and

"Whereas Dr. Rajendra Kale, the Canadian Medical Association Journal's interim editor-in-chief, stated that patients are having to cut doctor's appointments short so they don't have to pay for another hour of parking;

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association Journal has said in an editorial that parking fees are a barrier to health care and add additional stress to patients, who have enough to deal with;

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

"That Ontario's members of provincial Parliament, and the provincial government, take action to abolish parking fees for all seniors when visiting hospitals."

I'm pleased to sign it and support it on behalf of my constituents.

TAXATION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: "Whereas the cost of living in northwestern Ontario is significantly higher than other regions of the province due to the high cost of necessities such as hydro, home heating fuel, gasoline and auto insurance; and

"Whereas an increase in the price of any of these essential goods will make it even more difficult for people living in northwestern Ontario to pay their bills and put food on the table;

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

"To reject any proposed increase to the harmonized sales tax, gas tax or any other fees or taxes in the northwest; and instead investigate other means such as increasing corporate tax compliance or eliminating corporate tax loopholes in order to fund transit in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area."

I support this and will affix my signature and give it to Aly to deliver to the table.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition from my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Scarborough residents north of Ontario Highway 401 and east of Don Mills are without a rapid transit option; and

“Whereas a strong transit system is critical for increasing economic development and tackling income disparity; and

“Whereas this geographical area continues to grow and the demand for strong rapid transit continues to increase; and

“Whereas Sheppard Avenue is a major artery for automobile traffic for commuters travelling from suburbs to downtown Toronto, and travelling from suburb to suburb; and

“Whereas ground-level rapid transit would increase traffic, restrict lanes for automobiles, and add further risk for pedestrians and commuters at dangerous intersections along Sheppard Avenue; and

“Whereas demands for underground rapid transit along Sheppard Avenue have been part of public discourse for over 50 years; and

“Whereas the province of Ontario previously approved a plan from the city of Toronto to extend the Sheppard subway line from Downsview to Scarborough Centre; and

“Whereas an extension to the Sheppard subway line will require contributions and co-operation from the city of Toronto, the province of Ontario and the government of Canada;

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

“To support the extension of the Sheppard subway line east to Scarborough Centre; and

“To call upon all levels of government to contribute multi-year funding for the construction and operation of an extension to the Sheppard subway line.”

Madam Speaker, I fully support the petition and give it to Erica.

SHALE BEACH

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

“Whereas the Ministry of Transportation closed public access to Shale Beach off Highway 26 in the town of Blue Mountains suddenly and with no consultation; and

“Whereas the closure will impact fisherman, swimmers and visitors who have been frequenting the beach for generations with no problem; and

“Whereas the closure will remove one of the only wheelchair-accessible fishing locations in the area; and

“Whereas the McGuinty-Wynne Liberal government won’t let Ontarians enjoy anything for free anymore without implementing a new tax or a new fee;

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

“That Premier Kathleen Wynne and the Minister of Transportation immediately restore access to Shale Beach so that residents can continue to enjoy the beach and all that it has to offer for generations to come.”

Madam Speaker, I certainly agree with this petition, and I will sign it.

MINING INDUSTRY

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

“Whereas Ontario’s mineral wealth belongs to the people of Ontario;

“Whereas the people who collectively own these natural resources should stand to enjoy their benefits;

“Whereas Ontario’s Mining Act presently calls for resources mined in Ontario to be processed in Canada, yet allows cabinet to grant” exemptions “to the clause;

“Whereas these” exemptions “ensure residents of Ontario are told why our resources are being shipped elsewhere—information that can be used to better plan for infrastructure and job training needs to ensure a more competitive environment;

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

“To amend the Mining Act to ensure that people living in Ontario maximize the benefit of their natural resources.”

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

FAMILY CAREGIVER LEAVE

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

“Whereas the people of Ontario deserve to be able to look after their sick or injured family members without fearing that they will lose their jobs at such a vulnerable time;

“Whereas the people of Ontario deserve to be able to spend time looking for a child that has disappeared, or take time off to grieve the death of a child that was murdered without fearing that they will lose their jobs;

“Whereas the federal government has recently extended similar leaves and economic supports to federal employees;

“Whereas the government of Ontario, and the Premier of Ontario, support Ontario families and wish to foster mental and physical well-being by allowing those closest to sick or injured family members the time to provide support free of work-related concerns;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, during” the spring session—now, look; we’re doing fall of 2013—“Bill 21, the Leaves to Help Families Act.”

Madam Speaker, I fully support it and give it to Ravicha, the page.

MARKDALE HOSPITAL

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

“Whereas Grey Bruce Health Services’ Markdale hospital is the only health care facility between Owen Sound and Orangeville on the Highway 10 corridor;

“Whereas the community of Markdale rallied to raise \$13 million on the promise they would get a new state-of-the-art hospital in Markdale;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announce as soon as possible its intended construction date for the new Markdale hospital and ensure that the care needs of the patients and families of our community are met in a timely manner.”

I support this petition, will sign it and send it with page Erica.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: “Whereas home heating and electricity are essential utilities for northern families;

“Whereas the government has a duty and an obligation to ensure that essential goods and services are affordable for all families living in the north and across the province;

“Whereas government policy such as the Green Energy Act, the harmonized sales tax, cancellation of gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga have caused the price of electricity to artificially increase to the point it is no longer affordable for families or small business;

“Whereas electricity generated and used in north-western Ontario is among the cleanest and cheapest to produce in Canada, yet has been inflated by government policy;

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

“To take immediate steps to reduce the price of electricity in the northwest and ensure that residents and businesses have access to energy that properly reflects the price of local generation.”

I wholeheartedly support this, will sign my name and give this to page Megan to deliver to the table.

1540

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition for the Sheppard East subway extension:

“Whereas Scarborough residents north of Ontario Highway 401 and east of Don Mills are without a rapid transit option; and

“Whereas a strong transit system is critical for increasing economic development and tackling income disparity; and

“Whereas this geographical area continues to grow and the demand for strong rapid transit continues to increase; and

“Whereas Sheppard Avenue is a major artery for automobile traffic for commuters travelling from suburbs to downtown Toronto, and travelling from suburb to suburb; and

“Whereas ground-level rapid transit would increase traffic, restrict lanes for automobiles, and add further risk for pedestrians and commuters at dangerous intersections along Sheppard Avenue; and

“Whereas demands for underground rapid transit along Sheppard Avenue have been part of public discourse for over 50 years; and

“Whereas the province of Ontario previously approved a plan from the city of Toronto to extend the Sheppard subway line from Downsview to Scarborough Centre; and

“Whereas an extension to the Sheppard subway line will require contributions and co-operation from the city of Toronto, the province of Ontario and the government of Canada;

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

“To support the extension of the Sheppard subway line east to Scarborough Centre; and

“To call upon all levels of government to contribute to multi-year funding for the construction and operation of an extension to the Sheppard subway line.”

I fully support it and give the petition to James.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario has 634 long-term-care facilities providing care for 75,000 residents; and

“Whereas hospitals in Ontario report seeing nursing home patients admitted who are suffering from neglect; and

“Whereas several incidents of neglect prompted the Long-Term Care Task Force on Resident Care and Safety to release an action plan; and

“Whereas caring for the increasing number of patients with cognitive difficulties requires more time for front-line staff to manage patient needs; and

“Whereas staffing levels in Ontario’s nursing homes are below the national average (Statistics Canada); and

“Whereas Ontario does not have a minimum staffing ratio;

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

“That the Liberal government ensures front-line care and staffing levels receive funding precedence over administrative costs.”

I agree with this petition. I'll affix my signature and send it to the desk with Bridget.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Ms. Sarah Campbell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the province of Ontario is the only province in Canada that does not allow the provincial Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints against hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies, police, retirement homes and universities; and

"Whereas the people wronged by these institutions are left feeling helpless and most have nowhere else to turn for help to address their issues;

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

"To grant the Ombudsman of Ontario the power to investigate hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies, police, retirement homes and universities."

I support this. I will sign it and give it to Aly to deliver to the table.

FAMILY CAREGIVER LEAVE

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

"Whereas the people of Ontario deserve to be able to look after their sick or injured family members without fearing that they will lose their jobs at such a vulnerable time;

"Whereas the people of Ontario deserve to be able to spend time looking for a child that has disappeared, or take time off to grieve the death of a child that was murdered without fearing that they will lose their jobs;

"Whereas the federal government has recently extended similar leaves and economic supports to federal employees;

"Whereas the government of Ontario, and the Premier of Ontario, support Ontario families and wish to foster mental and physical well-being by allowing those closest to sick or injured family members the time to provide support free of work-related concerns;

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

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, during spring of 2013, Bill 21, the Leaves to Help Families Act."

I fully support the petition, and I'll give the petition to Daniel.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Walker: "Whereas the horse racing industry employs approximately 60,000 people, creates \$1.5

billion in wages and \$2 billion in recurring expenditures annually; and

"Whereas the partnership that was created between government and the horse breeding and racing industry has been a model arrangement and is heralded throughout North America, with 75% of revenues going to the provincial government to fund important programs like health care and education, 5% to the municipalities and only 20% goes back to the horse business; and

"Whereas the horse business is a significant source of revenue for the farming community and rural municipalities;

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

"That the Ministry of Finance continue the revenue-sharing partnership with the horse racing industry for the benefit of Ontario's agricultural and rural economies."

I support this petition, will sign it and send it with page Katherine.

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas many Ontarians need health care services at home and 6,100 people are currently on wait-lists for care;

"Whereas waiting for over 200 days for home care is unacceptable;

"Whereas eliminating the wait-lists won't require any new funding if the government caps hospital CEO salaries, finds administrative efficiencies in the local health integration networks (LHINs) and community care access centres (CCACs), standardizes procurement policies and streamlines administration costs;

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

"That a five-day home care guarantee is established and existing wait-lists eliminated so that Ontarians receive the care they need within a reasonable time frame."

I agree with this petition and will send it with good page James.

LYME DISEASE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe; and

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that

Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario health insurance plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process of establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives at 45% to 95% of the time;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct that the Ontario public health system and OHIP include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis, to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians.”

This is extremely important, and I agree with it. I'll affix my signature and send it to the desk with Ravicha.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (LEAVES TO HELP FAMILIES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (CONGÉS POUR AIDER LES FAMILLES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 5, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 21, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver, critically ill child care and crime-related child death or disappearance leaves of absence / *Projet de loi 21, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé familial pour les aidants naturels, le congé pour soins à un enfant gravement malade et le congé en cas de décès ou de disparition d'un enfant dans des circonstances criminelles.*

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I had the privilege when this House last dealt with this bill—I believe it was in June some time. At that time I had the floor, and now I have about four minutes left. In summary, it's a good place to start after such a long absence. Mr. Naqvi, the Minister of Labour, with all the right intentions, introduced the bill in March.

At this point in time, we understand the empathetic or sympathetic tone of the thing about giving persons a leave under special medical conditions.

I'll read the regulation under the bill itself. Regulation 49.3 says, “An employee is entitled to a leave”—this is important—“without pay to provide care or support” to a family member who has a serious medical condition. It could be a mother, father, an aging parent. It could be a

child. An employee may take up to eight weeks per calendar year, in addition to other entitlements, which could be related to their contractual arrangements with their employer, or under federal law as well.

It's important that we all support that, but really, Madam Speaker, there's no money in it. It isn't going to cost the government one nickel, but it is going to cost the employer, so it's actually downloading costs to small business.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Unpaid.

Mr. John O'Toole: The unpaid portion is—the work still has to be done, Minister. I hope you understand how business works. You've been a civil servant most of your life, so you don't really understand—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I ask you to withdraw.

1550

Mr. John O'Toole: At a personal level, I certainly withdraw.

My point is this, though: It sounds good, but it really does nothing in terms of helping a family. For instance, if they had a partner die or who was perilously ill, and you're taking time off work from a job and you're not getting paid, now you have two problems: You can't pay your rent, your car payment or your cellphone bill—all these bills, the taxes that this government has laid on us.

If you have a critically ill child under another section, 49.4—an employee with six months of continuous service is entitled to 37 weeks of care for a critically ill child. No one would fault the intent here, but let's put it on the table: There's no money in it.

It's a feel-good thing. I understand that. The entitlement is there. But is there any other way to help employees? That's what I'm saying.

Interjection: They're just going to blame the feds.

Mr. John O'Toole: You're going to blame the federal government, and that argument has been made about it as well.

I think the rules aren't clear enough. This bill has to go to committee, and my impression is—here's the other thing. You get 37 weeks, but you have to take a week at a time. If they have to go for a chemotherapy treatment once a week—

Mr. Todd Smith: You've got to take the whole week off.

Mr. John O'Toole: —you've got to take the whole week off.

There are portions of this that were actually prepared with a nasty tone to them. There's no money, you've got to take the whole week off—if the person is going for dialysis two or three times a week, you've got to take the week off.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Read the bill.

Mr. John O'Toole: You haven't read the bill, obviously. But it's important; the bill is important. I support it in the sensitivity of what it's trying to achieve. It's a discussion, and we're raising critical errors or problems with the drafting of this bill.

I only have a minute left. I want to put this in a personal—we've all had these experiences; whether it's an aging parent, aging in-laws, these are important things: providing bereavement leaves and other kinds of leave, in palliative care especially today. More importantly, this government is not creating any long-term-care beds. In fact, now they're cutting back on physiotherapy. For persons who are home now because of their hip and knee replacement, physiotherapy is virtually cut off.

If you look at the whole list of things that this Kathleen Wynne government is doing, all I see is more taxes and more cuts to services. I see it and I hear it every single day. I can't for a moment understand why the people of Ontario—I'm pleading with you: Watch what's going on. There's nothing here in this bill that's going to help you directly. Your employer now will have an added expense. They may lay you off, in fact, because they're going to have to hire somebody else anyway to do that job.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: They have their two minutes. They can respond in their two minutes, and I hope they take their time to agree with the changes that are needed to the bill.

There's 11 seconds. I certainly want to take my time to make sure that—we're supportive of the intention, but we're not supportive of a poorly drafted bill that's all showcase stuff. That's all it is.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: We've had the opportunity to debate this bill before, and I think the idea of having a leave provided for individuals who want to take care of their family is something, of course, we support. That makes sense.

But there are other areas that we need to look at. What I've found more and more is that when we look at addressing problems in our province, we can't look at them through a narrow filter. Many of the issues we face are synergistic in the sense that they're combined symptoms of a greater problem. There are multiple factors that work together.

We're looking at the fact that we want to provide support for loved ones who want to care for someone in their family who is either injured or ill. We also have to look at the support networks we put in place for those individuals. If we had a stronger home care system, that would also alleviate some of the pressure on loved ones. For example, if someone is critically ill and has significant mobility issues and needs to have assistance to get around the home, if there was a strong home care system, that could assist the loved one so that it wouldn't be as much of a burden on them to be able to care for their loved one. If we had home care visits in terms of physicians visiting and taking care of patients at their homes, if we had nursing care available in the home—a broader approach to this problem would provide a more wholesome solution.

So instead of looking at it as just providing the employee with an opportunity to be able to take some

time off so they could keep their job and be able to go and take care of a loved one, let's look at it as a broader solution. What can we do to create a society that provides more avenues to provide the support beyond just that leave? If we looked at these other mechanisms like home care, home visits by doctors, nursing care availability in the home, these would provide a more wholesome approach to caring for individuals.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'd like to comment on the member from Durham, whom I've known for a long time. We've both been here since 1995. He's a well-meaning individual, but he shows exactly what's wrong with the PC Party today, exactly what's wrong with it. They think it's a good idea, but, you know, "We'd better stick up for employers only and forget about employees," because that's really what he's saying.

If he had truly read the bill, it clearly states that there's a gap in the current leaves of absence under the Employment Standards Act. It does not provide for long-term unpaid protected leave. That's what this bill is all about. It speaks to the notion that in certain circumstances it's absolutely important for an employee to be with their family, to look after an aging parent, to look after a critically ill child or a missing child or even, heaven forbid, a deceased child. That's what this is all about. He likes to mix it all up with tax increases, with this and with that and the other thing. This is a good bill.

What I would really like to know is this: Is the Tory party of today going to support this bill or not? Where do they really stand? This is all about giving the people who work in this province on a day-to-day basis further protections in case of need. The employers will not have to pay any more money, but it's to protect the job of the employees when they are in very dire circumstances because of a family emergency. So let him speak to that issue alone. Just stick to the issue. Are you in favour of the bill or are you not in favour of the bill, and which way are you going to vote?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I very much appreciate the opportunity to intervene briefly and to answer the Attorney General's question. Yes, we are going to be supporting this bill at second reading. If the Attorney General had been here for the rest of the debate and if he had actually listened to the member for Durham, I think he would have understood that we are supportive in principle of family leave for people who have these kinds of situations.

At the same time, I think it's necessary that the bill, of course, will go to a standing committee of the Legislature so that everybody who has an interest in this issue—including small business people; let's say the CFIB and other groups—will have an opportunity to have their say before this bill comes back for third reading. I think that's an important point.

The member for Durham made an outstanding speech—although there was a bit of a break over the

summer. We were waiting with bated breath for the second part of it, but at the same time, he made good points.

I think it's important, also, to point out that those of us who are privileged to sit in the opposition in this House at the present time and who aspire to serve in government in the future have a job to do in the Legislature. We have a job, and that is to thoroughly debate and analyze and scrutinize legislation. It's our job to hold the government to account. I know it frustrates the government members sometimes to hear us giving our speeches in the House, representing our constituents, but I would suggest to them that if they think about it, they will again conclude that that's democracy too and that we have an obligation to represent our constituents in this place. We do that with a great degree of honour and we bring forward our views after due consideration, obviously. We'll continue to do that in this House, but at the same time we are prepared to work with the government on issues and reach across the partisan divide when the public interest gives us that opportunity to do so. That's what I've always done, as the ministers opposite will know.

I think the member for Durham did an outstanding job this afternoon, and I want to thank him very much for his comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

1600

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to rise in this House after the summer break. I appreciated listening to the last four minutes of the member for Durham's speech, as he was so rudely interrupted as well by the summer break. I enjoyed listening to all the members' comments, and I found each of the members brought comments that actually added to this debate.

My colleague from Bramalea-Gore-Malton made a really good point: that you can't look at each issue in health care—or any part of legislation, but specifically in health care—you can't look at an issue in isolation and say, "This is good" or "This is bad," because you have to look at the issues around it.

This bill picks one issue: long-term leave for a caregiver. But if you look at it in isolation, as the member from Durham pointed out, there are some big issues with this bill because the people who would benefit the most probably can't afford to take the leave off in the first place. So is it actually helping the people it's targeted at, or is it more targeted as a feel-good bill? That's a legitimate question; it really is.

In my 20 minutes, I'm going to talk about what happened to our family and how it would have worked or not worked. Realistically, we're very fortunate that I didn't have to worry about who was going to pay my grocery bill by having to take a couple of days off to help some of my family members. But the people who really have to worry about that—this bill is not going to help them, and that's something we really, really need to discuss.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to thank the NDP member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton. I did think he picked up the real theme I was talking about. There are other ways of providing supports that don't exist today. In fact, they're being removed. When you look at long-term care or you look at people in their strategy for aging at home, you can't get care. That's the problem. The wait-list—or you're limited to about eight to 10 hours per week, if you're lucky. If you're a person who is convalescent or a person who is aging and can't get out of bed, you need to have care for other periods. So there are other solutions here that this brings to bear outside of this.

The Attorney General mentioned the Employment Standards Act. In fact, if you watch what they're going to say, they're going to blame the federal government about the EI, the employment insurance portion. But I'd say that's part of what they always use as a strategy. It's always somebody else. It's Stephen Harper's fault for everything, basically.

The member from Wellington-Halton Hills is going to be speaking, and I appreciate his complimentary remarks, but he made it very clear: We do support the bill. I think I made that clear at the beginning, at the outset of the bill.

I'd say that the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane talked about a very good part of it. It's the feel-good part. But how do people, like in your case when you were farming up in Timiskaming and perhaps someone in your family gets bad—who milks the cows? Do you understand? If you're going to have the cows milked, you have to hire somebody to do it, if you're going to be taking care of the other person.

So it costs somebody something; no question about it. I call it downloading on small employers—a mum and dad who are operating a 7-Eleven store, and their kids are helping as well. If one of the children gets sick or has cancer or some other disease, now one of the parents can't work and maybe the store closes. If the store closes, they lose money. Somehow, someone—so we must consult with small businesses. I'm not talking about corporations. A good employee and a good employer will work together to solve these problems about leave for a loved one.

I think the bill is a feel-good bill. We'll support it, but support it going to committee, and let's see some real action—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further debate?

The member for London-Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker. I wasn't sure who was going to go first, so thank you very much.

I honestly wish I could say wholeheartedly that today I would support this Bill 21, entitled the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families). But that being said, Speaker, I do wholeheartedly support the intent with which it's brought forward.

Ontario families are struggling to make ends meet now more than ever. Taking care of a sick family member escalates the financial and emotional pressure on

families, and they are rightfully looking for us to help them in their time of need when they have someone who is ill and they are feeling that financial burden because they can't make ends meet.

That's where this bill perhaps somewhat looks like it's addressing the problem, because of its intent. But on the real face of this bill, it does not address the real needs of families but offers a band-aid solution.

We all know financial pressure on Ontario families continues to escalate. Someone has to pick up the tab for this government's spending spree, and that burden has fallen on Ontario taxpayers. This government has saddled Ontario families with several billion dollars of debt, thanks to their gas plant, eHealth and Ornge fiascos and in return offers Ontarians the ability to take unpaid time off in order to care for an ill family member.

I think we can all agree that no one should be forced to choose between an ill family member in need of care and losing their job in order to provide care for that family member. As it stands, Ontario families are being forced into these untenable situations that risk their financial stability and their family obligations.

While I strongly support the objective of this proposed bill, I am deeply concerned about the lack of reach and overall effectiveness in actually providing the support necessary to Ontario families and employees. Caregiver leave and employment protections are very important aspects of this issue, but they don't provide us with the full picture.

I can promise you this issue runs deeper than this. When we fail to recognize the dire financial position of many Ontario families, we are risking our ability to truly make that change meaningful so that those we claim we're representing can actually use the services that this bill's attempting to provide.

When we fail to recognize the full picture, the full depth and breadth of their plight, what message does that send? The people of this province are looking for a well-thought-out approach that balances all the key issues at play. We must ask ourselves, is this the best we can do for them?

We must acknowledge that Ontario workers struggle between balancing medical needs of their families and the needs of a paycheck. Too many families in this province are a mere paycheck away from losing their homes, and unpaid leave of any kind does little to relieve their concerns. This is why I feel this amendment could do much more to address those needs.

In its current form, this bill provides no employment insurance support. I understand there is discussion between the federal government about this possibility. My concern is that we have already seen the federal government's willingness to slash and burn much-needed employment supports for Canadian families, and I, for one, am not confident in our federal government's willingness to support this initiative.

With no employment insurance support in this bill, I have to ask, exactly how many Ontario families does this government believe they are helping with this bill? We

all need to understand that without real changes to our employment standards, I fear that we are simply paying lip service to a very serious issue. While job security is a very important issue, especially in a riding like mine, London-Fanshawe, where unemployment is still over 8%, it is not the only concern for those who may need to care for an ill family member.

This amendment is a welcome but small step forward, and yet without a real buy-in from the federal government on EI supports, many will be unable to take advantage of this program. This government must deliver a strong message to our federal government that income supports for those taking this leave are a vital component to the success of this effort.

Currently, most employees are unaware and unclear of their rights under ESA. I want assurances from this government that they will ensure Ontario workers know about the leave and that there are no reprisals for employees taking the leave.

Enforcement is another area of concern surrounding this bill. Not all employees are created equal, and ensuring that employees are protected by law requires diligent oversight and enforcement. I hope this government is up to the challenge of that enforcement because Ontario families who do take this leave will be counting on you.

This is the same government that was proposing to cut \$6 million from the employment standards branch enforcement budget. As a result of the Poverty Reduction Strategy, this government promised to invest an additional \$10 million annually to hire new employment standards officers, to improve the ESA compliance and to reduce the number of backlogged complaints from workers.

Not only are they not getting that promised funding, but now this government proposes to slash their budget by \$6 million and continues to introduce new programs. So as I understand it, we are now expecting the ESA enforcement branch to enforce this program while in the background huge portions of their budgets are being hacked.

1610

When we connect the dots between slashed funding and enforcement, it is hard to imagine how this proposed program will live up to the intention and the needs of our workers and families. I and my NDP caucus know that to make this amendment work for Ontario workers, we need to do much better work with the ESA. We need to stop the cuts to the ESA budget and increase the minimum wage, which is the only way many low-paid workers get a pay increase. We also need to start really looking at the time and monetary limits that ESA imposes on our workers who try to make claims on their entitlements. No other province in Canada imposes limits on unpaid wage recovery. These are very real concerns that we need to address if it is our intention to improve the lives of Ontario workers.

Also, I think this bill does not take into account the emotional distress that a sick family member brings. Whether it is a family taking care of an elderly parent or

a young child, the emotional distress of caring for a family member because there is no other option weighs very heavily. Cooking meals and doing laundry don't begin to cover the 24-hour care required in many of these cases. That's why my private member's bill addressed the need for seniors to get home care within a five-day period. If families could better count on our health care system, we wouldn't have to create partial solutions through bills such as this.

While I am prepared to support this bill, I hope that this government takes what I have said under advisement and begins to look more seriously at the whole range of challenges faced by those caring for sick families.

The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton actually gave me quite a little bit of an intro to what I was going to connect the dots about the fact that this bill does have good intentions, but it does have many holes in it because our health care system isn't meeting the needs of a lot of Ontarians. One of the ones I'd like to highlight is the needs of seniors. Everyone talks about that we're going to have a seniors explosion in the year 2021. So there's going to be a great need for people to have access to health care in general.

We know from studies and we know—probably a lot of people I've talked to personally, when they get in their golden years, they want to remain at home and they want to have some dignity. They've worked all their lives and they've built a nice home for them to stay in, and because they may need some physical help with some challenges that they've come across physically, they don't want to just abandon their home and go into a long-term-care or retirement centre. They still want to live out the best years they can in their private home, their castle if you will.

This is where this government needs to step up the health care system when it comes to home care. We hear from seniors that there isn't enough home care available to them, as the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton pointed out. We need to ensure that there are doctors' visits. That would be a great initiative to look at as a holistic approach to helping families that need to look after an elderly parent. As I'm kind of highlighting right now, for the purpose of when we talk about health care or family leave, a lot of people are thinking about an elderly parent.

So the NDP has done some real thoughtfulness—thoughtful information about how to address that particular problem in the health care system when people are at home and they need that help. We proposed a wonderful initiative. It's that five-day home care guarantee for people who are at home. That would help the children of those parents have some kind of psychological relief or peace, if you will, knowing that their parents, when they get home from the hospital in five days, are going to have some professional health care provider come to their home, because even though we have the intent to look after our parents, we aren't medical experts.

The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane had mentioned that we're probably going to have a lot of

examples personally, in our own lives, of some of the situations we faced looking after loved ones. My mother passed away last May, but before that, she was home with my father—elderly parents—and they didn't want to leave their home. Neither one of them wanted to be separated, first of all, and they loved their home. Their home was their castle; it was their comfort. That's where they felt relaxed and at peace, so we tried to oblige that. We tried to oblige them.

This was before I became an MPP, so it kind of felt interesting that I would have been in that position, because I worked for someone—a great employer—but there was no benefit to look after an elderly parent. You weren't paid for that leave. So my sister and I were the primary caregivers. We would work all day, and then we would do our shift after we were done work at my mom and dad's. That would make sure that she got her pills, was bathed for the evening and even had a little interaction, because my dad, of course, was there with her all day, and he got tired.

At that time, there wasn't a lot of home care available to them, for whatever reason, but what I experienced was—I wasn't a PSW. I wasn't certified medically, really, to look after my parents or, in this case, my mother. If we had had a five-day home care guarantee, I would have been more at ease, knowing that someone was coming to the house and looking after my mother's medical needs, and I could do the housekeeping needs to make sure things were kept on that part of the equation because of her illness.

I think that the intention of this bill is good, but it's going to have quite a gap, because people are not going to be able to afford that time off from work if they don't have benefits to look after an aging parent or, perhaps, a sick child, and they're going to be left stressed. It's really hard to make that decision: “Do I continue to work? Because I can't afford to not pay my mortgage or buy the groceries and watch my parents, daughter or son in the hospital because I can't be there.” That, again, is not a healthy work environment, when you have to go to work and you're stressed out. Your mind isn't really at work; it's at the hospital with your parent or it's at the hospital with your daughter.

Saying that, is this bill really going to be effective for the people that need it? I would say not really. At least it opens up—I'm not going to say the “conversation” word; I'm going to say it opens up talks and discussions about the realities people are facing today in the job force, the realities families are facing with regard to the lack of health care, and maybe some alternative ways of how we can handle this could come about. It could open up discussions, like we talked about: the five-day home care guarantee; or perhaps we need to have a nurse practitioner go in the home or a doctor go visit the home; or health care equipment, perhaps.

I know we had that seniors' home renovations tax credit; again, that is going to help a very narrow “seniors,” because you have to spend a lot of money just to get that tax credit back. That's there and that's fine,

but when you have someone who wants to stay at home and they want to make those improvements that the member talked about, we should have that expanded a little bit further, because it's just not going to touch that particular group—someone who can afford those types of aids and devices at home.

I think the NDP members had thrown out an example from Quebec, how there are more initiatives around those devices that seniors need to stay at home. It's not just if you own your home, but maybe, as we talked about, if you're a tenant and you might need those devices. There are other ways that we can certainly make health care better, if people are not feeling well, so that we can alleviate some of the stress and the burden on their family members. Therefore, that could also help the fact that they may not have to take their leave.

1620

That kind of addresses the Conservatives' concern when you have that mom-and-pop shop and they only have two or three employees. When someone leaves, that leaves quite a gap in their business, and that's one of their concerns.

If we have better health care and home care for people who are not feeling well, then that can help the situation with the employer, because the employee will feel at ease. Their mind will be at ease that their parents, their children, are being looked after properly. Then they can take the time that they need after work, or maybe a shorter time. Maybe it doesn't have to be three weeks.

I think there is a better way of dealing with the actual problem that we're talking about. It's not just a narrow tunnel vision about how to solve it and just give someone three weeks off, and then all the problems will be solved in the health care system. It has to be an approach where we're going to look at it in a holistic approach.

I'd be really interested in seeing it go to committee so we can really have a true discussion, but in that committee I'd like to see some of those discussions come to fruition so that we can actually have a better home care system and tie those two things in.

It will be interesting what comes out of that: if it's just going to be employment-based, or if there will be some expansion beyond the thinking of what this bill was intended for.

With that, Speaker, I just would like to wrap up my feedback on this bill. I hope that it does get to committee. It sounds like the Conservative Party opposite here is also going to support it. I'm going to support it, and it sounds like there's a sense that our caucus will support it as well.

When it gets to committee, I think that's when the real work is going to be done, and we need those really tough discussions to be had. But let's get something done. Let's get some results out of it, because it's extremely important—health care. We all feel passionately about it, but we need to take action.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I just wanted to comment on the lead that the London–Fanshawe member spoke today. I

thought she provided some very thoughtful discussion on this particular Employment Standards Amendment Act, which is a bill about compassion.

I recall speaking about this bill when I was Minister of Labour and speaking about how important it is to families and job security.

It's about creating unpaid job-protected leave for hard-working Ontarians. I think that when this discussion took place previously when the House was sitting, I remember the member from Nickel Belt also offered some very thoughtful suggestions, so I appreciate the constructive dialogue that we're having about this legislation.

I remember also speaking about this legislation before the Human Resources Professionals Association. They did a survey of their members. I can't remember all the numbers, but it was extraordinary how many of their members felt that this particular gap in legislation—how much this step that we were proposing would mean to their membership and to so many employers. I thought that they offered some very constructive advice as well. I think there are a lot of stakeholders out there that want to speak about this particular need.

There isn't anybody in this Legislature who hasn't had a sick child, a sick parent, somebody in their family that needed you to drop everything to help them. We all know that whenever we're at work and somebody in our family is struggling with a health issue or something of a very serious nature, we want to be there. Knowing that your government is there to provide you with that safety net is important.

I'm happy to speak in favour of this legislation and to know that whether it's somebody who's critically ill or somebody who loses a child—we know that there are a number of stakeholders, whether they're the MS Society, the Parkinson Society, the Alzheimer Society, the Canadian Cancer Society, the caregiver coalition—they're all supportive of this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to provide comment on the member from London–Fanshawe, who spoke for 20 minutes on Bill 21, which is the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families), 2013.

Certainly, she is quite accurate. I think all of us get stories in our constituencies or just out in our communities about family members that are struggling to balance between work and trying to assist a family member, if it's just an acute illness or sometimes chronic illness, till they're placed properly within the system to be taken care of. We certainly are supportive of the attempts by this government in the legislation to bridge that gap that does exist in our communities, and helping people.

This is the second time, I believe, the bill has been brought forward. There were some changes made to it. I think it's important that we continue to talk about how we can implement this bill. There are certainly some questions on the federal involvement, pay during the time of leave to protect the job. So there's a lot of discussion that needs to occur.

I think the intent, both, if I can say, federally and provincially, is that we recognize the need in our communities as the elderly population, which the member from London–Fanshawe mentioned that we’re facing, kind of explodes. We’ve all seen those demographic charts and know that there are going to have to be changes not only to this act but probably to how health care is delivered generally.

There are some progressive ideas out there that are innovative that we need to apply to our health care system because it’s going to help all of us in the end. People are looking, especially family members, to the advice and some regulations from the government that do assist them in looking after their family members.

I’m pleased to rise today and support this bill and would like it to move forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My colleague from London–Fanshawe was quite accurate. I guess I provided a little bit of an introduction and she went into much more depth of the need to provide multiple avenues in addressing this problem instead of looking at it with one isolated viewpoint. Using the word from my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane, all too often we look at issues in this province or problems that we have with an isolated lens, and we need to look at it in a broader perspective.

The one area that I want to touch on with my remaining time—a minute and a half—is that while there was a significant gap in the legislation that we needed to provide this protection for folks who were not covered by any legislation if they were seeking a longer-term leave for a loved one who was facing a critical illness—that gap in legislation did exist and it was important to close that gap, and I think that’s definitely a positive step.

The other area that comes up again when we talk about not looking at problems in isolation—there is another corollary that we need to look at, that if we have this protection in terms of legislation, the next piece is that we have to make sure that there’s some enforcement. If someone does take this leave and make use of this legislation that provides them with this avenue so that they can take that long-term leave from their employment with the hopes of returning to that employment, how can we ensure that the employer will actually follow through with this? The element of enforcement to make sure that this law, if an employee chooses to make use of it and utilize it—where’s the guarantee that an employer doesn’t just say, “Listen, it’s not cost-effective for me to keep someone on or to let them come back. I could hire someone else in the meantime, train them up and move on with a new employee, and it’s not advantageous for me to go back to this person” who’s maybe taken a year gap or however many months’ gap?

That’s something we need to look at as well, the enforcement of all the legislation we’ve put, particularly when it comes to labour laws.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I appreciate the opportunity to have some time to comment on the well-spoken words from the member for London–Fanshawe. I listened carefully to her speech and I agree with almost everything she said in her speech.

This bill that’s in front of us today, Bill 21, is basically an amendment to the Employment Standards Act. I think it allows for a lot of opportunities to protect people who are vulnerable, who have to leave. The act is pretty straightforward. If someone wants to take extra time off, their employer can’t fire them if they need to take care of various people: for a critically ill child, for a missing child, for a deceased child, and also time to take care of a family member who may be sick. That’s the bulk of what I see in this bill.

The world has changed a lot in the past couple of decades, especially with the fact that people are living longer and also the fact that employers in general sometimes try to find excuses to fire someone. We’re doing something to protect that, and if someone takes a long leave of absence, they don’t have to worry about losing their jobs. That’s what I think is the most important part about this bill.

1630

I think it goes to committee, which I’m looking forward to. Amendments can be made; they usually are. In the committees that I’ve sat on, the opposition has brought forward amendments, and sometimes they’re very good amendments, and they work to amend the bill. So that’s why I think—I’m looking forward to this going to committee and to having that discussion there. Then it comes back here and we debate it again one more time during third reading. So I think there’s an opportunity to thoroughly go through this bill, especially at committee, where a lot of the work is done, and I’m sure there will be suggested amendments, and hopefully we’ll come back with a good, strong bill that we can talk about and vote on. So I look forward to that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for London–Fanshawe has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I’d like to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton and the member from Scarborough Southwest. Thank you very much for your comments on my remarks with regard to this bill.

From what I hear, it sounds like we’re all in agreement that this bill has some good intentions, that it has some good ideas behind the bill, and that we’re all looking forward that if we are going to pass it to committee, then that’s where the real work can be done. I always enjoy sitting on the committees because I like to hear the deputations of interested parties and who they feel it’s going to affect the most.

Sometimes in that committee, there are other ideas or legislation that we can take out of those deputations. I know particularly if it’s going to—the deputations will be strictly on this bill, but I’m hoping there will be some

good feedback on that, that we can actually look at a holistic approach, maybe in other areas later, because as I mentioned, if we did have a strong five-day-home-care-guarantee bill passed in this House, that could certainly alleviate some of the issues that people may feel from the stress, even just if they had this leave, of looking after a loved one.

I look forward to it passing and that when it does get into committee, we all do the hard work that it takes in order to make sure that when it comes back for third reading, we have a really strong bill with some teeth that can actually help people in their time of need when they do need to take some time off to look after a loved one.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a pleasure to rise on second reading of the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families), 2013, and it's a pleasure to speak to this proposed legislation because this bill goes to the heart of what government should do. Our legislation would help the working people of our province to be with their loved ones when they are needed most, at times of major health issues and tragic situations involving children.

The Leaves to Help Families act, if passed, would provide up to eight weeks of unpaid job-protected leave so that employees could care for loved ones who have a serious medical condition. An employee could take up to eight weeks per year per family member. A family member for whom an employee could request unpaid time off to care for would include the employee's spouse; a parent, step-parent or foster parent of the employee or the employee's spouse; a child, step-child or foster child of the employee or the employee's spouse; a grandparent, step-grandparent, grandchild or step-grandchild of the employee or the employee's spouse; the spouse of a child of the employee; the employee's brother or sister; or a relative of the employee who is dependent on the employee for care or assistance.

Importantly for many in our province, it could be taken to care for family members who live in other countries. We know that many Ontarians are born outside of Canada, and in the greater Toronto area that percentage is about half. The importance of having job-protected time to take care of family members who have a serious medical condition is all the more important when distance separates us from those we care about and we must travel to be with them.

Our proposed legislation would also entitle parents to up to 37 weeks of unpaid job-protected leave to provide care for a critically ill child.

In addition, this bill would show compassion by providing up to 52 weeks of unpaid job-protected leave for parents of a missing child. As a parent myself, this would be a nightmare for us, unlimited stress to a family.

It would also provide up to 104 weeks of unpaid job-protected leave for parents of a child who has died where the disappearance or death is probably the result of a heinous crime.

The hard-working people of our province and those who depend on them deserve nothing less than this. Every member of this House and those who are listening to the proceedings today share a common experience. We are either sons or daughters, we have parents and grandparents, and we have spouses and children. In short, we are all part of a family, and when those family members have major health problems, we want to be there because we care.

There are many things that members of this House may debate and have various opinions on. However, the need for compassion for our loved ones when they face a medical crisis is not one of them, and that's because everyone in this chamber and those who may be watching these proceedings on television this afternoon know that when loved ones face a major health problem, we need to be at their side at all times. We need to care for, to reassure those who are closest to our family. It is when we face a major medical problem that we realize just how dependent we are on those who care for us, and it's when our family members have major health issues that we realize how dependent they are on us.

I know a colleague of my wife's at a school in Peterborough. Her sister lived in Grafton, Ontario, and has one of the most difficult forms of cancer, that being bone cancer, and recently moved to Peterborough to be with her sister, for her sister to provide that care. Because we are very fortunate in our community of Peterborough now to have a radiation bunker, and when you have this severe form of bone cancer, a radiation bunker and treatment can provide much-needed relief.

At these times, our concentration and concerns are not on our day-to-day work, but on working to help those loved ones to get better. We all know that time stands still when our loved ones face such a crisis, and nothing else in this world matters.

Speaker, this legislation, if passed, would give the province's working people time—time to care for their elderly parents, time to be with a hospitalized child, time to be with their spouse who has had a stroke or a heart attack. There is an obvious need for this legislation that is all too familiar to anyone who has faced the challenge of balancing work with family members who are struggling with major health problems.

We all know we have a growing aging population. We are going to have 43% more seniors a decade from now and twice as many seniors 20 years from now. We know that our seniors make enormous contributions to our society, but of course we also know that as people age, they need more care, and there are times involving serious medical conditions, like a broken hip or a stroke, when human need is absolutely critical. Our seniors naturally want to be at home as long as they can be, and it is the care by family members that helps ensure the ability to remain where they want to be: at home, where they are most comfortable and feel most secure; at home, where there's less expense for our health care system and less pressure on needed health services.

Our government—your government—through my colleague Minister Deb Matthews has launched a care

strategy to help seniors remain healthy and provide better care at home, where they desire to be at all times.

Our proposed family care leave recognizes the vital role family members play in our health care, but to provide that care and fulfill that role, working Ontarians need to know that their jobs are protected and will be there while they look after their loved ones. We also know that taking care of a loved one who is ill does not solely consist of accompanying them to MRIs or chemotherapy, but involves staying with them afterwards and helping them every step of the way. It is a job, my friends, that has no breaks.

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Here is what the Canadian Cancer Society vice-president, Rowena Pinto, had to say about this legislation in a March 6, 2013, news release: "Bill 21 is welcome news for those who need to take leave from work to care for a loved one with cancer. This legislation will allow families to concentrate on supporting their loved ones instead of worrying about losing their jobs." Ms. Pinto explained, "Cancer is more than a health issue. It is also a complex social issue. With approximately 22% of Canadians grappling with caregiving responsibilities for seriously ill family members, the physical, emotional, and financial burden on caregivers is a veritable strain on many families." This is why we introduced this important proposed piece of legislation.

We've received other supportive words of encouragement regarding this proposed legislation. Sue Vander-Bent, the executive director of the Ontario Home Care Association, has said, "Home care systems are dependent on the support of families and loved ones. For many, the caregiving responsibilities are intense, emotional and lengthy in duration and the demands can result in absence from work. The Leaves to Help Families will provide family caregivers with peace of mind related to their employment. The members of the Ontario Home Care Association are hopeful that all parties will move quickly to pass this legislation."

The executive vice-president of health care for the Service Employees International Union has said, "This legislation will provide urgently needed relief to overstretched families who are caring for a loved one while juggling responsibilities like work and raising children."

Mary Lewis, the executive director, mission, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, has said, "We are very pleased to support the Ontario government's proposed legislation, the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families), 2013, and congratulate the government on taking this important step to protect the job security of Ontarians caring for loved ones. The Heart and Stroke Foundation recognizes that the health and support of caregivers is a vital aspect in a person's recovery from heart disease and stroke. We look forward to working together to further support caregivers through our health and information programs, like Living with Heart Disease and Living with Stroke, in order to give Ontarians much-needed support when filling this role after a tragic event."

David Harvey, the chief public policy and program initiatives officer of the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, commented, "The Alzheimer Society of Ontario recognizes the commitment of the new government to improve the supports available to family caregivers. Families value being able to support their family members to live in the community. Families indeed are the front line of community care and it only makes sense for new 'enablers' so that people can integrate family and employment responsibilities."

Lisa Levin, chair of the Ontario Caregiver Coalition, said in supporting this bill, "The Ontario Caregiver Coalition, a collaborative that works to advance the interests of caregivers, is pleased that our decision-makers are recognizing the important contributions made by caregivers. Based on national data, it is estimated that caregiving contributes between \$24 billion and \$31 billion annually to maintain the health of Canadians. Caregivers need our support to continue their critical role. This is the beginning of a broader dialogue on economic and social supports to help those who take care of their loved ones."

We've introduced this bill so that people can take care of loved ones without fear of losing their employment. Our proposed legislation would provide reasonable protection for both employers and employees alike. If passed, and I'm confident it will be, this proposed legislation would be enforced by Ministry of Labour employment standards officers who could step in if employees' rights are denied. It is our way of saying to the people of this great province that we will help protect you as you protect your loved ones.

The same spirit of compassion that inspired this bill also led our government to introduce the family medical leave back in 2004. The current family medical leave legislation provides unpaid job-protected leave for employees when a family member is facing a terminal condition. Our proposed family caregiver leave would apply in cases of a serious medical condition, even where there is no significant risk of imminent death. Our proposed family caregiver leave would be in addition to the family medical leave. This means that if you are caring for a loved one under the proposed family caregiver leave and their condition becomes terminal, you would also be entitled to the family medical leave.

Our province also provides personal emergency leave. This leave may be taken for a personal illness, injury or medical emergency of an employee, or the death, illness, injury or medical emergency of, or matter concerning certain family members and relatives that are dependent on you for care and assistance.

Again, our bill, if passed, would help the most vulnerable among us to protect those they love who are struggling with major health issues. A working mom should not have to hesitate to take time away from a critically ill or injured child or her husband with a serious medical condition because she fears losing her income. A single parent, Madam Speaker, should not have to choose between their employment or being there with an elderly

father or mother who has just suffered a stroke or a broken hip.

There's another group, of course, to whom an unequal share of responsibility for caregiving has fallen, and that is the poor and the marginalized. No one would want a mother to worry about providing for her child who is critically ill or injured because she fears she would lose all or a significant part of that family's livelihood. An employee who is working part-time or on a temporary contract can also be among those who are among the most vulnerable and who may have the greatest fear of losing their job when they need to take time off when a family crisis occurs.

So our bill would make all employees who are covered by the Ontario Employment Standards Act eligible for this proposed job-protected family caregiver leave. Whether they are full-time, part-time or on a temporary contract, Ontario employees will be covered by the Employment Standards Act and would be eligible for these leaves. This is fair and just for all, for we know that one thing working Ontarians need most when it comes to caring for family members with major health issues is the time to be with a loved one.

This proposed legislation is part of our government's commitment to ensure that families across this great province have the support they need when they need it most. Madam Speaker, our proposed Leaves to Help Families act is a matter of compassion, and caring for those who provide care to their loved ones. It's just simply the right thing to do for all Ontario families. With our proposed legislation, we would be able to tell working Ontarians to take care of their loved ones and make it their top priority. This bill is the right thing to do for working people of this great province and for those that we all love.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise again today to comment on the Minister of Rural Affairs' remarks on the caregiver act that we are discussing this afternoon. I think we have all shared many stories from our areas of the hardships families do incur when they are caring for a loved one, as I said, whether with an acute or a chronic problem, until there is better care available.

We have all agreed, I think—all the speakers that have been up here have agreed—that there has to be attention paid to this. So we look forward to it going to the committee because, as I have said before, we just have to work out a few things: the federal government's participation in this, as well as the provincial regulations. And stakeholder consultation, I have noticed, is not that consistent on some things. I think more of that needs to be done. As I said before, it was brought in once. It was changed a bit to make it better when it was brought in the second time, and I think we can always improve on that.

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I know that certainly a relative of mine—at that point she was working in one of the financial institutions in the

riding and had to take a leave of absence. When your parents die, you have to be there. It's not something we can all plan out, and sometimes it's a slower process than the sudden death of an individual, and family members have to be there. We all, of course, tried to support as much as possible to give her a break, but she literally, for her own mental and physical state, had to take a leave of absence from work. You just cannot do both.

I think there's recognition from all parties that that's a situation that's occurring out there, the demographic of an aging population that we have. I'm pleased that we're at least addressing the issue in these steps.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again it's an honour to be able to stand in this House and comment on the review of this bill given by the Minister of Rural Affairs and the comments from the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes.

We're almost at the point where we want to move on. The Minister of Rural Affairs did a good job of explaining the need and explaining the reasoning that his government gave. On this side, we're trying to bring out the things that we think could be improved. He gave the example of a working mom and a sick child: She didn't have to worry about losing her income. Well, she does. She doesn't have to worry about losing her job, but she is going to lose her income. That's because the people who are most at risk, the people who have fairly high incomes and fairly secure jobs—most of them can work this out by themselves with their employer. The people who could benefit from this bill are the people who have—some employers aren't so great out there. Those are the people who are going to need this bill, and those are the people who can't afford the eight weeks. The minister made mention of family medical leave, but it's not the same because under family medical leave you get money under EI, and that's a whole different ball of wax because then you're not losing your income. I think we have to work really hard to try and make this bill coordinate with the feds, and maybe with provincial money, so that the people who are most at risk can actually benefit from this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: First, I just want to give a brief overview of what this bill provides. It's a bill that provides job protection for families who have to care for a loved one, and it provides eight weeks of unpaid leave with job protection. Also, if someone has to look after a critically ill child: For that, this bill would provide 37 weeks of unpaid job-protected leave from their employer. Also, in the case of a missing child, where there is a probability of the fact that crime is involved: In that situation, the employer would have to give 52 weeks of job-protected leave. The other thing that we've added since this bill was introduced was for a deceased child with the probability that the child is deceased due to crime; for that, the employee would be entitled to up to 104 weeks of job-protected leave.

This past summer, this issue hit close to home for me when my daughter became ill. I was fortunate enough that I was at an event with the member from Mississauga–Streetsville and a couple of other municipal colleagues that I was able to ask to leave and was granted sort of permission to go look after my daughter. It was only then when I realized how fortunate I am that I was able to reshuffle and reschedule my events to go and look after my daughter.

It is with bringing legislation such as this that we can help other Ontarians who may be going through that very critical stage in their life. So I'm hopeful that we will be able to go to committee and go forward with this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to get up and join the debate. I will have an opportunity to speak for about 20 minutes on this bill in just a few moments, but I'll just provide some comments on the comments by the Minister of Rural Affairs, who did a very good job, I must say, explaining why this type of legislation is necessary. Compassion was there in his voice—we heard that—and compassion is at the root of this bill from the government. But wouldn't it be great if this government were able to actually provide something—as the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane pointed out—to these people who are in need?

There are many who can afford to have a caregiver come to their home and look after their loved ones, but there are many who cannot, and they are going to lose their income; it's a simple fact. Wouldn't it be great if we were in a province that actually had its act together financially and was able to actually supply some support to these people so that they could stay in their jobs and create some wealth and income of their own? But we don't live in that province. This province is broke, and we're running deficits around \$10 billion, or even higher, every year, because this government can't get its act together.

If they really wanted to be a compassionate government, they would look at the bills that are going to get our economy going again. We in the PC caucus have put forward all kinds of ideas on how this government can actually kick-start the economy in Ontario. If we get growth going in the province of Ontario, then we can afford to look after these people and we can be a compassionate province. These guys are waiting for the feds to do it. They haven't taken the bull by the horns and done it on their own. I'm going to talk about this a little bit later on, but I do appreciate the comments from the Minister of Rural Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The minister has two minutes to respond.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank my colleagues across the aisle, the members from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and Timiskaming–Cochrane; Brampton West, particularly, sharing the personal details about his daughter who became ill; and, of course, my good friend, and formerly a wonderful radio announcer, from Prince Edward–Hastings—their thoughtful comments today.

I was a little remiss when I started my remarks today. I should have congratulated all of the new members who arrived in this House just recently: the members from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Windsor–Tecumseh, London West, Ottawa South and Scarborough–Guildwood. I want to personally welcome them here. We know that they will all be making contributions to this House, in their own very unique ways, over the next months and, of course, years to come as this government moves forward.

Frankly, on Bill 21, I'm hearing a consensus on all sides. I was speaking at an event this past week or so in Peterborough, and I said, "You know, when it comes to minority government, we're all the government, on all sides, in a minority government situation." I think this is a good example of all of us being a part of the government here today, with Bill 21.

I listened intently to the fine remarks from the official opposition and, indeed, the third party; there is common ground here. We need to get Bill 21 to committee in a quick fashion, after we've had the appropriate amount of debate and scrutiny on Bill 21—an opportunity to hear from the good folks across the province of Ontario. They will inevitably come forward and make presentations which will lead to suggested amendments to improve and strengthen this bill. But this is an important bill. Ontarians want this bill, and together we can move this bill forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Todd Smith: Like my good friend and colleague from Peterborough, the Minister of Rural Affairs, I would like to congratulate the new members of the Legislature as well. I haven't had the opportunity to do that. Of course, I have with Mr. Holyday from Etobicoke–Lakeshore—but also the members from Windsor–Tecumseh and Scarborough–Guildwood and Ottawa South: Welcome to the Legislature. We all are very fortunate and I think humbled and honoured to be members of this Legislature and have the ability to stand here in this House on a daily basis, now that we're back at it in the dog days of summer, to debate bills like Bill 21 and the various bills that we have encountered in the first few days of the Legislature resuming after the summer break.

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Let me say that really not much has changed since we left in June. We have the same slate of bills before us as we had when we left, and there's nothing here that's actually going to turn the province around. Sure, there are some compassionate bills before us that might actually improve the lives of some members of Ontario, but what we really need is something that's going to change the direction of the province and turn it around, as I was alluding to earlier, so that we can actually provide the social programs that we have come to expect here in Ontario. Those social programs are in a lot of trouble, and we have experienced it over the summer. We have seen the cuts to physiotherapy that were announced to our seniors and then pulled back on because they were

losing that public relations war. These are the kinds of things that we've been seeing over the last 10 years under the Liberal government. We can't afford to provide the programs that people expect here in Ontario because the Liberal government can't get their finances in order. They can't get their act together, and they're not proposing any new bills that are going to do that, to get us back on the right track financially. As I say, we have put forward all kinds of ideas for this government, starting with that public sector wage freeze that we've been talking about since the day I arrived here in November 2011. We haven't seen the government act on that.

We need to take a pause, and we need to slow down our spending. We've said many, many times that this government doesn't have a revenue problem; they have a spending problem. We're bringing in more revenue and more taxes than we ever have here in Ontario—

Interjection.

Mr. Todd Smith: And the Attorney General knows that, because it's right there in black and white. If you look at the budget, we're raking in tax dollars like we've never seen before and revenue that we've never seen before, but we have a structural spending problem, and that's putting these types of social programs that we would love to provide to our residents in Ontario in jeopardy.

Now, let me get to the bill. Bill 21 is the Employment Standards Amendment Act, which is the leaves to help families, and I understand that the aim of this bill is a good one. Right? We do want to provide some opportunity for family members who have an ill or deceased child or family member the ability to stay at home and provide the care that they need—great intention, Madam Speaker, and we do support this bill.

As many of my colleagues have said before me here this afternoon, for the year now that we've been debating a bill to this end, this bill actually is an improvement on the version that this government brought forward in the last session. It's an improvement that wouldn't have been possible, though, without some of the comments that came from both the official opposition and members of the third party, the NDP, as well. The member from Timiskaming-Cochrane has already spoken this afternoon and talked about some of the ways that this bill should be improved, and the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton has done the same. There are all kinds of reasons and good ideas that are coming from the opposition, and that's why we debate these bills in the Legislature. We were kind of lectured yesterday, as a matter of fact, on the fact that we were debating bills, but that's our job. That's what we do here in the Legislature, and that's how we make positive changes to the legislation going forward. Sure, we want to get it to committee and we can make some changes there, but we all spend time listening to our constituents in our ridings.

I can tell you that over the summer, in Prince Edward-Hastings, at my Belleville constituency office on Millennium Parkway, where I have the greatest constituency staff in Ontario, we heard from all kinds of people, and

not just seniors. We heard from family members who are dealing with cancer. Cancer strikes at such a young age now. We have children who are dealing with cancer, and I know the Minister of Rural Affairs, when he was speaking, talked about the endorsement that the government has received on Bill 21 from the Canadian Cancer Society, and I understand why they would, because it makes a lot of sense. We have so many people in our province, in our country and in the world in general who are dealing with cancer that there need to be supports in place, and this is one. However, a lot of the burden is being placed on the federal government to provide the services. There's nothing really here that the Ontario government is providing, except ensuring that those who want to take this caregiver leave will have their job after they do so.

But there are so many stories, and we've all heard them in our ridings. I've got a lovely young lady from Tweed who has contacted my office and my MP's office. Her name is Kristy Thrasher-Emigh. Her story has been well publicized over the summer months in the Quinte region. She took time off. She was pregnant and had a baby. Shortly after returning to work she was diagnosed with breast cancer, and she can't get any kind of support right now because she took her EI. And because she didn't work long enough after coming back from her maternity leave, she can't acquire any kind of support. Honestly, if this province had its act together, then this province would be able to do something for her. Honestly, I feel for her, and I hope that our federal counterparts really do come to the aid of this young lady, because it doesn't seem right that someone has paid into the EI system for 17 years, I believe it is, has had a job throughout that entire time—and then when they actually need to get the benefits, they can't access the benefits and the supports that are in place, for what I believe is this kind of a situation for Ms. Thrasher-Emigh up in Tweed in my riding.

But there are so many stories, and I know we all get them. Family members are taking time off, and as has been alluded to many times here today, those family members who are taking time off aren't getting any support. They're able to take the time off and look after their family member, which is fantastic, but they're not getting any financial support.

What we've seen over the summer, as well, is just the erosion of the health services that we have experienced and that we have come to expect. I think another one that's occurred—I talked about the physio and the cutbacks in physio, but we've also seen the diabetic strips. What we have seen is a government that doesn't have its act together is now nickel-and-diming to try and stay afloat and to try and do the best they can to provide some kind of service. What they're doing is, they're not paying for these diabetic strips. I get dozens and dozens of calls from residents in my riding who are on fixed incomes. Many of them are seniors or they're on some kind of social support program, and they are not going to have these diabetic strips, which they need. It's going to

end up costing them \$1,000 this year that they don't have because the government doesn't have its act together.

Just a few weeks ago, the CCAC in my area—and I feel for the CCAC and some of these organizations that are trying to provide service because they're getting word from the local health integration network, "Look, you guys have to do something to balance your budgets and keep your finances in order here." Meanwhile, the province can't do it, but they're being forced to. The CCAC had put out a notice to my office that they were going to actually be reducing services to seniors in my area who didn't require daily services. Now, they didn't do that. The CCAC didn't do that. They sent a memo just last week saying that they've decided maybe that's not the best course of action to try and balance their budget, but that's what they were faced with.

The whole notion that this government is going to be able to provide home care in the community is just a pipe dream right now. Our CCACs are not prepared to do it. The LHINs are not prepared for this. I'm not exactly sure what the local health integration networks have been doing for the last seven years, but I can tell you that in my riding, in Prince Edward county—and the Minister of Rural Affairs put the stat on the table. There's going to be a 43% increase in seniors in Ontario in 10 years—a 43% increase. Somebody has to provide care to these seniors who are going to need it.

1710

The government says they're going to provide the care in the home. In my riding, in Prince Edward county, we're seeing services being removed from Prince Edward County Memorial Hospital. That's a hospital that was built by the people of Picton, the people of Prince Edward county. Quinte Health Care is removing services continuously from that hospital. The Prince Edward County Memorial Hospital Foundation is worried that before long there's not going to be a hospital in their community. They've had no reassurances from the LHIN on what kind of services are going to remain at Prince Edward County Memorial Hospital, but were led to believe by this government, "Don't worry about it. The services are going to be there so that people in Prince Edward county can get the care in their home."

The CCAC isn't equipped to do that. The LHINs have had seven years to prepare for this and they haven't laid out any kind of vision as to what health care is going to look like in Prince Edward county in the next year, let alone the next 10 years. So the LHINs have been a failure—there's no question about it—and they are the ones that are doling out the money to organizations like the CCAC and telling them that they have to come back with a balanced budget and provide the services to those who need them. But as we say, there's no way that with a 43% increase in seniors a decade from now—when they can't even provide the services to those in the community now and we're going to have this kind of an explosion in our senior population, some changes are going to have to be made.

Long-term-care beds: It was mentioned earlier in the debate that we haven't seen long-term-care beds built in

the province in quite some time. There is a huge backlog in Hastings county, in my community, to get into a long-term-care facility. I was at a beautiful community carnival just last week up at Moira Place, which is an absolutely beautiful long-term-care facility in Tweed. They had the community carnival there, and it was a great family atmosphere; a lot of people and children were there visiting with the residents of that home. The staff were playing games and there was a pie contest and it was just a great event. But we need more Moira Places. We need more long-term-care facilities. People can't get into an LTC bed because the government hasn't made any investments in those areas. It's great if we can provide the service in our homes, but that's not happening in our communities today.

So back to the legislation for a moment. As I mentioned earlier, it's an improvement on the similar legislation that was introduced in the last session in that it eliminates some inconsistencies between the Canada Labour Code and the Ontario Employment Standards Act.

Family medical leave is already available to Ontarians for up to 26 weeks. In order to qualify for it, though, a health practitioner has to sign a certificate stating that the individual needing care is at significant risk of death within 26 weeks.

The bill also creates critically ill child care leave of 37 weeks in Ontario, and this leave will largely be paid for by the federal government, which created benefits for critically ill child care leave in June 2013.

It also creates crime-related child death or disappearance leave of up to 104 weeks in Ontario. In January, the federal government began to issue benefits for this kind of leave that would last for 37 weeks. In addition, the bill creates a leave of 52 weeks if it's suspected but not confirmed that the child's death or disappearance is caused by crime.

By closing the inconsistencies between what leaves are covered by federal benefits and what leaves are available in Ontario, the government has drafted a piece of legislation that's more than just an errant piece of paper, unlike its counterpart from the previous session that we were debating back in the spring and over the winter months of last year.

I covered many stories as the news director at Quinte Broadcasting back in the Quinte region, crime-related deaths and the disappearances of children, and they are heartbreaking for a community and devastating for a family. So it's only fair that the government bring forward this kind of legislation that will at least allow family members to take time off and make sure that their jobs are there for them if this type of tragic and heinous situation should arrive and affect their lives. I can tell you, having met with many families and covered the stories, similar occurrences like this, that this is a compassionate bill in that way, in that it provides that kind of service to a family so that they can at least be at home with their family members and grieve in some cases and provide care in others. So we are going to support this bill going forward.

As I mentioned, some of the issues that we had discussed previously have been altered in this latest Bill 21, the employment standards amendment, but there are still some improvements that could be made. My colleague from Durham actually outlined one of the issues with this bill earlier, and as the small business critic for the official opposition, I can tell you that there is an impact on small businesses with the way that this bill stands right now. We do need to consult with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and we do need to consult with stakeholders who would be adversely affected by it, and hear from them and get their input on how we can make improvements to this bill, so that it doesn't end up costing small businesses in the long run.

I can tell you that when I speak to small businesses now, they're hanging on by a thread, many of them. Sure, there are some successful businesses in Ontario, obviously, but many small businesses are hanging on by a thread, and the reason that they're hanging on by a thread is that they've been hit with incredibly high electricity bills. The electricity bills just continue to rise, and we know, because the Minister of Finance has told us himself, that those increases are going to continue because of the Green Energy Act and the global adjustment. It's going to become even tougher for our small business people, so there are some concerns when it comes to rising energy costs for our small businesses.

There are concerns, of course, to a certain point, about this type of legislation as well when you're talking about a small, family-run business, but there are so many things that need to be addressed in Ontario right now that aren't being addressed by the current government. Our party continues to bring forward private members' bills that are going to turn the province around financially, so that we can ensure that we have these types of public programs—social nets and social programs—that we can depend on, while we're getting all of these feel-good bills from the current government.

There's nothing wrong with this bill. There are a few things that need to be fixed up, but providing an opportunity for families to care for their loved ones when they're ill makes sense. We want to do that, but there are other bills we're talking about as well—the Ontario wireless bill that we were debating earlier today, Bill 60; sure, we can look at that, but is it a priority right now for Ontarians? I think not, and I can tell you, having spread out across the province over the summer months—from Sudbury in the north down into the Hamilton area, and also in Scarborough for much of the summer, and up in Ottawa—I talked to a lot of people and a lot of businesspeople as well. Did this issue ever come up when I was talking to them? No, it didn't. Did the cellphone bill come up? No. It's not a priority for the people of Ontario right now. Did the Local Food Act come up? Maybe when I was talking to some farmers, it came up, but in general? No, and when I was going door to door, it didn't come up.

What people are talking about right now is the affordability—or the lack of affordability—of the cost of

living in this province right now, and the fact that the government is doing nothing to try and keep those increases in the cost of living in check. The biggest one is the electricity bills, and we're doing absolutely nothing on the government side of the House to address those situations. Our party has brought forward many bills—probably about five of them since I've been here—to address the rising cost of electricity, which seems to be the biggest issue on the minds of people across Ontario right now; whether they're business owners or homeowners, they simply can't afford to live in their homes, let alone take time off of their job to look after a loved one.

These are the kinds of things that I believe we should be looking at, and these are the things that should be priorities: making sure that we get our economy started again, because if we don't get our economy going and increase growth from 1.5% or wherever it's at right now, we're not going to be able to provide any kind of health care program, let alone being able to provide home care services and these types of social programs that we've come to expect here in Ontario.

With 20 seconds or so left, I look forward to hearing from my colleagues here in the Legislature more about Bill 21, the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families), but we will be, of course, supporting this bill, and we look forward to making some amendments to it when it actually does get to committee.

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

1720

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I am pleased to rise today and comment on some of the remarks that were made by the member from Prince Edward–Hastings. I appreciate the breadth of subject matter that he has provided us with today—some of them about the bill; some of them about other things.

I guess one of the things I wanted to talk about before I get to the bill is, if you listen to the Progressive Conservatives these days—the latest iteration of the Progressive Conservatives—they sound like they are really caring about the downtrodden Ontarians across this province, but if we remember, it was that government that downloaded a number of services, and this is really what is plaguing a lot of people, especially in my area. In my area of the province, people are struggling with out-of-control property taxes, and that's because of all the services that were downloaded onto the municipality, like roads, bridges, infrastructure, all that kind of stuff, as well as the local district services boards, whether it's Ontario Works—the whole nine. So those are the big issues, and I'm encouraging people who are at home and who are watching this just to keep that in mind when they're listening to some of the comments that are made.

Getting back to this bill, regardless of the deficiencies that are in the bill, I just wanted to say that I think that it's important—and I don't know if enough of us have been saying that so far—to protect workers who, for whatever reason, may find themselves in a very tight

bind because they might have a loved one or somebody who is close to them who is very ill, and they may need to take some time off work. That said, though, I do have some questions about how it is going to be implemented. What's the definition of "serious"? How is this going to be policed? Who is going to police this? Do we have the resources in the province of Ontario to actually make sure that the good intentions of this bill are actually implemented?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'm very happy to speak again on this bill. The member from Prince Edward–Hastings seems to think that this bill would have negative consequences on business. I happen to disagree with him, because having an employee at a workplace who's stressed out about a family member or a loved one who is sick at home will only diminish the loyalty and the productivity in that business. As an employer, as an MPP—all of us employ people in our offices—I always try to keep an open dialogue with my staff about their personal lives, and if they need to have time off because of a personal situation, I encourage them that, "I want you guys to be happy," especially in our constituency offices, where things are often fast-paced and can be quite stressful.

As a matter of fact, in relation to the business aspect, the HRPAs did a survey of its members, and 96% of their members supported this bill and thought this was the right direction to go. In terms of other jurisdictions, Manitoba has done this. Yukon, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland and Labrador are on their way to making protected job leave a law in their provinces. As well, we've received endorsements from the MS Society, the Parkinson Society, the Alzheimer Society, the Canadian Cancer Society and the caregiver coalition.

Simply, this bill is about compassion. It's the right thing to do, and we want to ensure that working Ontarians have peace of mind.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to rise to add some comments to this bill as well. I support what my friend from Prince Edward–Hastings has said. Bill 21, I guess, is the reworking of Bill 30. As I'm sure everyone who's aware knows, this was introduced, I believe, back in December 2011, when then-Premier McGuinty was the Premier, Dwight Duncan was the finance minister—

Interjection.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: —and yes, my colleague from Huron–Bruce recalls this bill being introduced before the House was prorogued. We all remember that.

But I remember this bill because it was one of the first bills that we debated after the election—I think somewhere thereabouts in that time frame. I enjoyed the opportunity to speak to Bill 30 at that point and outlined a number of concerns that our caucus had with this legislation, including the fact that the bill was tabled without any proper consultation. There was no consulta-

tion with stakeholders or with the small business community in particular.

As the member from Prince Edward–Hastings pointed out correctly, the fact is that we have major challenges in the province of Ontario now. This bill, which we are supporting, is important to many people, but there are major challenges that we have to address with the sitting of this Legislature this fall. I would encourage the government to really tackle the deficit and the jobs crisis that we have here in Ontario. The tanning bed legislation and this legislation obviously serve an important part of this sitting, but we need to tackle the major issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: One of the interesting things about being in this Legislature is that there are some rare times when it sounds like we can work together. We should take those moments when we sound like we're working together and cherish those because that's something—I think we're setting an example of what we can do to really advance some meaningful legislation in this province.

The only thing is that while this legislation is certainly something that is helpful and it does bridge a gap that's missing, it is still just a narrow slice of a much bigger problem that we're facing, particularly when it comes to folks who are trapped in poverty. My colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane talked about this: that many of the people who might really want to take advantage of the opportunity to leave their employment and take care of loved ones simply couldn't afford to take such a long time away from work because, in caring for one member of their family, they might fall back on providing for their family broadly in being able to pay the bills.

Again, with the health care issues that we're facing in this province, we need to look at different models of delivering health care. This was mentioned actually by a colleague from the Conservative Party. There are other models of delivery of health care that are efficient, that are more cost-effective and provide better care. One of those models—we talk about people who are critically ill—to prevent that from happening in the first place, health promotion could be a very important area where we need to put more investment, and community health centres, centres where we can provide personalized care in a cost-effective manner, with that element of health promotion so that we can prevent illness before it happens. But there will always be sad times when people are critically ill and injured without any prevention that could have helped them, and in those cases we need to ensure that we provide more protection for those folks.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Prince Edward–Hastings has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you to the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton; also my friend from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex; the member from Kenora–Rainy River, who is absolutely correct—I did tend to wander a little bit off the subject matter—and I thank the Speaker for

the leeway and the leniency on the transient nature in which I brought forward my remarks here this afternoon. Also the member from Brampton West, who touched on some of the small business concerns—and while there are some concerns for small business, I don't want to give the member for Brampton West on the government side any kind of indication that this is a big issue on the radar for small business operators and owners in Ontario, because it certainly isn't. I think I made it quite clear that the big issues that small business owners are facing have to do with the rising cost of electricity, and it's not just small business owners but residential homeowners as well, especially those who are on fixed incomes or young families. Or overregulation. Those are the issues that are facing small business owners. We are the most overregulated, and we are dealing with the most red tape, of any jurisdiction in North America. Those are the big issues when it comes to small business.

Back to Bill 21 just for a moment—and I appreciate the remarks from my colleagues in the Legislature here this afternoon. By consistently pointing out, as we did back when it was Bill 30 in the previous session of the Legislature—we brought forward a lot of ideas and a lot of examples of where this legislation actually failed, and there was the incentive on the part of the government to actually introduce a better bill. I congratulate them on doing that, because Bill 21 is actually a better bill than Bill 30 was. What we're talking about here is discussing these types of bills in the Legislature, and then we'll do the same when we actually get to committee.

1730

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

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you very much for your comments, Madam Speaker, but we would like the debate to continue because we think it's very, very important.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further debate.

Mr. John Vanthof: It is truly an honour to once again be able to stand up and speak on behalf of the people of Timiskaming–Cochrane. I'm not sure I fully agree with the Attorney General that we all really want to further debate this, because I think—

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well, then, sit down.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, I think there are points that have to be made. But we've all debated this bill—most of us—as Bill 30, and then the government was prorogued. Now it's being brought back, with some improvements, as Bill 21. But if you really think about it, if the government hadn't been prorogued, we could have moved this issue much quicker.

Hon. John Gerretsen: That's ancient history.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, it's fact. I'm not trying to be political about this, but for those people who are saying, "We have to push this much faster," we would have. In this corner of the House, we would have. We didn't have the opportunity.

This is an important bill, and what makes this bill important is—I'll just say, for the folks at home and for the folks in Timiskaming–Cochrane who have been wondering, listening to this sometimes this afternoon, it has strayed off course a few times. Speaker, be forewarned: I might do so myself a few times, but I'll try to stay on the subject.

This bill provides an unpaid job-protected leave of absence to provide care or support to certain family members who have a serious medical condition but are not at risk of death. That's pretty bland, but it's actually a very important bill. One of the most important things about bills like this is they affect and impact people. It impacts people directly. Sometimes we talk about creating laws that have a long-term, very high-level impact on somebody, but this one, if you have a sick family member—an elderly person in your family, your mom, your pop or your sick child—allows you to take unpaid leave to take care of your family. Basically, that's a good thing. I think we've all, on all sides of the House, in our own ways, said that that's a good thing.

But there are shortcomings with this bill. I think one of the biggest shortcomings is under the ESA—you're protected by the Employment Standards Act, but the people who really need the protection probably don't even know that the act exists. That's the problem, Speaker, because for a lot of people—you know what? The majority of employers are good, the majority of employees are good, and they try to work together. This has happened when I was an employer. We didn't work through the Employment Standards Act; we just worked it out. I pride myself—hopefully, I was a pretty good employer when I ran my dairy farm.

What this act is aimed for is people who—laws are always for the bad apples. You don't need to make a new law for the people who are going to do things the right way anyway. You need the law for the people who are the bad apples. The member from London–Fanshawe brought up a really good point earlier today, and I didn't hear anybody else bring it up. We're creating a new law under the Employment Standards Act—great—but at the same time we're slashing the number of people who enforce this act.

Interjection: So?

Mr. John Vanthof: So we create a new law on paper, but in reality we're not protecting the people. Because the people who really need it, who need those inspectors—if you're cutting inspectors at the same time, the act, to the people who really need the protection, doesn't mean that much. That's something we have to spend some time thinking about: It's one thing to create the law, but how is the law actually going to be enforced?

Hon. John Gerretsen: You've got the wrong talking points. That's on the other bill.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, no—no talking points at all.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: You have no talking points.

Mr. John Vanthof: I pride myself on not using too many talking points.

The member from London–Fanshawe brought it up, and it's a really good point: Create a law, fine, but what is the mechanism to make sure that people are going to be protected by that law? By saying we're making the Employment Standards Act stronger but at the same time saying—or not saying, but actually cutting the number of inspectors, that's a problem, a big problem.

Another big problem—regardless of whether it's the federal government or the provincial government, a lot of people—and we're fortunate. I'm sure most of us, probably all of us in this House are that fortunate that we could afford to take advantage of this act. And our staff could afford to take advantage of this. But there are a lot of people in this province, in the lower income brackets, that can't afford to take off these weeks of leave. It's just that the money is not there. Their job should be guaranteed, provided they understand how the act works, provided there is an inspector, but they can't afford to take the leave. This act does not touch that at all. And that's something—do we support it, do I support it? Yes. It's a step forward—a small step, a very small step. But that's a big problem. The people who can afford to take—and I'm going to repeat a few times, because it's one of the most crucial—because the people who can afford it don't need the act, really. It's the people who can't afford it. Because usually it's the people in the lower-income jobs who have the most problems with their employers, and those are the people who need the Employment Standards Act and those are the people who don't understand the act, and those are the people who are, quite frankly, so worried about their income and so worried about keeping their jobs that they would be afraid to challenge it in the first place. And these aren't talking points, these are very serious issues.

I'm glad this act is coming back. Is this act going to fix the problems that ail Ontario right now? No. But provided we make some good changes to it, this act might make some very big changes in people's lives. A lot of people have talked about it today, and I'm sure every family has had the experience when you get the call and your whole life changes because someone who was previously healthy is no longer. Your whole life changes. Everyone has had that call, you know. But can you imagine when you get that call and you've got a minimum wage job and it's there but you can't afford it. That, that, my friends, is incredibly tough.

I'm pretty happy I haven't strayed off the act at all, but I'm going to at the very end, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Todd Smith: Warning, warning, warning.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, warning, warning, warning.

The people in northern Ontario weren't that happy with the Common Sense Revolution when all the roads were downloaded to the municipalities to save the province money. So the quick solutions, like in Iroquois

Falls—Iroquois Falls has the most miles of roads per person in the province.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Really? There's a statistic.

Mr. John Vanthof: It is a statistic, but it's more than a statistic if you're the people of Iroquois Falls and you can't afford to fix your own roads anymore.

1740

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, there are lots of cars that go on the road. But the people of Iroquois Falls also have to worry about health care and also have to worry about caring for their families—and with very high taxes. Those are some of the reasons why they might not be able to afford to take advantage of this. So we really have to make sure to do our best so that the people who truly need it, the lower-income brackets who truly need it, have access—true access, not just access on paper, but true access—to pieces of legislation like this.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I always enjoy listening to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane. He speaks very passionately about the problems of the north and the problems of the people in his particular area.

But you know, the real dilemma we have is this on this particular bill. On the one hand, we get the Conservative Party saying, “Well, we kind of support the bill, but we are being unfair to employers; not that it's costing them any money, but if this family leave act were to go into operation, then in certain circumstances they may have to hire someone else to do the job of the person who's taking the unpaid leave.” And on the other hand, we have the NDP basically saying, “Well, how could somebody take unpaid leave without getting some compensation for it because, obviously, it's costing that individual, if they are not getting any money in while they're having the unpaid leave?”

What I think we should recognize in this bill is that it's all about one principle, and that is, if there is a family situation that requires you to be with that family member at home, because of a sick child, because of a sick parent, you can take that leave for a certain period of time, depending upon what the circumstances are, anywhere from eight weeks to 30 weeks. You can take that leave, and your job is still protected. That's what this bill is all about.

It is not about compensating that individual for doing so; there may be other programs in place for that. And it's not about taking money away from the employer, because the employer doesn't have to pay the individual when they take their unpaid leave.

We've talked about this bill now for over seven hours, Speaker. Everybody kind of agrees with it. Let's get it to committee as soon as possible, and let's just get on with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's a pleasure to rise today to reflect on the comments that were shared and pointed out by our member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

This bill is very interesting, the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families), when the biggest thing we can do to help families in Ontario today is making sure life is affordable. The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane's colleague from Kenora–Rainy River read in a lot of petitions today with concerns over the cost of energy, and we have to focus in on that.

We support this bill. We need to be doing right by our families in Ontario. They are being nickel-and-dimed to death with regard to the cost of living. Never before have there been more seniors in stress, and the stress I'm talking about is economic stress. They're finding it very, very difficult to make ends meet. They have a fixed income, and their bills just keep going through the roof because of this failed Liberal government's attempt to try and spend their way out to secure more votes so they can stay in power and cover things up. But, with that said—

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: With that said, we need to have a focus on Bill 21, and Bill 21 has to enable people to have the flexibility to care for their families at home.

You know, in rural Ontario, people have to leave their homes and leave their communities to find jobs. Guess what is happening as a result? Their families, their loved ones, their parents and their grandparents are being left to their own devices because, as I said, people in rural Ontario are leaving their communities to find jobs. Not only are they leaving their communities, they're having to leave Ontario because this government has run this province right into the ground, and we have to do right by our families.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: We've had a lot of discussion on the benefits of this bill. We've also had a lot of discussion on some of the shortcomings in the areas that we need to work on. One of the areas that I think we also should focus on, when we look at this—we're talking about not looking at things in isolation and looking at things in the broader picture; the solutions have to come from a broader picture. In this area, some of my colleagues in this House have spoken about it, but we can look to some collaborations with our federal counterparts to ensure that there is a national strategy on this as well. While we have old age security for folks who are older and they can be supported in that way, in the same manner, if we have a national strategy where we work in coordination, provincially and federally, to provide protection and support for those who do take the choice to care for loved ones, care for those who are critically ill—I was in Sweden recently, and Sweden has a very dynamic approach to this issue. In Sweden, members of the community, if they choose, can have a loved one care for someone in their family. An example that was given to me was, an individual I met said that his job was to care for a baby, and the baby was the daughter of his sister. So he's caring for his niece, providing care for her in a loving environment, from a loved one that the mother can trust, and that is something that's compensated by the state. So it's a way of delivering care

in a direct fashion without having the infrastructure of a daycare centre; a direct fashion of providing that care in a circumstance where the best care is care in the home. That's a very creative solution, a very creative strategy that creates jobs, but more importantly provides a meaningful way of providing support in the home. So that's a creative solution in Sweden. We could look to implementing something like that perhaps nationally, and provincially in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 21. I did listen to the comments of the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane. I think, for the most part, they were very well balanced and very well thought out. I think that this really speaks to a common value we have around this House. I think most people have said in their remarks that they support the bill, that they would like to see the bill move forward. There are all sorts of other comments that are added on after that, but I think they are superfluous to what we're really talking about today, and that is something that is really practical in a person's life. I think it's something that we can see in our own families. We can see the potential in it when this is happening to our constituents, when a tragedy strikes within the family, and all of a sudden things change. Obviously, at that point in time, when you start to pay attention to either somebody in your own family that needs your care full-time—you start to think about things like, "Do I have the security of income during that period of time?" What this does, in many ways, I think, with changes now that have taken place at the federal level—long-overdue changes—is bring the Employment Standards Amendment Act in Ontario into the same phase, into the same sphere as the changes that have been made for the federal leave so that Ontarians will be able to avail themselves of the benefits that are provided at the federal level.

The member spoke about, "What's the sense of making changes if you can't enforce them?" I think most people around the House would agree with that. We've just received, certainly in the province of Ontario, an annual funding increase of about \$3 million a year to hire more inspectors to actually enforce the Employment Standards Act. So the type of enforcement that the member was asking for is coming through in this year's budget. It's something that, when we approved the budget last spring, was included in there, so that should help, I think, in some regard.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank the Attorney General, the member from Huron–Bruce, my colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton and the member from Oakville.

I think we're at the point where most of us agree we should move forward with this—and I'm not going to get into playing with numbers games about how we cut last year out of this year.

I would like to—

Interjection.

1750

Mr. John Vanthof: I would like to comment specifically on the Attorney General because he's one of my favourite—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Hecklers.

Mr. John Vanthof: Hecklers? Of course. But he's a fellow Dutchman, and it's hard to hold it against a Dutchman.

The member from Huron–Bruce always focuses on rural issues. The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton always has a personal touch. I would like to look at the numbers with the member from Oakville, but at the end of the day, it's our hope that this doesn't become a political “Look what we did” as opposed to how we could help people, because at the end of the day, the people in this corner of the House want to deliver results, real results for people—not just press conferences, not just announcements. We want real results. I think we've set the standard pretty high, and on this one and a lot of other bills, people want less politics. They want to be represented and they want things like the Financial Accountability Office, lower car insurance, the five-day home care guarantee, and they want to make sure that that money doesn't get sucked out from somewhere else. Those are the things that are important to people, and those are the things that this Legislature has to work on to get done.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Hon. David Zimmer: It's my pleasure to join in the debate, and I'm glad that all parties seem to be in agreement that this legislation should move through.

We have heard a lot of technical discussion, we've heard a lot of discussion about what the act says and what section so-and-so says, and what other sections say. But I thought, Madam Speaker, it may be useful for the viewing audience if I were to actually walk through a couple of scenarios about what this legislation—how it would actually play out in real, living circumstances. So I'm going to walk you through three scenarios.

Scenario number one: This is how the legislation would actually play out in the real world, in the real world of family life. Here's the scenario: An employee who works for an employer that regularly employs 50 or more employees takes up to 10 personal emergency leave days to deal with a medical emergency of a child under the age of 18. As a result of the medical emergency, the child is diagnosed with a serious medical condition, making the employee eligible to take up to eight weeks of the proposed family caregiver leave.

What happens next? Well, at the end of the eight-week period, the child in our scenario receives a diagnosis of being critically ill, entitling the employee to take up to 37 weeks of the proposed critically ill child care leave. After 37 weeks, the child receives a diagnosis of having a serious medical condition with a significant risk of death within 26 weeks, entitling the employee to take up to eight weeks of family medical leave. So in this scenario, when you track that scenario through, the employee in

this situation would be entitled to a leave of a total of 55 weeks. That's the progression.

Let me walk you through another example, because I think these examples help the public to actually understand how the legislation plays out, as I said, in the real world. So we take that same employee that I mentioned in my first scenario. That employee, wishing to take leave to care for a relative, other than a child, in a similar situation as in scenario 1, could take up to 10 personal emergency leave days, up to eight weeks of proposed family caregiver leave and up to eight weeks of family medical leave. So in this scenario, the employee could be on leave for a total of 18 weeks. That's how it actually plays out in the real world.

I'll give you one more scenario. I'll refer to this as scenario three. The same employee that I just referenced in my earlier example, wishing to take leave to cope with the crime-related death or disappearance of his or her child under the age of 18, could take up to 10 personal emergency leave days, followed by the proposed crime-related child death or disappearance leave—that's up to 52 weeks in the case of a disappearance or up to 104 weeks in the case of a death. In the case of a crime-related child disappearance, this employee could be on leave for a total of 54 weeks. In the case of a crime-related child death, the employee could be on leave for a total of 106 weeks. So that's how the legislation actually plays out in real-life circumstances.

Madam Speaker, this legislation is about compassion for the pain and the suffering that families go through in these tragic circumstances. I referenced the three examples that I've just given. I think we all agree in this chamber that, in the examples that I've just given, the heart cries out to provide that kind of relief for the family. In short, it's the right thing to do.

I suppose, at another level, when a family is in crisis as a result of these situations, particularly the three examples that I've referenced, really, I think what we all want to do as legislators, what we all want to do as citizens, what we all want to do as human beings, is to ensure that those families, when they're working through that crisis, when they're dealing with the grief and the shock and the pain—that we do whatever we can to help them achieve a certain peace of mind.

If passed, this bill will recognize the importance of family, and it will recognize the importance of job security to families, by creating these unpaid, job-protected leaves for hard-working Ontarians.

Can you imagine being a parent, a brother, a sister, a grandmother, a family member, and you're dealing with the grief and the pain of one of these situations that the bill references, and at the same time, while you want to deal with this and deal with your other family members in pain and you want to spend time with them, you're afraid that if you do take that time, if you're away, you might lose your job—your job might disappear? A family in grief, a person in grief—what we have an obligation to do is to lessen that grief in whatever way we can, to help them to deal with that grief. That's what this legislation is designed to do.

I think back to August 2011, when this government announced a proposal to create the family caregiver leave. That was a campaign promise that this government made in 2011. We reiterated our support with a campaign promise in our Liberal platform at the time. We introduced the bill last fall. Last fall it received all-party support to go to committee, but it died with the prorogation. In January 2013, our action plan for seniors also announced that we would be reintroducing the legislation, which would, if passed, give this unpaid, job-protected time away from work to care for a family member with serious medical conditions. This is a campaign commitment that we are keeping. It was a commitment that we made going back to 2011.

I have to say, from listening to the debate here for the afternoon, I am so pleased that this is an example—I might say “a rare example,” but it should be an ideal that we should all be working for—of how all three parties can muster around a piece of legislation that can only have a beneficial effect on Ontarians. I think it’s something that all members of this House, be they Liberal, Conservative or NDP, want for their constituents. We’re all hearing from our constituents that they want this type of legislation to help them through these grieving times. As I’ve said before, I am so pleased that the three parties, it appears from the debate, are coming together, and we all agree that this legislation should go forward.

I make those comments because I throw it out as a challenge to all the members of this Legislature, from the three parties, that we should use the way we’ve come together on this bill as a model for how we should come together on a whole host of other things that are pending before this House and that should be dealt with by this House. I think when the public sees how the parties appear to be coming together on this piece of legislation, they probably ask themselves, when they’ve been watching this place on the parliamentary channel for the last six, seven or eight months and have seen the wrangling and some of the discord here, why we can’t get together on other useful, meaningful, required legislation and deal with it in the same spirit that we’ve dealt with this piece of legislation.

This legislation is good for families. It’s good for people in grief. It’s something that’s needed. It’s something that’s wanted, and it’s something that we’ve finally come together on and are providing for the members of the public.

I throw out this challenge: Why can’t we do what we’ve done on this bill on other things that we should be acting on?

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1802.

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 | |
| 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 |
| 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 civiles 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 | |
| Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB) | Oakville | |
| Forster, Cindy (NDP) | Welland | Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu |
| Fraser, John (LIB) | Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud | |
| Gélinas, France (NDP) | Nickel Belt | |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--|---|---|
| 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 | |
| Hatfield, Percy (NDP) | Windsor–Tecumseh | |
| Hillier, Randy (PC) | Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington | |
| Holyday, Douglas C. (PC) | Etobicoke–Lakeshore | |
| 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 |
| Hunter, Mitzie Jacquelin (LIB) | Scarborough–Guildwood | |
| 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 | |
| McKenna, Jane (PC) | Burlington | |
| McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB) | Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale | Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires |
| McNaughton, Monte (PC) | Lambton–Kent–Middlesex | |
| McNeely, Phil (LIB) | Ottawa–Orléans | |
| Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB) | Ottawa–Vanier | Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones |
| Miller, Norm (PC) | Parry Sound–Muskoka | |
| Miller, Paul (NDP) | Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek | Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Milligan, Rob E. (PC) | Northumberland–Quinte West | |
| Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB) | Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre | Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement |
| Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB) | Richmond Hill | Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--|---|---|
| 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 Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine |
| 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 |
| Sattler, Peggy (NDP) | London West / London-Ouest | |
| 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 Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales 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 |

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Mike Colle, Kim Craitor
Joe Dickson, Michael Harris
Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
Steven Del Duca, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Mitzie Jacquelin Hunter, Monte McNaughton
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Todd Smith
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Rick Bartolucci
Laura Albanese, Rick Bartolucci
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
Mitzie Jacquelin Hunter, Jim McDonell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Teresa J. Armstrong, Steven Del Duca
Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Steve Clark
Grant Crack, Vic Dhillon
Garfield Dunlop, Cindy Forster
Lisa MacLeod, Amrit Mangat
Michael Mantha
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, Jerry J. Ouellette
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Donna H. Cansfield, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Monte Kwinter
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Helena Jaczek, Jane McKenna
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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|---|------|
| Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, 2013, Bill 55, Ms. MacCharles / Loi de 2013 renforçant la protection du consommateur ontarien, projet de loi 55, Mme MacCharles | |
| Second reading agreed to | 2795 |

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