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**Wednesday 11 September 2013**

**Mercredi 11 septembre 2013**

Speaker  
Honourable Dave Levac

Président  
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk  
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

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*The House met at 0900.*

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

*Prayers.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY  
OFFICER ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE DIRECTEUR  
DE LA RESPONSABILITÉ FINANCIÈRE

Mr. Milloy, on behalf of Mr. Sousa, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 95, An Act to establish a Financial Accountability Officer / Projet de loi 95, Loi créant le poste de directeur de la responsabilité financière.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Mr. Milloy.

**Hon. John Milloy:** It's a pleasure to kick off the debate on government order G95. Just to remind members, the actual debate of this legislation, the Financial Accountability Officer legislation, is under a slightly different format right now because of a motion that was passed by this House in June, which was tied to the budget deliberations. Members may recall a programming motion that outlined a series of steps to be taken to pass the budget bill and that also called on the government to introduce legislation on the whole issue of a Financial Accountability Officer as soon as we returned from the summer break.

So the bill that my colleague the Minister of Finance introduced on Monday reflects the motion that was passed by this House, and outlines what the terms of a Financial Accountability Officer would be. It also, as I say, follows a different format, in that there will be a prescribed period of debate here, and then, should it pass second reading, a prescribed period of debate at both committee and, should it be successful there, at third reading.

Very briefly, the Financial Accountability Officer is in many ways the mirror image of the Auditor General, another officer of this Legislature. While the Auditor General takes a look at initiatives and undertakings by the government at the end of the process and reports his or her findings, the role of the Financial Accountability Officer—similar to what we saw in Ottawa through the formation of the Parliamentary Budget Officer—would look at initiatives and undertakings at the beginning of

the process and report on his findings of the costs and some of the implications that are involved.

I must say that when this idea was first raised around the time of the budget negotiations—in fact, we will be the only province in Canada to have such a budget officer, such a parliamentary officer—I think there was a great deal of enthusiasm on our side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, no one likes an Auditor General's report that comes out with criticisms and concerns about an initiative. I think any minister who is in that position, any government that's in that position, says to itself, "I wish there was someone at the beginning, a neutral third party, whom we could have gone to, to get the type of advice and input that would have allowed us to foresee any of the challenges or problems that arose."

So that, very simply, is the role of this Financial Accountability Officer. He or she will be an officer of the Legislature, will be chosen if the legislation passes through the usual process, will be another step toward a more open and accountable government and, I think, will be an aid to the government of the day and obviously an aid to every member of the Legislature. Because the other piece of the puzzle is that MPPs here in the House can prevail upon this officer of the Legislature to get his or her advice on private members' bills, and obviously on government initiatives and on a range of issues that face the government.

Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to kick off the discussion today. As I said, it's going to be slightly different because it has been prescribed by the order, but I look forward to a good debate over the course of the next day or so. Certainly we, on this side of the House, are very enthusiastic about supporting this piece of legislation.

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

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** It's a pleasure to join this limited debate on this piece of legislation brought forward by the Liberals as a quid pro quo for the NDP's support in propping up their tired, old, corrupt government through the last budget session. In fact, the NDP made it clear: They went public and said, "We will support this government even though we think it's corrupt, bordering on evil. We will support it. We will support it if you give us this."

Now I must say that I detect just a faint aroma of buyer's remorse on the part of the NDP. However, that could just be that PR stuff going on again; you know, that messaging for the public where Andrea Horwath, the leader of the third party, stands up in the Legislature and berates the government for the corrupt way they are behaving but—nudge, nudge, wink, wink—says, "If there's

more on the table, you guys will stay in power. Don't worry about it. We hate you, but we don't hate you that much."

It's interesting how the political system works sometimes, Mr. Speaker. You see the government House leader there, talking about this legislation. He's almost an apologist; he's almost like, "Well, we had to do it." But when you look at the legislation itself, ask yourself, what is it really accomplishing? I'll tell you one thing.

**Mr. Jonah Schein:** It's about accountability.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I'll tell you what I say to the member for Davenport: Accountability starts right here, right here in this Legislature. It's about time that maybe the government was accountable for its actions.

Now, I've read this bill, and it's a pretty thin gruel. I'll tell you one thing: There is nothing in this bill, not a smidgen of any indication in this bill, that had this bill been passed 10 years ago, almost 10 years ago on that ill-fated day when Dalton McGuinty seized the premiership in this province and began to take us down the pathway to ruin, financially—there is nothing in this bill that would prevent another \$1-billion to \$2-billion eHealth scandal. Nothing would prevent that. Nothing would prevent that. There is nothing in this bill that would prevent another billion-dollar scandal like Ornge. Nothing in this bill would prevent an eHealth or an Ornge scandal, and maybe we're going to talk a little bit more about those if I have time. How much time do I have?

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Oh, my goodness gracious.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** You only have 10 minutes.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** My deputy whip says I have 10 minutes; the clock says I've got 36. I'd better listen to him.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Well, the sheriff's back in town. It appears that we've got about nine sidebars going on, and I would like to hear what the member from Renfrew has to say.

I would also appreciate if people would not forget to acknowledge the Chair when you come in and out of this chamber. I would appreciate it. Also, further to that, any members who are talking out loud might want to get back in their seats. Thank you very much.

The member from Renfrew, continue.

0910

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Thank you very much, Speaker. I would certainly appreciate that myself as well today, because you may be able to tell that my voice is a little bit weak today, and I don't want to strain it unduly trying to keep above the din of my friends in the third party. They're a noisy group.

As I said, nothing in here is going to prevent eHealth or Ornge, and is there anything in this piece of legislation that would have prevented the government, in the dying days of the 2011 election, in order to save the seats of many of their members in Etobicoke and Mississauga and Oakville—is there anything in there that will prevent them from once again subjecting us to what we know

now today is at least a \$585-million bill? And when that auditor's report comes out, whenever that happens—we're hoping it comes out maybe before Christmas, if the Premier doesn't try and bury it. That bill could likely go to maybe \$800 million, maybe \$1 billion. Is there anything in this legislation that would prevent a tired, corrupt, self-serving government from doing that again? Nothing—nothing, I say, Mr. Speaker, in there that would prevent this government from doing exactly what it did before.

Listen, there is nobody, nobody, no party that is more committed to accountability than the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario under our leader, Tim Hudak. In spite of the fact that they're going ahead with this placating legislation to satisfy the NDP, accountability starts with the 107 members of this Legislature—pardon me; it starts with the government, because they're the ones with the hand on the wheel, and it extends to the 107 members of this Legislature. We have a responsibility to be vigilant in watching the government. We will continue to do our part to ensure that the taxpayers of Ontario are represented well in this Legislature, that their financial interests are paramount when it comes to the actions of this Legislature.

In spite of this legislation that they're bringing forth today, I question the commitment to accountability of this government. In fact, they're still spending it the same way. Isn't it lovely that Kathleen Wynne's transition officer, Monique Smith, gets a nice appointment to Washington, with cushy surroundings—little to do, but lots of money to be paid. Where's the accountability there? Where are the savings elsewhere in the budget that pay for "Ms. Smith goes to Washington"? I guess we're going to get a movie out of that, maybe.

Speaker, this government continues to behave exactly the way it did before. It will continue to behave this way after this accountability officer is appointed, because they know only one way. Whatever it takes to keep the Liberal Party in power is what they will do, and the interests of the Ontario public be damned. That's the way they behave. Shame on them. It's got to change.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Further debate?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I'm very proud and pleased to be able to make a few remarks on the second reading of the Financial Accountability Office legislation. It's interesting: In spite of Liberal sabre-rattling in the last couple of days, they really wouldn't have much to talk about if it wasn't for the New Democrats. I think that's obvious even today, with the second reading of this bill. The fact is the Liberals have laid out some priorities for this session: for example, cutting auto insurance premiums; for example, getting young people back to work; for example, creating a Financial Accountability Office. I have to say that these things have one primary thing in common, and that is that they were all put forward by the NDP. Speaker, I would put to you and to this House that, in fact, the Liberal government doesn't really have an agenda, but we were happy to give them some ideas to

cobble something together for the people of this province this fall.

So what we're doing, what New Democrats are doing, is we are going to be rolling up our sleeves and we're going to do the hard work of actually leading in this province: making sure Ontarians are getting some results on the issues that concern them; making sure that the promises are kept to young people, to be able to get their first crack at a decent job; making sure auto insurance rates actually do come down and are not just another promise by a Liberal government that's more interested in lining the pockets of the industry than they are about protecting wallets of drivers; making sure that people get the home care that they deserve in this province.

For years and years now, I'm sure every MPP, regardless of which side of the House they sit on, has received horrifying complaints about the way that their loved ones are being passed over, if you will, when it comes to needed home care services. That is not acceptable. That has to stop, and New Democrats are the ones who are going to make sure that the home care system is improved so that people can get the care that they need for their vulnerable relatives when they need it, at an appropriate time.

Of course, what we're talking about today is the Financial Accountability Office. Now, this office isn't for the NDP, it's not for the PCs, it's not for the Liberals. This office is an office for the people of Ontario.

One of the things we heard very loudly and clearly in the discussions that we engaged in with Ontarians over the course of the budget process was that they were fed up with the Liberals' track record. They were very, very cynical—had become very cynical—about the Liberal scandals that continued to unfold over the last decade. What does that look like? I'm going to give you just a couple of examples, and they don't even really, I don't think, reflect a number of other things that have occurred.

For example: hundreds of millions of dollars wasted at Ornge, so that a well-connected Liberal insider could build an empire that quickly fell apart and left egg on the face of the government; a billion dollars wasted at eHealth and no electronic health records system to show for it, certainly not in a timely fashion; hundreds of millions of dollars wasted on gas plants that needed to be moved because of the arrogance of Mr. McGuinty and Mr. Duncan refused to pay attention to the real situation that the people in those ridings were concerned about. They ignored the people because they had ultimate power. Then when they saw their power possibly slipping away is when they decided they were going to move those gas plants—not because of what the people wanted, not because of the impacts on community, not because of what mayors were saying, but because it threatened their political power. How shameful.

Broken promises are a big, big issue here in this province, and they have been for years. We've watched as Liberals have broken promise after promise after promise after promise. Liberals, for example, said the HST would not cost families, but actually, it cost families about

\$1,500 annually, each—\$1,500. That's, from the Liberals' calculation, a no-cost deal for families. I think families see it a little bit differently.

Now we're waiting to hear the new plan that the Liberals have to increase the costs on families again with taxes and tolls that could actually cost them another \$1,000 annually—money that they simply don't have.

So as people lose trust in a government that is cynical, that is politically self-interested, that seems to only be able to make decisions that are going to affect them positively and simply ignore the realities and the concerns that everyday families have, what we believe is that we have to start rebuilding trust. We have to start rebuilding trust, because the cynicism out there is thick. The way you do that is you start to bring some real accountability to this place.

Now, I know that the previous speaker railed on about how you can just trust the PCs to be able to bring some trust back here, bring some accountability back here. Well, I'm sorry; I think it's quite obvious—in fact, just over the last week or so, if I dare say—that that's actually not the case, and it has been proven quite clearly. What I think we need to recognize and acknowledge, though, is that there are tools of accountability that can be brought to bear here, and those tools of accountability can be brought to bear not just on this government with its horrible, horrible track record, but also any on political party that forms the government in this province.

**0920**

So it's not just the current, reigning Liberals, but the New Democrats, when we're to form a government; if the PCs were to form a government. Any government in this province would now have the extra accountability that comes with the Financial Accountability Office, and we are very, very proud of that.

You know, it's pretty interesting. Speaker: The Liberals talk a good game when it comes to transparency, but what they really continue to do—and we saw it again yesterday in question period from the Premier—is that they continue to keep trying to protect their political insiders. It's very, very obvious. The Conservatives: Well, they make a lot of noise, but they really can't seem to get anything done around here. It's New Democrats who are delivering real transparency in this province, and Ontario will judge politicians based on what they do, not just what they say.

What do they do? The Liberals will spend anything, and it's not their money they're spending. They will spend anything in terms of the public dollar to try to get elected. The Conservatives? They're stuck on the sidelines, and if they had their way, Ontario wouldn't have a Financial Accountability Office. New Democrats take a different view. We are the ones who are actually going to be delivering the results on the Financial Accountability Office.

So what is it? The government House leader downplayed the importance of this office; I notice he didn't really speak about it very much at all. This is an extremely important office. In fact, this is an office that is so

useful and so diligent in the work it can do that Stephen Harper actually wanted to get rid of the one it's modeled after in Ottawa, called the parliamentary budget office. It's no wonder that the provincial PCs, cousins of the federal PCs, don't want to see a Financial Accountability Office in Ontario, because their friend Stephen Harper didn't like the one in Ottawa.

What we did is we looked at that office, the parliamentary budget office in Ottawa. We looked at that, and we spoke to Kevin Page, the person Mr. Harper ran out on a rail. We asked him, "How do you make that parliamentary budget office better?" So not only did we take the model from Ottawa, but we wanted to make sure that we learned the lessons about what had gone wrong in Ottawa and tried to improve what we brought forward for Ontarians.

What the office was able to do in Ottawa, even though it probably wasn't as effective as it could have been—the reason it wasn't is because Mr. Harper refused to provide documents that were requested by the officer, something we're not going to allow to happen here in Ontario.

The Harper Conservatives claimed that buying F-35 fighter jets was going to cost \$9 billion; the people of Canada would be on the hook for \$9 billion to buy F-35 jets. The parliamentary budget office, in advance of that transaction being finalized, did the work, did the research—uncovered the truth, if you will—about what the actual cost of the F-35 contracts was going to be. Lo and behold, the figure that the Parliamentary Budget Officer, Mr. Page, came up with was \$30 billion—more than \$30 billion. So a minimum of three times more is what the parliamentary budget office pegged the cost at.

You can imagine that Mr. Harper was not happy with that. He was not happy with the accountability and the truth coming out. So you can see why the provincial Conservatives here would have a similar dislike for that kind of transparency, if you will.

The Harper government also claimed that old age security was unsustainable in this country. This was a claim of the Conservatives, because it was their political agenda to start getting rid of old age security in the country. What did the parliamentary budget office see when they looked into it? The parliamentary budget office showed that in fact the Conservatives were not being truthful with the people of the country. In fact, old age security was sustainable and is sustainable, and today it still is sustainable.

What that did—and I'm hoping that there are some seniors out there right now who are watching this—is it basically saved Canada's old age security system, a system that seniors rely on to a great deal and that we want to make sure seniors of the future are going to be able to rely on as well. The only reason it was saved in Canada is because the parliamentary budget office unveiled the lack of efficacy, if you will, in the figures and the plans that the federal Conservatives were bringing forward.

What's another lesson that we learned from the parliamentary budget office when we looked at how it could apply to Ontario? We found that in fact even though Mr.

Harper did create the parliamentary budget office, as I said earlier, he refused to respond to requests for information and release of documents that were sent to him. So what we did, when we looked at the Financial Accountability Office here in Ontario, is we insisted that our Financial Accountability Office be able to order access to documents, plain and simple. We're going to make sure that the Financial Accountability Office has access to all of the documents that it needs to get the job done—again, not to get the job done for the government and not to get the job done for the PCs or for us, but to get the job done for the people of this province.

What else? The parliamentary budget office showed that independence, being independent from the political influence of the government or any other political party, was essential. So we made sure that the Financial Accountability Office would be an independent office that was not subject to political pressure from the government particularly or either of the other political parties.

So what kind of impact could the FAO have here in Ontario? What kinds of things could have been avoided? A Financial Accountability Office is a practical, reasonable solution to a real problem that we have here in this province, because what it does is it provides forward-looking assessments—I think the government House leader mentioned that in his remarks—of government plans, government ideas and government announcements so that we know for sure whether or not the government is putting forward something that's laden with a whole lot of spin and a whole lot of underestimating in terms of costs, or if in fact the real deal is being presented to the public.

Those forward-looking assessments will help us to prevent the kinds of scandals that have happened here in Ontario from happening again. It will help us save precious public dollars from being wasted on either political opportunism or simply half-baked plans that the Liberals are so famous for bringing forward. They're tired of governments saying one thing about the books when the truth is really something quite different. Every year the government, for example, gives us unreal deficit projections so that of course then they can beat those projections. It's all a bit of a game and everybody laughs and the press gallery chuckles, but the bottom line is it's really not fair to the people of this province to set out unrealistic numbers, to play a silly game to then pretend that you're doing so much better than even you projected you were going to do. Let's grow up about it and be honest with the people about what the numbers are so that we can all kind of get behind some of the initiatives to deal with the pressures we have in this province.

The government consistently lowballs and misleads about costs. The gas plants, for example—they claimed it was going to be \$230 million: \$40 million for Oakville and \$190 million for Mississauga. Now, the auditor showed, again in hindsight, that the costs were much, much higher than that. When the Oakville report comes out within the next several weeks, I believe, we're probably going to see even a higher figure than what we see now.

The cost of nuclear refurbishment—again, the government lowballs that figure on a consistent basis, to try to pretend that somehow the costs aren't really there.

Saving the ONTC: The government inflated the costs of saving the ONTC because their political agenda was to get rid of the Ontario Northland, to cut all of those people from the north out of their passenger rail system.

**0930**

The real cost of secretive private power contracts: We consistently have been pushing the government to unveil the costs of their secret private power deals. Samsung was, of course, the biggest one. But we've been consistently FOIing the cost of these private power deals. In fact, if we'd have had that information, we might not be in the soup that we're in when it comes to the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants.

The PC government, if we want to go back a little ways, did the same thing. They handed away the 407 for a short-term gain, a short-term communications win with the people of this province. The PCs can ask anybody if they think that Ontario got a good deal when it comes to them handing the 407 over to a private consortium. Most people would say, "No, that was not a good deal." If the Financial Accountability Office were up and running in Ontario when they made that pretty stupid decision, we wouldn't have had it happen, because the people would have seen what the reality was behind the suggestions that the Conservatives brought forward at the time, that this was the right thing to do.

One more example: In 2011, a lot of people wanted me to say that I would agree to the gas plant cancellations. We were on the campaign trail; the pressure was enormous. As a political leader, I was scrummed by the media and I was asked, "Will you cancel those gas plants?" I said I will not tear up a contract that I have not seen and that I don't know what the financial implications are. That's what I said on the campaign trail. That's what's on the public record; that's what's on the media record. I said that because I watched as the Conservatives talked about tearing up the Samsung deal, not knowing at all what the cost of tearing up that deal would be. For some time, New Democrats have said that one of the things we have to be careful about is tearing up contracts sight unseen because we don't know what the implications of those things are going to be. I think that one of the things we know for sure is that the Financial Accountability Office will help us to be able to get a handle on what the implications of some of those decisions will be in the future.

So in conclusion, what this will do is it will give the Legislature and Ontarians access to real costs and independent assessments of the plans that this government is making and that all future governments are going to make. This will stop waste; I have no doubt in my mind that this will stop waste in this province.

What it will also do is—I believe and I certainly hope—it will help people to start having some more trust in government again, starting to restore the sense of trust in government. I think that's the bigger piece of what this

legislation does. I can tell you, everywhere I go, that's what I hear from everyone: "You can't trust any of them. You can't trust the Liberals. You can't trust the government. You can't trust any government." Of course, what we've seen with what's happened federally with the Senate—we've seen some of the municipalities go through some pretty amazing shenanigans, we've seen what's happened with the shenanigans of the Liberals here governing in Ontario. People are just fed up. They don't believe that they can trust government anymore. And it's our job not to flap our mouths about accountability, not to pretend that we're transparent and accountable because we say it, but to actually do something to bring accountability to this Legislature. I'm glad that that's exactly what we are going to do.

New Democrats brought this idea here to Ontario. We're proud that we're debating it today, and we look forward to the day that this legislation is passed, which will be coming very, very soon.

But I do want to say that we're going to look closely at the details of the bill because we want to make sure that the government doesn't try to water it down, that the government doesn't try to manipulate things so that it doesn't actually do the kinds of things that it has the great potential to do, which I spoke about in my remarks.

We're also going to be letting people have their say when it comes to the public hearings process because I think that there are things that are always added that are positive when it comes to public hearings, because ultimately it's the public that we're putting this in place for. It's their legislation. This is their House, and it's up to us to make sure that they're welcomed in to participate in the process of putting—particularly this piece of legislation, which is going to help them, I hope, to rebuild their trust in government.

So, Speaker, I want to thank you very much for the opportunity, and again New Democrats are very, very proud of this Financial Accountability Office legislation.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Further debate?

**Mr. Steven Del Duca:** It is a pleasure for me to be here, this being our first week back in the Legislature after our summer recess. Of course, as parliamentary assistant to our Minister of Finance, I am very pleased, very privileged, to stand here in my place in the House for second reading of the Financial Accountability Officer Act, 2013.

There's a lot of stuff that I do want to say with respect to the contents of the bill, but I couldn't help but pay close attention to what I heard from both the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and the leader of the third party.

I think I'd like to begin my remarks today by perhaps saying a couple of things to preface the elements of the bill itself that I know deserve the support of this Legislature.

First of all, of course, I'd like to say to Premier Wynne, to Minister Sousa, to our government, generally speaking: Congratulations on moving forward with this

initiative. It's a very important initiative that's going to help ensure that this Legislative Assembly can provide the level of fiscal transparency and accountability, going forward, that the people of Ontario have every right to expect.

I also do want to spend just a second talking a little bit about the process that led to this being included in budget 2013 and specifically give, I suppose, a little bit of credit to our friends in the third party, not with specific regard to this particular element, because the leader of the third party did speak to that at length, but the general notion that underpinned that sense of collaborative interest and spirit during the course of the budget deliberations back in the late winter and early spring.

When I think of the conversations that I had the chance to have over the course of the summer with many members of my community, I think it's quite telling to hear from people living in Vaughan and business owners living in Vaughan, who watched very closely the budget deliberation and the process back in the spring, the stark contrast between the way that the members of the third party and the leadership of the third party dealt with trying to move the agenda forward positively for Ontarians, working closely with our government, standing in stark contrast to what we saw from the members of the official opposition, the leader of the official opposition, who took a very unfortunate, very strident position very early on in the process, saying that that party—I think very, very unfortunately, Speaker—had no interest in participating in a collaborative or constructive way to try to move agenda items forward that might be of interest to their constituencies, to their way of thinking. The fact that there was no desire to play any meaningful, co-operative role and make sure that Ontario's economy stays on track, continues to perform as well as it has in the last couple of years, I think, was extremely unfortunate.

I should say that both in conversations I had with residents of Vaughan and also in conversations that I had at events like the AMO conference in Ottawa and elsewhere over the course of the summer, it was very clear that there is a great deal of disappointment that members from the official opposition, the leadership of the official opposition, did not see fit to try to play a constructive role.

I did speak a second ago about the importance of moving forward with items like this, like the Financial Accountability Officer, because of the importance of making sure that we provide the level of transparency and accountability that people across Ontario expect and deserve. But I think it's important to put the right historical context into play in the course of this discussion, this debate at second reading.

I know that the member of the Ontario PC caucus who spoke earlier and the leader of the third party did reference their version of history, but I think it's important to recognize that the proposal to create this particular position with this legislation is in fact a very natural evolutionary step for the Ontario Liberal government.

When you track back—in fact, it's probably hard for many observers out there who haven't been following politics closely for the last number of years, or perhaps people who are in their late twenties or early thirties, who were a great deal younger back in the early to mid- to late 1990s—it's probably very hard for individuals like that to recall that we once had a government in Ontario that saw fit to go into an election campaign and not to reveal to the people of Ontario that there was close to a \$6-billion deficit that was looming. In fact, the government of the day back in 2002-03, acted in a way that was completely unacceptable.

It's important to note for the historical context of this bill and this position of the Financial Accountability Officer that in introducing the 2004 Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, this government, the Ontario Liberal government, made sure that that would be fixed, that it could never happen again that a government would head into an election campaign not being straightforward and honest with the people of Ontario.

Again, residents in my riding, people who don't pay that close attention to politics or who might be a bit younger, probably have virtually no recollection that there was a time in Ontario when a government of the day would spend tens and tens of millions of taxpayers' dollars on government advertising that actually saw fit to put forward or promote their own partisan interests. That's another example, Mr. Speaker. In 2004 this government, the Ontario Liberal government, fixed that with the Government Advertising Act, to make sure that mis-using taxpayers' dollars for government advertising to promote partisan purposes could no longer take place.

#### **0940**

There are other examples in the course of this evolution that I'm talking about to put this particular bill in its historical context. We've improved issues relating to procurement and expenses by increasing the transparency of government agencies. Just last year, Speaker, we dramatically enhanced the reporting and disclosure of salaries components of the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act.

We did these things, and we've done many, many more over the course of the last number of years, because, as I said at the outset of my remarks, it's important that the people of Ontario understand their taxpayers' dollars, their dollars, are being spent wisely. That's what's important to the people of my community, and frankly, it's important to myself and to my wife and our own household as we seek to make sure that we are spending appropriately in our own household, making the investments we need to make. It's important that Ontarians see that their government is doing that, and that's why we have moved forward; we included it in the budget this past spring and we're moving forward with this particular legislation.

In terms of one of the other reasons we do these things, it's to make sure that Ontario's economy, which is so important to so many other things that we want to accomplish, continues to move along the right track. I said this just a couple of minutes ago. I think there's fair-

ly strong evidence—in fact, some that was just presented yesterday by Minister Sousa—that we are, both in the economy but in so many other areas, moving in the right direction. Just yesterday, when Minister Sousa presented the public accounts for the year 2012-13, he was, I know, delighted to reveal that Ontario's deficit now stands at \$9.2 billion. That is \$5.6 billion lower than was projected in the 2012 budget and a further reduction of \$600 million since the 2013 budget.

It was also interesting to note in that reporting of public accounts that, for the first time in more than a decade, total government reported spending fell from the previous year. At \$122.6 billion, spending was just under \$4 billion less than was planned in the 2012 budget. We see evidence of the positive results that this is having for the people of Ontario and for the economy of Ontario. We see the real gross domestic product is now 2.7% above its pre-recession peak. And perhaps what is the most important indicator to the people living in all of our communities across the province: Ontario has created more than 477,000 jobs, nearly half a million jobs, since June 2009, which means that we have recovered all of the jobs lost during the recession, and in fact the current level of employment here in the province of Ontario is more than 210,000 jobs above the high point before the recession.

So I think it's very, very important to make sure that we at all times in this discussion and debate keep one eye on that historical context that I talked about, and take into account that this is a very positive evolutionary step in making sure that we, on this side of the House, working with both other parties and working with people across Ontario through extensive consultations, keep our eye on the ball, that we keep moving forward and keep finding creative ways to make sure that people's tax dollars are being spent wisely. As I said, the Financial Accountability Officer is the next step. We are definitely on the right track.

There are some elements with respect to the office itself that I think bear mentioning. I believe some of this discussion came up when the leader of the third party was making her remarks. It's important to note that there are various aspects of this office, this officer, this position that we are proposing in the legislation. First of all, it's very, very important to note—and I know the government House leader did say this—that this legislation proposes that this position of the Financial Accountability Officer will be an independent officer of the Legislature. That's extremely important. I think that's what the people of my riding and the people across Ontario expect. They want someone in this role who is not going to be reporting specifically to one government, one party of the day. I know the leader of the third party did reference this.

It is important that we create a position in the most appropriate way possible to make sure that it provides sustainable support to the Ontario Legislature regardless of who's in power, regardless of what stripe the particular party in power may have. That's why it's very, very

important that he or she, whoever the person might be, if this bill is passed, is an independent officer of this chamber, this Legislature—and to take into account that being an independent officer of the Legislature, he or she will be in a position to serve all members of provincial Parliament, regardless of whether they got elected just a few weeks ago; whether they've been here for many, many years; whether they're Liberal, they're NDP or they're Conservative. This independent officer of the Legislature will serve all MPPs. He or she will be able to assist committees and provide MPPs with financial research regarding, for example, the costs or the benefits of public bills.

These are just some of the examples that are provided for in this legislation, Mr. Speaker, again, with an interest to make sure that we are creating a position that will provide sustainable support to this Legislature at the same time as having the impact of making sure that the people of Ontario, people in my riding, people who I heard from over the course of the summer, are aware of the fact that we are moving forward in a manner to try to make sure that their tax dollars are spent appropriately.

I do want to spend just a quick second talking a little bit about the selection process itself. Of course, in order to make sure that you produce a final product, be it in construction, be it anywhere else, you want to make sure that the architecture and the engineering is sound. When you look at the proposed selection process in this legislation, I think we can see that the plan is to move forward with a selection process that will be robust, that will avoid any criticism, unfounded or otherwise, with respect to how we arrive at selecting a particular person to take on this position, should the legislation pass. It's important to note that the selection panel will include, as I understand it, one member of provincial Parliament from each of the parties in the Legislature and the panel will be chaired by the Speaker of the Legislature, who will be a non-voting member.

Also, it's important to note that the length of the appointment for this position will be five years, with an option to reappoint, which I understand is similar to what occurs with other positions that we have, like the Ontario Ombudsman. It's very similar to that kind of set-up, which I believe also will help provide the people of Ontario with a sense that this is a position that's moving forward not just with the best of intentions but with the best of that architecture and engineering that I talked about a second ago: making sure that we get this right. That's what I know our government is committed to doing.

The leader of the third party did mention this, and I think it's important as well: Should the legislation pass, we look forward to the fact that ministries and government agencies will be required to provide the fiscal and economic information that's required for the Financial Accountability Officer to be able to do his or her job. Of course, there are some notable exceptions, some appropriate exceptions for that: personal information, personal health information. But it's important to note, as the leader of the third party did say in her remarks, that this

is a position that will be provided and afforded with every opportunity to do the kind of job that the people of my riding of Vaughan and the people of Ontario expect and certainly deserve.

I do want to spend just a second going into slightly more detail with respect to the actual mandate that this bill provides for this new position. I said earlier that it's an independent officer of the Legislature providing advice to all MPPs, but I want to make sure it's clearly understood that what we envision is a position that will provide independent analysis to the assembly about the state, for example, of the province's finances—finances that are, according to the report provided to public accounts by Minister Sousa yesterday, moving forward in an exceptionally strong and responsible way. The independent analysis that this officer will be able to provide will include information about the budget and trends in both the provincial and national economies.

It's also important to note that the bill provides for a mandate for this officer to be able to respond to requests from any member of the Legislature, any member of the assembly or any committee of the assembly, and also to undertake research into the province's finances and trends, as I said a second ago, in both the provincial and national economies; undertake research into the estimates and supplementary estimates that are submitted to this Legislature; undertake research into the financial costs or benefits to the province of any public bill that is before the assembly; and also undertake to estimate—and I think this is extremely important—an opportunity up until this point not provided to members of this Legislature in such a clear way. This bill provides a mandate for a Financial Accountability Officer who will be able “to undertake to estimate the financial costs or benefits to the province of any proposal”—any proposal, Mr. Speaker—“that relates to a matter over which the Legislature has jurisdiction, including any proposal made by the government,” whichever government may be in power—again, a non-partisan, independent officer of the Legislature—“or by any member of the assembly.”

**0950**

I think it's extremely important to note that by putting this particular legislation forward—and that's why it was a tiny bit disheartening for me to hear the opening remarks by the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I know that member has been here a lot longer than I've been here, and I do have a great deal of respect for the experience that all members bring to this floor. But I think on a matter like this, on something like the creation of a Financial Accountability Officer, I would really implore every member of the Legislature coming forward to discuss this over the next number of hours and days to take a step back from that partisan hat that we all like to don from time to time, and instead take a look at the broader view and take a look at making sure—if there is something specific and substantive in this legislation you're not comfortable with, discuss it. Discuss it productively; discuss it constructively. But frankly, Speaker, to get up in the House on something that's so important

to the people of all of our communities—the notion of financial accountability and transparency—and to provide not much more than quite a bit of fanciful bluster, I think, is something that's a bit unfortunate.

I hope, as the debate proceeds, we'll hear an awful lot more from members of all three parties about why this is the right way to move forward, and hopefully members will support it.

By putting this particular bill forward, it's also important to underscore that Ontario is leading the way as the first provincial government in Canada to propose the establishment of such an office. As I've said earlier, our government believes that the creation of a Financial Accountability Officer would enhance the information and resources available to all members of this Legislature and, indeed, to all Ontarians.

As someone who has been in this Legislature serving the community of Vaughan for just about 12 months now, I think it's very important to note that the information that will be provided and the resources that will be provided for by the creation of this officer will help all of us here in this House to make better decisions, to make more informed decisions, about the fiscal impacts specifically of proposals that are put forth here on behalf of the people of all of our communities. I think that will result in better decision-making, which I know is something that, again, Ontarians have a right to expect out of their Legislature. I think it will help all of us not just chart and plan a course but actually succeed in achieving along the way, along that particular course, a very strong and prosperous economy while making sure that we continue to protect the high-quality public services that the people of Ontario expect and deserve.

That's why, Speaker, I think it's really important to say once again, as we continue to have this debate at second reading, as this particular legislation continues to work its way through this legislative process—for all members on all sides of the House to take a look back to the process that culminated in the 2013 budget and, frankly, to perhaps take a tiny bit of a page from the work that was done around a certain party, the third party in this Legislature, playing a more collaborative and constructive role than we saw from the official opposition; to put aside what took place in the spring, to put aside a lot of the partisan, adversarial, confrontational stuff that takes place in this House. I know that behaviour has its place, and I think we all enjoy the cut and thrust of debate and discussion in this House, and I'm just as guilty as the next person of being interested in pursuing partisan goals; there's no doubt about that.

But on something like this, whether you represent Vaughan, Scarborough–Agincourt, Richmond Hill, Oakville, Scarborough–Guildwood, Ottawa South or any other riding from across the province of Ontario, I don't think there's any doubt that in talking to our residents, the people that we have been sent by to work here in this place together—I don't believe there's any doubt that the people of Ontario want to see us move forward in that evolutionary process.

This is a learning process. This is all about making sure that we get the job done correctly for the people of Ontario. We deal today with more technological creativity and advancements than ever before. This is why it's important for us to get the job done correctly on this bill, to have the kind of discussion, the thorough discussion and debate that we need here in this chamber.

I call on all members from all parties to work together, to work with us, to have the kind of debate that we need, to have the kind of discussion we need, but then to get this bill passed to move forward with the creation of a Financial Accountability Officer. I know the people of my riding of Vaughan and the people right across Ontario will greatly appreciate us getting the job done on this bill, and that's why I'm pleased to support it, Speaker. I thank you very much for the time today.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Further debate?

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I do want to put some context around this Bill 95, the bill that we're discussing today. I did listen carefully to the remarks by the minister originally, but I think we should also keep in mind where this actual office came from. It didn't come from Mr. Del Duca or the Liberal government. It actually came from the NDP, as part of the coalition and assurance that the NDP would get some promissory note from the budget process to buy their support, and they did buy the support through two things: the accountability office as well as the 15% reduction in auto insurance which, by the way, the viewers should be very, very wary of. When they talked about it in the last week or two in the media, it's going to be implemented over a number of years. How about never? That's another broken promise, and that's the context that—I think the leader of the NDP used the words, "They can't be trusted." That's a very true thing here.

I do want to put some context around this in a broader sense. In my response to the minister on the introduction of the bill on Monday, September 9, I related three things where there's accountability or broken promises. The first one—let's keep it in mind now—is the scandalous spending of political promises during the election in 2011, where they cancelled the two gas plants. That, to the moment, is \$585 million. We're looking forward to the next auditor's report on Oakville, and I'm putting on the record now, through you, Speaker, that the cost is going to be in excess of \$1 billion. That's \$1 billion taken out of health care, taken out of education, taken out of the civility of this province. They're living on borrowed time.

The second one is to keep in mind an ongoing inquiry on the scandalous Chris Mazza, on the Ornge helicopters. These were people making millions of dollars a year. The Ornge helicopter business is still in committee, and the expenses there are another scandalous waste of taxpayers' money.

The third thing that people should remember in Ontario, in the context of trust, is eHealth. They promised eHealth, and they've spent billions of dollars on eHealth, and it's still not working.

So they can't be trusted. In fact, they're completely incompetent, completely incompetent. I would suggest—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Mr. McMeekin is talking about reading the auditor's report. I'm going to start with the next auditor's report.

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Okay. The minister is actually talking louder than the speaker, which is unacceptable. And the member from Durham is quite aware that he doesn't refer to the person by their name; it's their riding. I would appreciate it if you would follow the guidelines. Thank you.

Continue.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Now, the auditor did report in the pre-election—the viewers should know this. This is the pre-election, 2011 report by the Auditor General, and the Auditor General said in the pre-election how much trouble they were in. He said that they were actually in a structural deficit. That means their growth in expenditures is faster than the growth in revenues. He went on to say the change that had to be made is much like what Tim Hudak has been talking about on our side: a public sector wage freeze. Here's what it said: Health care spending, up until that point of 2011, was about 7% growth per year. He recommended it go to 3.6%. Education was 4% to 5% and should go to 3%. Post-secondary is 8% and should go to 2%. These are costs that the Auditor General said. They went on to promise many things, none of which they delivered—none of which they've delivered. Another one—there's the auditor's report on the cancellation of the gas plant in Mississauga, and we're waiting for the second plant on Oakville to be reported.

There was a report issued prior to that, in 2012, and this was the Drummond report, and this Drummond report is an important reference point. There were 362 recommendations that the McGuinty, now the Wynne, government—and there's no change; they're the same policies—had to do to balance the budget, because, again, we have a structural deficit. How bad is it? We're spending \$32 million a day more than we're taking in as revenue. Each child, each page here, every person in Ontario, man, woman and child, owes \$19,000 of the debt. The debt has grown to almost \$3 billion, and that debt is being serviced by—the third-highest expenditure in the budget is interest on our debt. It's almost \$11 billion a year to service the debt. That's not paying it off; that's to service the debt.

**1000**

That's in the context of the budget today, and the interest on debt is very low. The amount of interest is low. Interest is low because that's how they're stimulating the economy through monetary policy. Here's the deal, though: The interest is going to go up. So if it's \$10 billion today, and interest goes up 1%, it will be \$14 billion a year to service the debt. It's scandalous.

There was a report issued right after Mr. Dwight Duncan—he resigned after his budget. This is Ontario

budget 2012: A missed opportunity. They went on to say that he failed. This is a report that's worth seeing. It was issued in May/June 2012. It went on to say a couple of very important things. It says, "Had Duncan actually seized the opportunity to balance Ontario's books, he could have done so in just two years—the same time horizon as the federal Liberals in the 1990s." He went on to suggest several recommendations, many of which are echoed almost daily by Tim Hudak.

I look forward to our new critic of finance, Vic Fedeli—or, pardon me, our member for Nipissing. He will have, I'm sure, a few remarks on this as well. But I think the context here was started by the NDP: It's a matter of trust.

What else has happened here? If you look at what they've done that many people know—I get a lot of calls on this, and I'm going to stop here shortly. I get many calls on this: "How come gasoline is such a high price?" Let's just take that one commodity that is a nondiscretionary consumption. You basically have to have gas to drive your car. You could say, "Stop using your car," but they want to put \$50 billion into transit—which is a good thing. They haven't got the money, but where are they going to get it? It's going to be taxes or user fees or something. But here's the deal: When they changed the HST—this is just one example. HST was made up of harmonizing the GST, which was the goods and service tax of 5%, and the provincial sales tax, which was 8%. So you harmonized them; it was 13%—8% of which was the provincial portion. When you apply that to gasoline, that's eight cents more per litre, and gas is about \$1, \$1.30 or \$1.50. So that's 12 cents per litre of gas, every one of them, the money going to Kathleen Wynne and Charles Sousa.

On your energy bill: It was announced on September 1 that we have the highest energy costs in North America. One of the causes of that is Bill 150, the Green Energy Act. It's called the global adjustment. The global adjustment on your electricity bill—listen up, now. Close your eyes, open your ears. It's eight cents a litre for the global adjustment. That's not the electricity you use; that's to pay for or subsidize wind and solar.

They're paying about 50 cents per kilowatt hour for solar and they're selling it for five cents. So how are they subsidizing that difference between 50 cents and five cents? It's called a global adjustment—which is shutting businesses down in my riding. Bowmanville Foundry is one example, where their global adjustment is a larger cost to them than the cost of the electrons they're actually using.

This government has messed up so many files, not just Ornge helicopters, not just the gas plant issue. The entire energy file is completely messed up. I say to you that they bought peace at the very expensive price of the very standard of living that Ontario has today.

I'm going to stop there because it's not my privilege to take all the time, although I have more to say. I would only say this in conclusion: When people in Ontario are thinking about it, the real job of government is to say no

at the right time for the right reasons. Any person—and I think we're all civilized people here—would love to say yes to every ask. But our governments today around the world have to make important, difficult decisions. I don't believe they have the courage to do it because, first of all, you can't trust them. When you lose trust, you lose the right to lead, and in a democracy, that's when you have an election, to solve that problem. I think this example here was actually Bill 95, on the Financial Accountability Office. The idea was put forward by the NDP; good for them. They sold out to the Liberals, because they're on the same team. They'd spend you out of house and home.

I have more to say, but I'll leave it to my peers to say it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Further debate?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** It is indeed a pleasure for me to stand up in support of the Financial Accountability Office. Of course, it's not surprising that we're hearing such frustration from the PCs. It must have been very frustrating for them to go door to door during the by-elections during the summer and basically have nothing to show for two years of sitting in this House.

The "selling out" line is an old line. It's an old line, because we didn't sell out. We stayed focused on the real priorities of the people of this province. We brought forward ideas on home care and on youth employment, and all of the aggression and frustration that the PCs are expressing motivated us to bring forward this idea of the Financial Accountability Office.

If you've read the legislation—I mean, you said no to the budget before you read the budget, but if you read this piece of legislation, you would see that it's progressive and that it would address many of the concerns that you have. But, instead of actually putting the people first, putting the interests of the people of this province first, you have put your own interests first and fought for an election that nobody wants right now, unless, of course, we're to believe that the Liberals are thinking, "Oh, maybe it's time to have an election." All this election talk is not good for the people of this province. We need to stay focused on jobs. We need to stay focused on the economy.

The Financial Accountability Office brings back confidence to the people of this province, because we have a trust issue. Every one of us has a trust issue. All of us may do really good work at our constituency offices, but what we do here by putting progressive legislation forward is our key job as legislators, and we are proud. I mean, New Democrats obviously are proud of the work that we were able to accomplish.

That is, in many respects, the potential of a minority government. If we brought forward the idea of a Financial Accountability Office in a majority government—no one was listening. That's very clear from the last 10 years. That's very clear from the track record of the Liberal government over the last 10 years. I don't need to rehash all of the scandals, because they're so prevalent. They are on the minds of every Ontarian.

The PCs will say to the people of this province that it's too late to build trust. Well, that's not how we feel as New Democrats. We actually feel that it's never too late to rebuild trust. We feel that it's never too late to right a wrong, and that's what the Financial Accountability Office has the potential of doing. It really is surprising for me to hear that the PC Party is actually going to vote against enhancing their rights to access information.

**Hon. Ted McMeekin:** It's amazing, isn't it?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** It's incredible. You can have access to information. You have seen how hard it is to get information from the Liberal government, and yet, the Financial Accountability Office would give you greater power—not just power for yourselves, but power for the people that you serve, so that you have the information to influence and to impact public policy and legislation.

Of late, much has been made about MPPs' right to documentation of the business of the government. It has been a long, hard fight. We hear it often from the PCs. The work being done over the last year at the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, for instance, and at the Standing Committee on Estimates to fully understand the costs of the gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville is important and necessary, but has also served as a study on the rights of this Legislature.

I just want to share a story with you. I had the opportunity to sit at estimates yesterday and ask the finance minister some specific questions on policy, on legislation, on their ideas around energy and on infrastructure, for instance. At one point, the Minister of Finance cautioned the committee members, both the PCs and the NDP, and said, "You have to be careful about the questions that you're asking, because you've never had this information before."

It was, in many respects, a very patronizing comment, but then he went on to say that this is a shared responsibility; our economy and the state of our finances of the province are a shared responsibility. It's only a shared responsibility when you have the information in front of you. Then, it is truly a shared responsibility, and all of us bear the brunt of that responsibility in this House. And all of us have had difficulty accessing key information on gas plants, on energy, on infrastructure, for instance. Look how long it took to get the real story about the Ornge air ambulance scandal. Meanwhile, people's lives were impacted in a very negative way.

**1010**

The reason I bring up the responsibility of government is to, of course, ensure that Ontarians have transparency and have true accountability and that the government and all future governments—that's a real key piece. I was asked this question on Monday. This idea: "It's going to impact you, too." Yes. Yes, it is. And that is good. It will hold all future governments accountable.

There are so many examples of when, actually, a Financial Accountability Office could have been used in the last 10 years, in the last 20 years. For instance, if the selling of the 407 highway, the toll highway, had a full

financial analysis, do you think that that deal would have gone through? Because that was a bad deal for the people of this province. It's a bad deal today. Think of the profits that we have lost as a province that we could have invested in education, that we could have invested in health care—billions of dollars.

You want to talk about scandals. The Financial Accountability Office brings to this Legislature an independent level of accountability, because the Liberals have brought in other ideas about financial accountability, and we actually heard the Premier last week say, "Just because you say something over and over doesn't make it true." Yes, we know that. We know that based on their entire track record, right?

When you talk to people in the community, in our own constituencies, all of us recognize—if you're really listening to the people of this province—that there is a serious trust issue. People want to trust the government. They want to see progressive ideas happen in this Legislature that they can actually support.

This idea of a coalition—it's like people have not recognized that this is a minority government. In a minority government, the rules have changed. You just can't play the same old games. You have to come to the table with ideas, which we have done. Actually, you know what? When you can influence a budget the way that we have in the last two budgets—we've showed up to work in this Legislature, we have put people first and we have gotten real results.

I understand the frustration from the official opposition that they haven't been able to get results—because getting an election is not a result. It is not something that people value. People out there right now just want us to build confidence in our economy. They want to get back to work. They want their students, actually, not to pay exorbitant post-secondary fees. They want their children to access a public education system that is safe, that is healthy and that is inclusive. There is so much work before us as legislators.

Today, I'm listening to some of the sabre-rattling from the Liberals: "Oh, the opposition. They don't want to work with us." You know what? Quite honestly, if the NDP comes to work, the work gets done. The PCs have basically written themselves off. They have rendered themselves irrelevant in the development of policy and legislation in this province. They don't want to play. But we are here and we have ideas, and the ideas that we have come from the people of this province, and that makes for a stronger Legislature. That makes for a stronger Queen's Park. That's what people expect from the people that they elected: to work on their behalf.

A lot has been said about the cost, for instance, of the FAO. It is actually the lowest official office cost in the Legislature. So talk about value for money. It's forward-thinking. For instance, a good comparable would be investing in physiotherapy for seniors so that they don't fall, so that they don't end up in the ER, so they don't end up in a long-term-care facility. It's a preventive, early intervention measure that we can take to ensure that the money that comes into this place is spent responsibly.

Earlier, the House leader went on to say that this is a mirror of the Auditor General. It is not. The Auditor General looks at things after they've already happened, and it exposes the lies and exposes the incompetence. The Financial Accountability Office, actually, is forward-thinking—so we would have had an opportunity to look at the contracts on the Mississauga and Oakville gas plants. We would have realized that cancelling those plants had a huge cost, and it would have actually projected even the future costs—because we don't even talk about that anymore, about the transmission from Napanee, for instance. That is a scandal. It's a scandal that was preventable, and all of us actually knew that at the time. Yet the Liberals went ahead, as we've heard in the gas plant justice committee. They went ahead and they cancelled it anyway without regard for the true cost to the people of this province.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** It being 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

*The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.*

#### ANNIVERSARY OF 9/11

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The Premier on a point of order.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Mr. Speaker, before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge that today is the 12th anniversary of the September 11 attacks on the United States and suggest that we remember today those who lost their lives in this tragic event and the bravery of the first responders who put their own lives at risk to help others. I'd like to ask that the House observe a moment of silence in recognition of this anniversary.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The Premier is seeking unanimous consent to stand for a moment's remembrance of the anniversary of 9/11. Agreed? Agreed.

Please, all rise.

*The House observed a moment's silence.*

#### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mr. Mike Colle:** I have the family of the page from Eglinton–Lawrence, William Howard-Waddingham. His family is here: his mother, Kelly Waddingham; Martha Howard; and Brigid Waddingham. I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today the parents and family of William Howard-Waddingham. Welcome.

**Mr. Harinder S. Takhar:** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce some very distinguished guests from India today. I want to introduce Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa. Mr. Dhindsa is currently a member of the Rajya Sabha, which is like a Senate, in India. He's a former member of Parliament of India and a former Union Minister of Sports and Chemicals and Fertilizers. He is also the general secretary of the Shiromani Akali Dal. Welcome.

He also has some other guests joining him today: Harbans Singh Jandali is the general secretary of the Ontario Khalsa Darbar; Beant Singh Dhaliwal, president of the Shiromani Akali Dal, Canada; Dalbir Singh Sidhu is a great friend and organizer and a community worker; Inderjit Bal, a very good friend of mine; Inderjit Singh Dhugga; Karan Singh Ghumaan; Bikramjit Singh Goraya; Pavittar Singh Gill; Harsharan Singh Ghumaan; Jasbir Singh Lalli; and Satpal Johal is a TV and radio host.

I really want to extend a very warm welcome to them.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** It is my pleasure to introduce an international delegation that many members are going to be meeting with today. They are from Taiwan. If I may introduce them, they're over here. They're students from the National Tsing Hua University in Taiwan. They are with their teacher Wen-Hsin I: Meng-yun Tsai, I-Ling Huang, En-Ling Chang, Pei-Chi Wu, Hsueh-Han Lien and Yeu-Wei Harn. They are with the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office, with Justin Lee and Henri Chuang, who are well known to many members here. Later today, the director general, Winston Chen, will be joining us.

We would like to welcome you warmly to our assembly.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I'm very pleased and privileged to introduce a couple of health care trailblazers from the community that I'm from, Hamilton; first and foremost, Dr. Peter B. Dent, who was instrumental as a founder in Hamilton of the McMaster Children's Hospital and the Hamilton Ronald McDonald House. Peter is here on the government benches with his daughter Ashley.

Welcome. We're very proud to have you here.

We also have with us a trailblazer from a different side of the health care field—a community health centre: Denise Brooks, the executive director of the Hamilton Urban Core Community Health Centre. A number the people from that organization are here as well, and I'd like to welcome you here to the Legislature as well.

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** I'd like to introduce a friend of mine from the town of Tecumseh: Mario Spagnuolo, who is here. Mario is one of the most dedicated educators in the province. He's up here for a conference this afternoon. He came a little early to watch democracy in action so he can report back to his children in the school system how we conduct ourselves during question period. So I hope we do a good job for him today.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I am delighted to welcome people from the Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation. Joining us today are President Robert Davidson, Michael Jarvis, Henry Lowi, Larkell Bradley, Ron Lillie, Jean Lillie, Connie Detzler, Hugh Detzler, Laurie Fowler and Roger Chandler. I know they'll be meeting with many members today. We're delighted to have you in the House.

**Hon. Michael Chan:** I would like to also welcome my constituent Mr. Robert Davidson who's here today. He's also president of the Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation. The foundation will be hosting a reception this afternoon in the legislative dining room from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

**Hon. Linda Jeffrey:** I'd like to welcome the hard-working and tireless people from the co-operative housing federation, who are here to speak in support of Bill 14 at public hearings later today. I'd like to welcome Dale Reagan, Harvey Cooper, Simone Swail, Judy Shaw and Keith Moyer. Welcome.

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** Speaker, would you help me welcome my sister, Sister Marijke Gerretsen, who has been teaching in Japan for the last 40 years. She's here in the public gallery, together with Sister Yoko Ikeda. They are here with a group of 19 students from the Sakura no Seibo Junior College in Fukushima, Japan. They've been here in Ontario for the last two weeks to learn about our way of life and on a cultural exchange as well.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Well, my leader introduced the executive director of Hamilton Urban Core Community Health Centre, but Mrs. Brooks never travels alone. She has a few friends with her, and it would be my pleasure to introduce them.

I'll start with Margie and Dan Goold; Lynn Simmons is here; Floydeen Charles-Fridal; Maciej Kowalski; Tibor Lukacs; Vicas Sood; Attila Csikos; Rosella Russo; Rhonda Castello; Alma Harris; Ursula Samuels; Sybil Don-Martin; Wendell Fields; Tim Button; Jason Whalen; Tom Kaler; Catherine Hines; Sherry Proper; Francia Cenpeno; Sofia Ramirez; Paul Henry and Sean Gibson. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I am delighted to welcome Dr. Peter Dent here. Peter is a legend. He's the founder of McMaster Children's Hospital and the Hamilton Ronald McDonald House. We are delighted he's joined us today.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I do want to remind all members that I make a noble attempt to try to have all of you introduce your guests here because that's very important, and it's the people's place. I'm going to remind you to keep your comments to the introduction and avoid as much of the preambles as possible, which allows me to stay within the agreed-upon time that we've worked out. But I will try to be as sensitive as possible, because there are some that are time-sensitive; they either have to leave or go. I'm trying to work with everybody in this. If everyone can co-operate back, I don't think we'll have any complications with this—because it is an important thing for us to do, which is to introduce all of our guests who come to us in the people's place.

I thank you for your co-operation and thank you for your patience in making my job a little easier to try to get these introductions done for everyone.

1040

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### PUBLIC TRANSIT

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** My question is to the Premier. Momentarily, the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Doug Holyday, will be tabling a motion calling on the

government to make good on its promise to the people of Scarborough in the recent by-election to build a subway line, as requested by city council. I want to congratulate the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore for bringing this to the floor so quickly.

My question to you, Premier, is, will you support the motion? Will you actually keep your promise to the people of Scarborough?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I have to say it is refreshing to hear the Leader of the Opposition coming forward and talking about transit. I think that's great. I think that's just wonderful.

As the Leader of the Opposition knows, since we came into office, we've been investing in transit. There are projects happening all over the province. In fact, there is building going on in Ottawa, in Kitchener–Waterloo. There's building going on within the GTHA. There is transit money being used across the province as a result of the gas tax investments that we have made. There is a lot of work that is happening right now. I think our commitment to building transit is evidenced by the work that is happening.

We have been working with the city of Toronto on this file. We've listened to the members from Scarborough. We've listened to the people of Scarborough. We're committed to building a subway in Scarborough. We've committed \$1.4 billion and another \$320 million for the station. We will build that subway.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Well, back to the Premier: I listened carefully to the Premier's response. I simply asked if you were keeping your promise. I didn't hear either a yes or a no.

I'll tell you why I'm concerned. Premier, it was in March 2012 that we brought forward a motion in the House, standing in my name as Leader of the Opposition, to build subways in Scarborough. That was our motion, and we brought it to the floor over a year ago. I'm proud of that.

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** We've been consistent.

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** We've been consistent. You, Premier, and your transportation minister voted against it.

You referenced yesterday your canoe trip over the summer. You probably saw a lot of carp flipping and flopping in the river that you were in. Are we seeing the same thing here today? You're not going to flip-flop? Are you flip-flopping? Honest to goodness, it's hard to tell where you stand on the issue. Just yes or no, Premier: Are you going to keep your promise, or are you going to flip-flop yet again?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Order. Premier.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** As I said, we have been committed to building transit, and we will continue to build transit. We're committed to building the subway in Scarborough.

The piece that the Leader of the Opposition is missing in this is that we have to work with partners. We have to

work with the municipalities. The fact is that the Leader of the Opposition is coming into this discussion talking about one project to which we are committed. In answer to your question, we've said—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Excuse me. We're back to that little habit that we were out of during the summer break, which is that I'm hearing people from that side heckling while the question is being put, and while the answer is being put, I'm hearing heckling from this side.

I'd like all of us just to simply stop the heckling.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** We're actually not getting answers.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Renfrew doesn't help his case at all for today.

Answer, please?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** The Leader of the Opposition is coming in on one project in one region, as opposed to understanding that building transit is—

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** It's a system.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** It's a systematic approach that has to be taken, and we have to work with partners. But we're committed to building transit in Scarborough, and we're committed to building the subway in Scarborough.

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

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I don't know, Speaker; I've never seen this kind of quality of verbal gymnastics in a simple yes-or-no question. Are you going to keep your promise or not?

The Premier said, "Well, you have to work with partners." I remind you, Premier, that just a couple of weeks ago your Minister of Transportation, Mr. Murray, went out there and, all of a sudden, launched his own brand new plan that nobody had heard of, that council did not support, that the TTC did not support, that Scarborough residents didn't support and that Metrolinx didn't support. Nobody supports that plan.

The promise in the by-election was absolutely clear: a line going from Kennedy up to Sheppard through Scarborough City Centre. Your minister invents a new project with less money, fewer stops and lower quality.

Listen, the people of Scarborough have run into brick walls for far too long. We're going to put you up against that same brick wall with Doug Holyday's motion. Are you going to keep your promise, or are you going to flip-flop right out of the gate?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I think that the Leader of the Opposition might want to have a conversation with the new member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore and talk about exactly what has gone on at city council over the last couple of years, talk about how contentious this issue has been, and understand from the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore where the money is coming from, where the \$1.4 billion and the extra \$320 million is coming from, for the project. That would be from this government, from the provincial level; not from the city and not

from the federal government. I think if the Leader of the Opposition wants to talk to the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore and just understand the context that has been in place for the last three years, as we've gone back and forth with the city of Toronto, that might be very helpful for him, because he's coming in late in the game on one project.

We're committed to building the subway in Scarborough, and we're committed to working with our municipal partners.

## PUBLIC TRANSIT

**Mr. Douglas C. Holyday:** Firstly, Mr. Speaker, I would like to apologize for calling you "Madam Speaker" yesterday. That really stems from a long-time habit I've had at some other establishment.

My question today, though, is for the Premier. A few months ago, your Minister of Transportation said that it would be difficult for Metrolinx to proceed if Toronto city council and the TTC are not supportive of the transit options that have received municipal approval. Now your government has ignored the city of Toronto by offering a shortened version of the Scarborough subway. Madam Premier, why have you decided to move forward without the city of Toronto and the TTC?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Order.

I'll be waiting for the last person to try to get the word in because it's quiet.

Minister?

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** Mr. Speaker, I also predicted a few weeks ago, or a month ago, that the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore would be here representing the mayor's views, and he's doing exactly what we said and he's doing exactly what Conservative politicians in this House, conservative politicians at city hall and Conservative politicians in Ottawa do with subways in Toronto. They pass motions; they never write cheques. Here we have classic civic-provincial-federal conservatism on subways—yet another motion. I would suggest to my friend from Etobicoke-Lakeshore and his friend Mayor Ford, who have such great relationships with Mr. Flaherty, that maybe they can together get Mr. Flaherty to write a cheque for a subway in Toronto.

We are not, Mr. Speaker, going to build subways in Scarborough on motions and rhetoric and press releases. We need money. The only people putting money into subways, Mr. Speaker, are the Liberals.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Douglas C. Holyday:** It's going to be very difficult to build a subway in Toronto or anywhere else without the government of Ontario's support. The trouble here is that the government of Ontario has been all over the lot on both sides of this question—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Order.

Carry on.

**Mr. Douglas C. Holyday:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You cannot be on all sides of this equation. This is not a merry-go-round; you can't get off whenever you want. I just want to know: Are you really onside this time? Are you really going to follow your plan, or are you not?

*Interjections.*

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

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** Mr. Speaker, we have come to understand that Conservatives love to fill in subways. They bizarrely champion them, but they never like to pay for them. The other thing we know about Conservatives is, they don't like to read. They don't read budgets and they don't read plans, because if they had actually read a plan, the Leader of the Opposition would know he was dead wrong again. The line on that map has not changed in one single plan. We're following the same route that we ever had. The only change, Mr. Speaker—we have never changed our position once. The flip-flopping cars are over there.

What is the price tag for that whipped-up, out-of-the-blue thing that the member for Etobicoke Centre—

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Answer?  
1050

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** It's \$3 billion, Mr. Speaker—\$3 billion. The fiscal prudence for Conservatives is when you can build a line—

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

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I'd like to gently remind all members: When I stand, you sit. I'll say it again so that the minister is looking at me when I say it.

This is a gentle reminder for everyone: When I stand, you sit.

Final supplementary.

**Mr. Douglas C. Holyday:** Premier, you wanted LRTs. Then you changed your mind. You asked council for support, and then you acted on your own. Last year, you voted against a motion supporting the Sheppard subway extension. Then you flip-flopped on LRTs. Then you flip-flopped on the Scarborough subway.

People in Scarborough don't want you to break another promise you made during the election, so we're back to trust. After the gas plant scandal, we know Liberals will do anything it takes to win votes—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Order.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I am asking for quiet, and it should be obvious that no one else would add their two cents' worth, like the member from Durham, while I'm speaking.

The member from Oxford, I hope we don't have to go to the medic to take care of your hand, or else repair that desk.

You have a short wrap-up for your question.

**Mr. Douglas C. Holyday:** In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the people of Ontario do not trust this government. Premier, with your chronic flip-flopping, the transit

voters of the city of Toronto can never trust you. You've got to make a solid decision and you've got to stick to it.

*Interjections.*

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

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** I have to apologize to the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I had suggested he had moved to the centre. I was clearly wrong.

Mr. Speaker, \$16.4 billion in 15 rapid transit projects: a consistent plan, our Premier, we have not moved off of one inch.

There are more Conservative MPs and city councillors, and now one MPP, and together, they can't come up with 4% of the solution. The member opposite and I both were mayors. Both of us know we start conversations with one third. Why doesn't the member opposite ask the federal government why in Kitchener and Ottawa, the federal government pays one third of transit costs, but in the 416, in his area, 4%?

The gap between us and the transit system the people of Toronto deserve is one word: It's "Conservative." When you vote Conservative, you get—

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

## GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My question is to the Premier. The people of Ontario have sent us a pretty clear message: Focus on delivering results that create jobs, improve their health care, make life more affordable and make government more accountable. Does the Premier have a problem with any of this?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** No, absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. In fact, that's exactly what we're doing. Our investments in people and in business and in infrastructure are designed to do precisely what the leader of the third party is talking about: to grow the economy, to create jobs and to make sure that we help people in their day-to-day challenges. That's the kind of initiative that is included in our budget. That's the work that we have been doing over the last eight months and before, and that's the work that we will continue to do, I hope, with the co-operation of people in this House.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** People look to the government for leadership, and what they're seeing these days are some pretty cynical games, whether it's playing political games to make their budget numbers look good or using a plan to protect youth from cancer risk as a political football. People actually expect better from their government.

Will the Premier stop playing these same old political games and start focusing on results that people need?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Again, I'm not sure what the leader of the third party is referencing, but if she is talking about the announcement that the Minister of Finance made yesterday about our overachievement on

our budget and on our deficit, and if she is talking about the way we are managing the finances that the—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** You may be volunteering yourself.

Premier?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** The fact that the Auditor General has signed off on the numbers that were released yesterday, I think, should give the leader of the third party and, certainly, the people of Ontario some confidence when we say that the 2012-13 deficit is now down to \$9.2 billion, that we're \$5.6 billion lower than was projected in the 2012 budget—a further reduction of \$600 million since the 2013 budget—and that, for the first time in a decade, total spending fell from the previous year. Spending is down, as we said it would be. We are constraining spending, and we are overachieving on our targets. That's good news—

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

Stop the clock. I'm going to mention the member from Renfrew and the member from Peterborough. I don't want to have to come back to you.

Final supplementary.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** This week, we started debating the Financial Accountability Office. I'm sure that office will have some things to say about Liberal numbers, but as we go forward, we're going to keep working to ensure that home care wait-lists are actually going to go down in this province, that auto insurance rates are going to go down and that youth unemployment is going to go down.

People remember this government's track record. They know that Liberals only moved to protect youth from tanning beds because it would, according to a Liberal staffer, "make a fabulous headline" to detract from gas plants. Now, they know that this government is only moving on youth jobs, home care and accountability because New Democrats demanded it. They want to see results, but they've lost trust in this government.

Is the Premier ready to focus on results for the people who elected us, or are we going to see more of the silly political games that the Liberals like to play so much?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Well, first of all, I just want to say that, on this side of the House, we have a lot of confidence in the Auditor General. When the Auditor General signs off on numbers, we really support that. That's why that scrutiny is so important.

In terms of the deep cynicism around the actions of the government, I just want to say that our commitment to improving kids' lives, all of the changes that we've made in education, the supports that we've put in place for communities, the fact that we are continuing to implement full-day kindergarten—all of those are evidence of our commitment to the future, to making sure that the investments that we make improve young people's lives into the future. The measures that are included in our budget are an extension of that.

The leader of the third party chose some issues as we went into the budget last year that she knew perfectly

well we wanted to take action on. We've taken action on those, and they will improve people's lives.

#### MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** This next question is for the Premier as well.

A simple step the Premier could take today would be to ensure that the committee looking into wasted millions at the gas plants is able to actually do its job. When the Premier was rejecting calls for a public inquiry that we were calling for earlier on, she insisted that this committee was going to be able to have all of their questions answered, but we all know that hasn't been happening. For two days, the Premier has refused to say in this House whether she will do anything about it.

Is the Premier going to open up the gas plant committee so that Ontarians can get answers about Liberal political interference, or will she keep protecting her Liberal friends?

1100

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Again, I have a lot of respect for the procedures of this Legislative Assembly. I do not control committees. I think it's fairly clear that Chairs of committees take their advice from the Clerk, and then the committee makes those decisions. The fact is, in a minority Parliament, we don't control the committees. The committees are a reflection of the makeup of the House. In fact, the NDP and the Conservatives can work in committee, and they can make those decisions.

I've been clear that my position is that the committee should have the opportunity to ask the questions that it wants to ask. So I turn to the committee and I say I hope that they will work to ask the questions that they want to have answered, that they will provide opportunities for people to come forward, and I will leave that up to them to make those deliberations, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Speaker, yesterday the Premier said the justice committee has her blessing to ask the questions it needs. Well, that's very nice, Speaker. That's very nice. But the Premier's blessing does not get Ontarians answers about questions that are being blocked at committee. What will get answers, Speaker, regardless of her refusal to acknowledge it, is the Premier supporting an expanded scope of this committee. Will the Premier support expanding the scope of the justice committee or will she keep protecting well-connected Liberal insiders?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I really believe that the committee needs to be allowed to do its job. From my perspective, every person that the committee has wanted to call from the Liberal Party has come forward, as far as I know. As the committee has asked people to come forward, they have come forward. As the committee has asked for documents, they have received those documents—135,000 of them, Mr. Speaker.

I'll just put the sarcasm aside. When I said that the committee has my blessing, I meant that. I meant that if

the committee wants to ask particular questions, they want to make decisions, it's up to the committee to do its work with advice from the Clerk. But I think that they've had a broad scope, and they should be able to continue to exercise that.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** It's a pretty interesting day today, Speaker. The Premier has said she wants transparency. On April 25, she said, "I said I was committed to being open and transparent ... all the questions that were asked were going to be answered."

On April 16, she said, "From day one when I came into this job ... information that was being asked for needed to be available."

Earlier this week, she said she will "make sure that, as questions are asked, they get answered." She said the same thing again today.

But the Premier needs to know we are asking the questions about Liberal interference with the Speaker. Will the Premier make sure that those questions get answered at committee?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I'm pretty sure that the particular issue that the leader of the third party is referencing got addressed by you earlier this week, Mr. Speaker, so I am not going to weigh into that. What I will say is that the committee has the authority to ask the questions that it chooses to ask, with the advice of the Clerk.

If there is a discussion that needs to happen among the House leaders in terms of changes, as the Premier and the leader of this party, I'm open to that happening. The House leader can meet with the House leaders from the opposition and the third party. They can have that discussion.

I remain committed to being open and transparent on this issue. I have said that as there are questions that come forward, I want those questions to be answered. This is not about protection of anyone. It's about opening up the process, and that's why the boxes of paper, all of the information that has been made available has been made available, Mr. Speaker.

#### TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** My question is to the Premier. Earlier today, part of your caucus in the public accounts committee supported our motion to finally learn the true cost of the reopened negotiations with the teachers' contracts last year. Today, in the Toronto Sun, it has been estimated that that cost would be as high as \$500 million. But what I am concerned about is the fact that your party is split, and it was very clear in the public accounts committee today that you were split.

So my question is, will you finally be open and transparent with the taxpayers to reveal these true costs? Given the Auditor General's report into the gas plants, one of my major concerns is that your party will obstruct legislative officers as well as members of this assembly

in getting the true costs. Can we get a commitment from you today, very public, that you will not get in the way of getting those answers out to the public, who very desperately want them?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Minister of Education.

**Hon. Liz Sandals:** I'm very pleased to respond to this because, in fact, we have been quite open about what the financial considerations are here. We announced in January 2013 that we had reached savings of \$1.8 billion as a result of labour negotiations, and as of today, we continue to achieve savings of \$1.8 billion. Nothing has changed.

What we clearly are very pleased about is that, as a result of our discussions with our friends in the various teachers' groups and the various education support workers' groups, we have in fact achieved what we wanted to achieve, which was a good start to the school year. I can tell you that any parents and grandparents I have spoken to in the last few weeks are absolutely delighted that we have received a good start to the school year.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** This minister did not provide me with any cost whatsoever. In fact, after six months of asking, doing order paper questions, asking questions in this assembly, not once did she provide me with a detailed breakdown of what this costs.

Mr. Speaker, you'll understand when I get concerned as a mother, with my child in the public education system, when the education minister in this House says that her number one priority is about bargaining—

*Interjection.*

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

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** —not educating students in our classrooms. It's a very big challenge for us on this side to believe this government, because they don't want to tell us what the true costs are.

I also am very concerned because this is the Premier who effectively campaigned to get the support of the teachers' unions by accepting tens of thousands of dollars from them in the last year. She then decided to repeal Bill 115 at the unions' request. She decided to appease the unions by pushing out the former minister.

All I am simply asking on behalf of parents, teachers who want to teach, students and members of this assembly is: Will they do their job, will they provide us with the information and will they table it, effective immediately?

**Hon. Liz Sandals:** Unlike the party opposite, we actually do believe that teachers want to teach, and we're very appreciative of that.

I must say, in terms of confusing numbers, the member opposite has claimed we have a \$100-million bill, a \$300-million bill, a \$500-million bill. I want to get the accurate number.

What we did is we struck an implementation cost estimate working group, and we have been working with school boards over the course of the summer, working through each item accurately and getting the actual

figures from the school boards. We have one or two items remaining, and when we have those accurate numbers absolutely nailed down, we will in fact release the accurate, actual costs, and I'm quite prepared to do that.

#### TANNING BED LEGISLATION

**M<sup>me</sup> France G linas:** Ma question est pour la premi re ministre. For five years, my NDP colleagues and I have been urging this government to regulate the tanning industry. But for five years, this government has let the bills languish, despite the fact that we knew of the cancer risk.

Speaker, this bill could have passed in 2008, in 2010, in 2012. Right now, it feels like a cynical game is being played on the backs of cancer patients.

If the Premier is not playing politics, then why didn't she pass this bill when she had a majority government?

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

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I am asking all members of this Legislature to work together for the benefit of the people of Ontario. We have an opportunity to pass this bill by the end of September. We need a party to stand with us to get that job done.

The member opposite's commitment to this tanning legislation is impeccable. She clearly supports this legislation that was first introduced by Khalil Ramal in 2008. Since 2008, cancer patients have been waiting for us to take a step that almost every other province has already done. We can get this done by September 30. It's time to put the political gamesmanship aside and get this job done.

1110

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**M<sup>me</sup> France G linas:** Thanks to the good work of the cancer society and of Kate of the Melanoma Network, right now if anyone in this House was to hold up this bill, they would be on the front page of every media with a set of red horns and long pointy tail. Nobody is going to hold this bill up. We've discovered that the only reason that this government suddenly became interested in the bill was to distract Ontarians from the gas plant scandal.

Instead of actually delivering results for Ontarians, why is the Premier more interested in manufacturing a crisis when in fact everybody agrees that it is time for this bill to move forward?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Be seated, please. Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** The member opposite was present this morning at a media conference. She heard first-hand from the people who were advocating for speedy passage of this bill. The Canadian Cancer Society, melanoma survivors, the Ontario Medical Association—there is overwhelming consensus that passing this bill is the right thing to do. It has been introduced five—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Minister?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Speaker, this bill or a bill similar to this has been introduced five times. Five times, the hopes of the cancer survivors have been raised and then dashed. We have a plan to get this done by September 30. I don't know why both parties aren't standing with us, together, and saying, "We can get this done." Let's get working together and get this legislation passed by September 30.

#### TANNING BED LEGISLATION

**Mr. Joe Dickson:** My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Parents and families in my community of Ajax-Pickering want to know if this government is serious in its commitment to protect the health of our sons, our daughters and our children. In March, the minister introduced the legislation that, if passed, would restrict access to tanning bed services for Ontarians under 18.

My question—straightforward: Could the minister tell us when she expects this legislation to move forward?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I'd like to thank the member from Ajax-Pickering for this very important question. As we were saying, this Skin Cancer Prevention Act represents common ground. All three parties agree that this legislation should move forward. There has been broad consensus that this is the right thing to do, but unfortunately this legislation has been blocked. It has not moved forward because the PCs have been extending debate for 55 hours on three other bills, blocking the progress of this legislation. We can no longer allow this legislation to be held up. The longer this legislation is delayed, the worse it is for our young people. So we will be moving a programming motion. I look forward to the support of the parties opposite.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Joe Dickson:** Thank you, Minister. It's great news for all Ontarians that we have an opportunity to pass this vital legislation swiftly. It seems to all of us in the House that we agree that restricting young Ontarians' access to tanning services is vital to protecting their health. However, as you have noted, this bill has needlessly been delayed.

Can the minister, through you, Speaker, tell us why it is important to have this done so quickly?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I'm quite aware that there is broad support for this legislation to move forward, and for very good reason. The dangers of exposure to artificial radiation for young people have been very well documented.

Speaker, I've been disappointed that the Leader of the Opposition kind of fluffed it off as not an important issue. I tell you, this is an important issue. It's an important issue for young people; it's an important issue for cancer patients.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Prince Edward-Hastings come to order.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Prince Edward–Hastings is warned.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Renfrew is warned.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Renfrew maybe didn't hear it while he was yelling. I said he is warned.

Finish your answer.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Speaker, at the end of question period, I will be moving unanimous consent for this programming motion—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Be seated, please. Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Order, please.

New question.

#### MINING INDUSTRY

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I have a question for the Premier on the Ring of Fire. Premier, your government has done a lot of talking about the Ring of Fire. You've touted the project in throne speeches, budgets, debate and in response to questions here in the Legislature. But despite all this talk, we are seeing very little progress made on the Ring. In fact, things have taken a step backward recently, with major players choosing to put their operations on hold, punctuated by the decision by Cliffs Resources to suspend work on their environmental assessment.

Premier, since becoming leader of your party, have you met with Cliffs, Noront or KWG, all key players who will create thousands of jobs for Ontarians by developing the Ring of Fire?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

**Hon. Michael Gravelle:** I appreciate the question from the member. Indeed, the Ring of Fire is a very exciting economic development opportunity for not just northern Ontario but for the whole province of Ontario. We are working very, very closely with all the companies involved in the Ring of Fire, certainly including the companies that the member mentioned.

I think what's extraordinarily important for us is to take the good news that's coming forward; for example, the fact that we are working so closely with First Nations—a set of negotiations on a regional framework basis led by the Matawa First Nations, led by Mr. Rae; and by asking Mr. Frank Iacobucci to take on the provincial negotiating role, which is moving forward in a very positive way.

Just this morning, for example, members may not know that the application for a judicial review has been actually withdrawn by the Matawa—

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Answer.

**Hon. Michael Gravelle:** —showing real confidence, may I say, in the process that's moving forward with Mr. Rae and Mr. Iacobucci. So—

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

**Hon. Michael Gravelle:** —a complex, extraordinarily complex—

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Thank you. I stand, you sit.

Supplementary?

**Mr. Norm Miller:** It's hard for the minister to provide a useful answer to a direct question asked of the Premier. So again, to the Premier, even in the face of prominent miners criticizing delays in the approval process and “unresolved agreements with the government of Ontario that are critical to the project's economic viability,” you insist that the Ring of Fire is moving ahead.

Premier, for claiming that your government would make the north a priority, your actions have done little to signal that there's been any real change. While getting the Ring of Fire right is important, there needs to be real action to show that you're committed to creating northern jobs.

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With yesterday's ruling of the land commissioner in mind, why should miners continue investing millions of dollars to stay afloat in the Ring of Fire when there's so little action on the part of your government?

**Hon. Michael Gravelle:** What's so absolutely crucial is that we do have the support of all three parties in the Legislature to move the project forward. Certainly, the information relating to the withdrawal of the application for judicial review is a very important piece in terms of moving the project forward.

There is no question: We do indeed agree that we all need to get it right, and that certainly includes working on making sure that the First Nations that are closest to the Ring of Fire are absolutely going to benefit from this project. That is certainly one of the goals that we have. It's also one of the very clear goals of the major companies involved in this project. I think that if you're talking to Cliffs Natural Resources, Noront Resources, KWG or Canada Chrome, they're also working very, very closely.

We are extremely encouraged by the decision to withdraw the judicial review.

The issue relating to the Mining and Lands Commissioner is one that we are looking at very closely, obviously, between Cliffs and KWG.

The long and the short is: It's a great project. This is a project—

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

#### PUBLIC TRANSIT

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** My question is to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. Yesterday, we learned that the minister's Scarborough transit proposal (1) does not have a detailed cost estimate, (2) would likely cause delays and cost overruns in the Eglinton Crosstown line, and (3) require Toronto council approval and willingness to pay hundreds of millions of dollars in sunk costs and cost overruns.

Why is the minister undermining transit expansion in Scarborough by floating a plan with so many flaws, road-blocks and uncertainties?

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** What we learned yesterday has never been the minister's plan. It has actually been a plan, worked on very diligently, between Metrolinx and MTO. It's actually the same plan that we've had for a very long time. If you just click twice on the MTO website, it pops up, and if you go back through time regression, you'll actually see that the same line is there.

We asked the city one question—"Do you want an LRT or a subway?"—because our members now for 20 years have wanted a subway and there were previous city councils that said they did not want a subway. When the council changed its mind in May to agree with my colleagues like Minister Duguid and my many MPP colleagues from Scarborough who had been elected on a subway—they said to me as minister and to the Premier, "Can we do it?" We did it, and we're going to do it with as minimal changes as possible. We're sticking to the same plan. There are no changes. The only flip-flops have been in the NDP, and the only government that has changed its position is the city's.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** What pops up is this: The minister is running roughshod over Metrolinx by pushing a proposal (1) without knowing how much taxpayer money will be wasted by breaking contracts with Bombardier and other suppliers, and (2) without the agreement of Toronto council to cover sunk costs and cost overruns and without confirmation that the plan is technically feasible.

What price will the city of Toronto, the TTC, Metrolinx and, above all, the taxpayers pay for the minister's arrogance and his self-serving scheme?

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** I have been accused of drawing some hard edges, but I don't personally attack people like the member opposite just did.

Second, very quickly: I know that the Conservatives and the NDP like to debate subways. They don't like to build them. They propose motions. The member for Trinity-Spadina wants us to get into another debate. We're not debating subways anymore. We're not debating transit; we're building it, and we're building it now.

I'm not interested in politicians who want to move motions. The people of Scarborough are fed up with the politics of this. The people of Scarborough are getting their subway, on budget, on time.

Enough talk; let the member for Etobicoke continue his rants from city hall and move more motions here. We don't need city hall politics here. We certainly don't need the NDP, who have no position—

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

#### CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING

**Ms. Mitzie Jacquelin Hunter:** The question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I have heard from a number of my constituents in Scarborough-Guild-

wood who live in co-operative housing that they have to go to court over an issue in their co-op. They say that this process is expensive and time-consuming for both the co-operative and the member involved.

This is an expense that is often prohibitively expensive for both parties. They are frustrated that tenants in rental properties seem to have better access to dispute resolution mechanisms, such as the Landlord and Tenant Board, than they do. They have asked me why our government has yet to help them reform this process, and I think this is a fair question.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, could you please explain what Bill 14 would do to help co-ops and their members with these costs?

**Hon. Linda Jeffrey:** I just want to start by congratulating the member from Scarborough-Guildwood on her successful election and her question in the House.

This is a very timely question, because Bill 14 is actually going to committee today, and I know we have a number of members of the co-op housing—the hard-working members here today.

I want to remind the entire House about the important role that co-op housing plays in providing affordable housing to Ontarians across this province. However, co-operatives have what can only be described as a complicated and expensive dispute resolution process: having to use the courts. That is unlike most tenants and landlords in Ontario, who are able to access the Landlord and Tenant Board to resolve a variety of disputes without involving courts or pricey lawyers. It's an issue of fairness for those who are least able to afford the costly court process. That's why our government introduced Bill 14 and that's why we urge the opposition and the third party to work with us and pass Bill 14. It's time to—

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

**Ms. Mitzie Jacquelin Hunter:** Thank you, Speaker. I would like to ask the minister, through you—because I've heard from some people in Scarborough-Guildwood that they are confused about how this bill is different from an earlier one. They have heard about an amendment that would allow the Landlord and Tenant Board to waive application fees. This causes many of them to worry that this would only increase the number of cases being heard by the Landlord and Tenant Board, leading to longer delays and less justice for tenants.

While I am new to the Legislature, I know there have already been questions in this House about this very issue.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: Could the minister explain how the fee waiver to the Landlord and Tenant Board would work and the rationale for including it?

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Minister?

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Attorney General, you're not helping.

**Hon. Linda Jeffrey:** —I want to comment that also the member from Leeds-Grenville raised this issue—

we've had this debate in the House—and previously questioned why we included this amendment.

In short, the reason we proposed this amendment was to ensure fairness for all Ontarians no matter what their income. Currently, all applicants to the Landlord and Tenant Board have to pay a fee to have their case heard, unlike many of our other boards and tribunals, meaning that a tenant whose only source of income is a disability benefit might have to choose between seeking redress at the Landlord and Tenant Board or paying for groceries.

Our government believes that no Ontarian should have to make that choice. At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, this amendment would mean that all Ontarians, whether they're rich or poor, would have the same access to justice.

#### MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** My question is for the Premier. Premier, yesterday in justice committee, your predecessor's former chief of staff, David Livingston, once again came up with a case of selective amnesia. He had a hard time recalling his role in your Liberal gas plant scandal. To make matters worse, he saw nothing wrong with his deleting emails and breaking document retention laws.

Week after week, Liberal staffers have come before the committee and either said they don't recall or have deliberately misled members of the committee. Premier, when are you going to start taking your party's flagrant abuse of taxpayers seriously, instruct your former staff to co-operate with the committee and finally start providing some answers?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Government House leader.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that on this side of the House, those members who have been called to appear in front of the committee have, including Mr. Livingston, who was mentioned.

1130

It's very interesting, Mr. Speaker, that, again, to go to the point of an answer I gave yesterday, the fact that the PC Party so aggressively was opposed to the plants, said they were the only party, if they formed government, that they would cancel them—what's interesting, Mr. Speaker, is over and over and over again we have asked those failed PC candidates—who had robocalls, who had tweets, who had press releases, who went around saying, "We're the only ones." We've asked them to come before committee to talk about their costing, to talk about their analysis, and there has been a concerted effort on the part of the PCs to make sure none of them would show up. So I ask the honourable member, in his supplementary, to tell us when he will encourage the PC candidates to show up and tell their side of the story.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Back to the Premier. Premier, transparency is about providing answers, and you have failed miserably on that account. Current and former Liberal staffers have come before the committee only to have their testimony contradicted by senior bureaucrats.

There are emails indicating that senior Liberal operatives were plotting an attempt to influence the Speaker to change a ruling.

Premier, you don't want to get to the bottom of this scandal because you're afraid of what we're going to find. Will you commit today—and changes can only be made here. It's not about letting the committee work. Your House leader has a job to do. Will you commit to instructing him today to expand the scope of the committee, the mandate of the justice committee, to include asking questions about your Liberal operatives' attempts to influence the Speaker? And will you finally—

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Stop the clock. Be seated, please. I will—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** It's really tough from this spot. I've ruled on this once before, and it's the second time I'm asking the member to stay away from an already-ruled-upon issue. Rephrase the question to include what you're looking for but without the issue that has been ruled on.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** As I said before, will you finally instruct your staff and advisers to regain their memory and tell the truth?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Be seated, please. Government House leader.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Mr. Speaker, you know, it's a little bit disappointing, the games that that member is engaging in this morning here in the Legislature. He is an individual who knows the procedures of this House. An issue arose before the justice committee, and there were a number of different avenues that could be taken. His House leader decided, with very appropriate notice to you, Mr. Speaker—several weeks—to move ahead with a notice of privilege. As such, that was the route that they chose. Some of the other routes that we talked about at House leaders' meetings were not then available. The honourable member raised it through a letter, and you gave a very clear and fulsome ruling, Mr. Speaker. In light of that ruling, I am open, as the Premier said, to having further discussions with the House leaders. But I think your ruling was very instructive about the nature of the meeting and the nature of meetings that you have as Speaker, and that of course is a context that we would have in any further discussions.

#### COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Hamilton Urban Core is a community health centre in my riding that delivers care to some of the neediest people in the province. After 17 years of dedicated service, it's stuck in a cramped and broken-down building because of chronic underfunding. Now the LHIN wants to cram the CHC into an even smaller facility and cut oral health and foot care from their mandate, even though 18 other CHCs in the province offer these very essential services.

Will the minister show some leadership and step in to protect the vital services provided by the Hamilton Urban Core, or does she agree with the local LHIN that the CHC should be cutting vital oral health and foot care services to my constituents?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I am delighted to welcome members of the Urban Core CHC here. I am a big champion of CHCs. I think you know that. We've been able to expand 19 CHCs, new capital projects across the province. In fact, we've almost doubled the number of CHCs in this province. It is a fantastic model, Speaker. It provides holistic care to people who might face barriers to receiving the care that they deserve.

I know that the CHC and the LHIN are working together to find common ground. I want the Urban Core to know that I urge them to continue to work with the LHIN, to develop a plan to move forward so we can meet the needs of the people of downtown Hamilton.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Speaker, for months now my health critic has been urging the minister to get involved in this issue. I finally raised it with her personally yesterday. It is not the case that the LHIN is working with the CHC. In fact, it seems as if the LHIN is working against the CHC and against the people in my riding who need vital foot care and oral care services.

This is an unacceptable situation that this minister has known about for a very, very long time, and I am asking her very, very specifically: Does she or does she not believe that community health care centres should have a mandate that includes foot care and oral care, and does she or does she not believe it's her job to make sure that the people of this province get the health care services they deserve?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Speaker, our commitment to community health centres is clear. We have almost doubled the number of community health centres. We've almost doubled the number of people served by community health centres. We've increased funding by 140%.

Our commitment is very clear. Nonetheless, Urban Core must continue to work with the LHIN. That is the structure we have put in place. I urge the community health centre to continue to work with the LHIN to find common ground. I look forward to this moving forward, but there's work to do before it can move forward.

## POVERTY

**Mr. Bas Balkissoon:** My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of our government's commitment to reducing poverty in Ontario. We've seen progress made through the efforts of the Poverty Reduction Strategy. This strategy aims to give children and their families the tools and support they need. There's a lot to be done when it comes to poverty and giving children and youth the best opportunity to reach their potential. Measuring our success is just as

crucial, as it allows us to enhance our strategy moving forward.

My question is, what have been the results to date of the Poverty Reduction Strategy and how has it assisted Ontario families?

**Hon. Teresa Piruzza:** I'd like to thank the member from Scarborough–Rouge River for this very important issue, one that I know resonates with many members in this House and across the province.

I'm proud of the progress we've made through the Poverty Reduction Strategy to date and our support for children and families. Current data indicates that 61,000 children have been prevented from falling into poverty. Additionally, 47,000 were lifted out. I'm very encouraged by these results.

We've been able to accomplish this through a range of programs and initiatives. For example, over 950,000 children in 510,000 families are being helped by the Ontario Child Benefit. As well, our Open Minds, Healthy Minds strategy has helped an estimated 35,000 young people deal with mental health and addiction. These are the ways in which we are investing in children and their families, building stronger communities and a healthier Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Bas Balkissoon:** Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for that response. I am pleased that we remain committed to reducing poverty and that our initial strategy has delivered results for families in Ontario.

In 2009, this government made a long-term commitment to combat poverty through the Poverty Reduction Act. A requirement of this act was that a new strategy would be developed every five years. It is my understanding that consultations have begun across the province on the development of a renewed strategy to continue to reduce poverty over the next five years.

I am personally taking part in a public consultation next month, along with my other Scarborough MPPs, to gain valuable input from our communities on the next strategy. Could the minister please inform the House—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Hamilton Mountain and the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek come to order.

Continue, please.

**Mr. Bas Balkissoon:** Could the minister please inform the House on the progress of these consultations and the steps being taken to reduce poverty in the province?

**Hon. Teresa Piruzza:** Thanks again to the member. I have to say that I'm proud that it's this government that brought forward the first provincial Poverty Reduction Strategy. It is this government that passed the Poverty Reduction Act.

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We are working on poverty reduction. We've been consulting with stakeholders to help develop our second strategy. I personally kicked off consultations in Windsor

on August 6 and also held one last week in Thunder Bay. What I'm finding is that people are pleased with the opportunity to provide their feedback on this issue. Their input is important to this issue. Poverty is a complex issue, and we need to hear from all voices. Our goal is that we hear from as many people as possible, and that's what we're working on, on the steps that need to be taken.

I want to encourage people across Ontario to participate in these consultations or provide feedback to us online. We know there's much more work to do. We all know there is, and these—

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

#### PULMONARY FIBROSIS

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, many Ontarians living with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis are not able to obtain the medication that will help slow the progression of this terrible disease. Esbriet, a drug that has been proven to help manage the symptoms, is not at this time on the approved drug formulary. Patients have applied to the Exceptional Access Program to get funding for Esbriet but have been denied, with no clear answer for the denial.

This issue has been before the Committee to Evaluate Drugs for a very long time, yet no decision has been made, and there's no indication when a decision will be made. Minister, will you commit today to speaking with the committee with a view to obtaining a positive answer with respect to funding as soon as possible?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I do welcome people who are advocating for this drug today to the Legislature. I do want to say once again, though, that these are not political decisions.

We make decisions on what drugs to fund based on the evidence. There is a process that we go through when we make important decisions about what drugs to fund. With regard to Esbriet, the Canadian Drug Expert Committee has recommended that Esbriet should not be funded because of inconsistent results.

We remain open to new evidence, but at this point the evidence to support the public funding of this drug has not been presented to the Committee to Evaluate Drugs. So we clearly are open to new evidence, but at this time the evidence does not support funding.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Point of order.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Timmins—James Bay on a point of order.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion to pass the tanning beds legislation at second reading.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Timmins—James Bay has asked for unanimous consent to call second reading of the bill without debate and a vote. Do we agree? Agreed.

#### SKIN CANCER PREVENTION ACT (TANNING BEDS), 2013

#### LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PRÉVENTION DU CANCER DE LA PEAU (LITS DE BRONZAGE)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 30, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 30, An Act to regulate the selling and marketing of tanning services and ultraviolet light treatments /  
Projet de loi 30, Loi visant à réglementer la vente et la commercialisation de services de bronzage et de traitements par rayonnement ultraviolet.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** On March 19, 2013, Ms. Matthews moved second reading of Bill 30. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Shall the bill be referred for third reading? I recognize—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** We've got this. I heard a no. Therefore, the bill is referred to committee.

Minister of Health.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I move third reading of Bill 30, An Act to regulate the selling and marketing of tanning services and ultraviolet light treatments.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I'm not sure if the member from Renfrew remembers something. I hope he does.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** And I think you were reminding him.

Having said that, we still have to finish what we started. This bill has been, for second reading, into a committee. The minister has an opportunity to put it into the committee that she so desires.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Excuse me; I've got this. It doesn't preclude the minister from doing something else, but I need to get it to a committee.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Speaker, I would like to refer this to general government.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The bill is now referred to the general government committee.

Minister of Health.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I move unanimous consent for third reading of Bill 30, An Act to regulate the selling and marketing of tanning services and ultraviolet light treatments.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I'm working through this. It's quite all right; I've got it. I think we may land where we want to land.

You're seeking unanimous consent to discharge the bill from committee, put it to third reading with no debate and passage. That is the unanimous consent. Do we have unanimous consent? I heard a no.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Order.

Therefore, the bill remains in general government committee.

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

*The House recessed from 1147 to 1500.*

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** Speaker, we're joined this afternoon by some members of the Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation. They're sitting in the east members' gallery. With us today are Michael Jarvis, Ron Lillie and Jean Lillie. Please welcome them to Queen's Park.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I also would like to recognize those persons suffering with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, looking for a cure in Esbriet, which is the immediate drug that they're requiring. My constituent Laurie Fowler, as well as Robert Davidson, who is the president of CPFF, the Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation: Welcome to Queen's Park. I hope the ministry is listening.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Wonderful introduction, and only an introduction.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### ANNIVERSARY OF 9/11

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** 9/11: Not so many years ago, 9/11 was just another date on the calendar, but that all changed 12 years ago today. 9/11 has become a solemn date that will forever be etched in our society's collective memory, for it was on this date, September 11, 2001, that thousands of innocent lives were lost, including 24 Canadians, in the despicable acts of terror that occurred in New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia.

9/11 is a date where people remember where they were when they heard the news. In a world before Twitter, we watched news commentators try to explain the unimaginable horror while watching the twin towers collapse, and we tried to understand why anyone would unleash such senseless violence on so many innocent people.

9/11 is now remembered for the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York City and the attempts on other targets, like the Pentagon. However, 9/11 will also be remembered for the bravery demonstrated by the many first responders, volunteers and citizens who did everything they could to help others during and after the devastation.

And so on this day, while we will never forget the unspeakable, reprehensible acts of murder that were committed 12 years ago, we will also never forget the amazing strength and unity free citizens of the world showed in condemning those terrible acts.

## HEALTH CARE

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** Until the end of September, it's time to get "Face to Face" with the Hospice of Windsor and Essex County. Now in its 11th year, Cogeco's John Fairley gets 500 ambassadors to ask for a \$10 donation from 10 friends. He's raised more than \$600,000 in this fashion, which support Canada's first and largest community-based hospice. The hospice services provided are at no cost to those who require them.

The Do Good Divas are gearing up for their annual Girls Night Out in Handbag Heaven. Some 1,200 women attend and raise funds for local health care services. This event features live and silent auctions of more than 300 handbags donated by celebrities, designers, retailers and generous members of the community. Over the past six years, this small non-profit group has donated more than \$350,000 to improve community health care services.

This year, the Do Good Divas will also be launching a new partnership with the Trillium Gift of Life Network to promote awareness and understanding of the importance of organ and tissue donation. Currently in Ontario, there are 1,500 people waiting for a life-saving organ transplant, and although 85% of Ontarians are in favour of organ donation, less than 25% have registered their consent to donate. The Do Good Divas are committed to increasing the level of donors in Windsor and Essex county.

## PULMONARY FIBROSIS

**Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** It's a pleasure to rise today and inform the House that September is Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis Awareness Month in Canada, something we should all pay a little bit of attention to, I think. It was established to increase awareness and understanding of this very rare disease. This important day and month is a reminder to all Ontarians of this debilitating and ultimately fatal disease, with no known cure.

It is estimated that up to 30,000 people in Canada are currently diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis. Of those, between 5,000 and 10,000 suffer from IPF. Today, unfortunately, approximately 5,000 Canadians die each year from this deadly disease. It's a progressive and it's a life-limiting disease, and it's characterized by scarring in the lungs that hinders the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the body. It makes it extremely difficult for patients to breathe.

Robert Davidson is a double-lung-transplant recipient who founded the Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation. Today, Mr. Davidson is leading a delegation of patients suffering with IPF at Queen's Park to educate us all about IPF. It was a pleasure to sit down with Robert Carew from my riding of Oakville to learn more about IPF last year.

So today, Speaker, I'd like to draw your attention to this month. I'd also like to welcome Robert Davidson, Robert Carew, Michael Jarvis again, Ron and Jean Lillie, and all members of the CPFF delegation to Queen's Park today.

## PUBLIC TRANSIT

**Mr. Victor Fedeli:** This past spring, Metrolinx provided several options to pay for improvements to gridlock and transit in the Toronto and Hamilton areas. This included a 1% hike in the HST and a five-cent-a-litre gasoline tax. This did not go unnoticed in my riding of Nipissing or across northern Ontario. Also found in the gas plant documents were files outlining nearly 50 other provincial tax and fee increases to be considered, including a monthly phone bill surcharge, increased driver's licence fees—which we saw implemented last week—and new fees for hunters, fishers and park users.

Taxpayers in northern Ontario are already overburdened with demands by the provincial government on their pocketbooks, and residents in northern Ontario experience higher costs for many items, including heat and transportation.

I surveyed my constituents over the summer with a mailer, and they have spoken out loud and clear. I presented a petition Monday and have here 600 coupons that they returned. Interestingly, 222 of these coupons were hand-delivered to my office. We've never had traffic like that for any other issue of any of the mailings we've done. The message from Nipissing is clear: They are not willing to pay for the expansion of Toronto and Hamilton transit through taxes, fees, surcharges, or other mechanisms that burden the taxpayers of northern Ontario.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I hope the member from Nepean–Carleton is okay. Just checking.

Members' statements: The member from Nickel Belt.

## MINING HEALTH AND SAFETY

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me take you to 1981: Prince Charles married Princess Diana, the first space shuttle launch took place, and an inquiry was held into mining safety. Fast-forward to 2013: Prince Charles has a new wife, the space shuttle has been retired, but the Occupational Health and Safety Act with respect to mining is still here.

MINES—Mining Inquiry Needs Everyone's Support—has been established to protect those working in Ontario's mining industry and prevent further workplace fatalities. The MINES committee is urging the government to call an inquiry into Ontario mining safety. Why? Because the last one is 32 years old, because there have been massive technological changes in mining, and because we have a better understanding of the link between environmental issues and health.

Why then is this Liberal government still refusing to hold an inquiry into mining health and safety? It is the people in my riding and the people in every mining community in Ontario whose lives are affected by those outdated regulations. I don't want to wait for another death. We owe it to the children in my riding who are growing up without their dads, we owe it to the brothers

and sisters who have lost a sibling, and we owe it to the moms and dads who have buried their sons and daughters due to mining accidents. Ontario needs an inquiry into mining health and safety. We have to do better. Merci.

## ORLEANS CHILD CARE CENTRE

**Mr. Phil McNeely:** In August, I attended the 30th-anniversary celebration of the non-profit Orleans Child Care Centre. This particular milestone for owners Sam and Uttra Bhargava marks their third decade operating in our community, serving over 3,000 young children and their families over that period.

## 1510

Balancing work and life can be difficult for today's working parents, and finding reliable, safe and affordable child care can be a challenge. Not only have the Bhargavas and their committed staff been up to the challenge; they have provided high-quality service, innovated through the years, and have gone above and beyond what is expected of most child care centres.

Sam and Uttra's entrepreneurial spirit has not only been applied to their business but also to charitable and community endeavours as well. The couple has contributed \$1 million for Parkinson's research and launched a fundraising campaign for stem cell research for spinal cord injuries, and both are dedicated Kiwanians.

Since 1983, Sam and Uttra have been there for our families, and I expect they will be there for many more years to come, providing affordable, high-quality and personalized care for Orléans' young families.

While Orléans has changed dramatically over the past 30 years, the Bhargavas have been there. Today, many of their original students are now bringing their children to Sam and Uttra.

I want to extend my congratulations to the Bhargava family and want to thank them for their many years of service.

## EAST NEPEAN EAGLES

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I rise today as a proud MPP whose riding is home to Canada's championship Little League team, the East Nepean Eagles. Not only were they the provincial champions and then the national champions; they went all the way to Williamsport, Pennsylvania, to represent our nation very proudly at the international Little League, the world championship.

I was so proud of them. When they came home, they continued their successes by being recognized by the Rogers Centre and the Toronto Blue Jays.

I want to give a special congratulations to their coach Mark Keeping. Coach Keep we called him because we followed him on Twitter with the constant updates he was giving us for our team. And then, when they were being honoured by the Toronto Blue Jays, Coach Keep was the proud recipient of a compliment from John Gibbons, the manager of the Toronto Blue Jays, who said, "Maybe we should hire you." I couldn't agree more

because the East Nepean Eagles made us all proud and so did their coach.

But the news gets even better because not only have we feted them in our community in Barrhaven and all of the city of Ottawa being so proud of them, but in 2015, I want to take you all out to the baseball game when we host the international championships, the World Series of Little League baseball.

Let's all congratulate those champion baseball players, 11 years and 12 years of age. They did it. We're proud of them. Take me out to the ball game, Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Okay.

### STOUFFVILLE SPIRIT

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** I'm extremely happy to tell you that there is also great excitement in the town of Whitchurch-Stouffville in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham. The Stouffville Spirit are a Junior A hockey team that play in the Ontario Junior Hockey League. They open their season at home this weekend with games tomorrow night and Sunday afternoon.

Founded in 1995, the Spirit play their home games at the Stouffville Arena and have a rich tradition of excellence both on and off the ice. In August, four of their players were selected to participate in the Ontario Summer Select Showcase. The showcase featured the best Junior A hockey players in the province. The Spirit had the second most players selected out of 40 teams.

However, what has truly impressed me has been their tremendous involvement in the Stouffville community. For example, players regularly visit local public schools where they emphasize to students the importance of literacy and education in our everyday lives. They also stress the very important notion that school always comes first when being a student athlete. The Spirit are also known for their annual appearance in the Stouffville Santa Claus Parade. Additionally, all proceeds from the 50/50 draw from their first two games this year will go towards the Stouffville Terry Fox Run. It is because of strong local partners like the Stouffville Spirit that the Stouffville Terry Fox Run is one of the most successful in the country.

Good luck this weekend, and go, Spirit.

### PULMONARY FIBROSIS

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I would like to recognize Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis Day at Queen's Park.

Today, there are an estimated 2,700 people in Ontario living with IPF and roughly 9,000 people in Canada. This disease is more common in men than women and is usually diagnosed between the ages of 40 and 80 years. Currently, there is no cure for IPF. This rare disease causes scarring of the lungs, making it increasingly difficult to breathe. Patients experience increased shortness of breath and reduced physical functioning, with a median survival rate of two to five years.

Today we welcome Robert Davidson, the president of the Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation. Robert is joined by other patients currently living with IPF. I'd like to welcome Michael Jarvis, Henry Lowi, Larkell Bradley, Ron Lillie, Connie and Hugh Detzler, Laurie Fowler and Roger Chandler, and their families. The Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation will be hosting a reception at 5:30 today in the dining room, and I certainly encourage all members to attend and learn more about IPF and the means of dealing with it through medications.

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### INTER-PROVINCIAL IMPORTATION OF WINE, BEER AND SPIRITS ACT, 2013

#### LOI DE 2013 SUR L'IMPORTATION INTERPROVINCIALE DE VIN, DE BIÈRE ET DE SPIRITUEUX

Mr. Milligan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 98, An Act respecting the importation of wine, beer and spirits from other provinces / Projet de loi 98, Loi concernant l'importation de vin, de bière et de spiritueux provenant d'autres provinces.

**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. Rob E. Milligan:** This bill amends the Liquor Control Act to add a provision that permits individuals who are 19 years of age or older to import, or cause to be imported, wine into Ontario from other provinces if the wine is for their personal consumption and not for resale or other commercial use. The Liquor Control Board of Ontario's powers do not apply to wine imported by an individual in accordance with that provision.

The government of Ontario is required to encourage the parties to the agreement of internal trade to implement or amend measures to allow for the free movement of wine within Canada. A progress report must be tabled in the Legislative Assembly within three months after the bill comes into force and every six months thereafter.

Similar provisions are added with respect to the importation of beer and spirits from other provinces. Those provisions only apply if the Importation of Intoxicating Liquors Act of Canada authorizes the inter-provincial importation of beer or spirits, as the case may be.

### MOTIONS

**Hon. John Milloy:** I seek unanimous consent to move the following motion with respect to Bill 30 and that the question be put without debate or amendment:

I move that the Standing Committee on General Government be authorized to meet for two sessional days for the purpose of public hearings on the bill, from 9 a.m. to noon and from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. commencing on Wednesday, September 18, 2013; and

The committee is authorized to meet for one sessional day for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill on Wednesday, September 25, from 9 a.m. to noon and from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.; and

The deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 5 p.m. on Tuesday, September 24, 2013. The committee shall report the bill to the House on the sessional day following the day on which the committee met for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That upon receiving the report of the committee, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on the sessional day following clause-by-clause consideration, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House, and shall be deemed to be ordered for third reading; and

The order for third reading of the bill shall be called no more than three sessional days after the bill is reported; and

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When the order for third reading is called, three hours shall be allotted to the third-reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and the vote on third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h), and in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Mr. Milloy—

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** No.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** You can say it all you want, but I've got to say it first.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Just making sure you know.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Yes, you're making sure I know a lot.

The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put the motion forward. Do we have consent? I heard a no.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Point of order.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Timmins–James Bay on a point of order.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Mr. Speaker, you would know that subcommittees in this House do meet, and there's going to be a subcommittee meeting this afternoon in regard to this particular committee. That is the place to deal with that, and we are prepared to allow that bill to have essentially what you've put inside this time allocation

motion, but it's done by the regular methods. We will move that in fact at committee—

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I appreciate what you are attempting to do, member from Timmins–James Bay. That's actually not a point of order, but I would like the member to know that I tried to give him enough leeway to make that point. At the same time, being challenged from time to time is not helpful.

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### STUDENT ASSISTANCE

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The House leader gave me a bit of a start when he got up at the same time I did, but there are no crossed signals there, which is good from my perspective.

This is an exciting time of year, I think, for all of us. This week, more than 568,000 students are returning to class at colleges and universities all across Ontario. As the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, I want to wish every student an exciting and successful year of study.

I want to note that this year's enrolment represents another record for our post-secondary system. This shows that our young people, like the government of Ontario, understand the importance of a post-secondary education in ensuring their future successes. A post-secondary education continues to be one of the best investments a student can make in his or her future. It's also an investment in Ontario's future, because it means we can continue to build the highly skilled workforce we need for a strong, modern economy. That's why we have made record investments in our post-secondary education system, investments that include student financial aid.

Our government is holding firm to its commitment to help students get the education and training they need: help that is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay. I'm proud to say that Ontario has one of the most generous student financial aid programs in all of Canada. Last year, we invested \$1 billion in grants and loans, including the 30% off tuition grant. OSAP helped more than 370,000 students. The 30% off tuition grant helped nearly 230,000 low- and middle-income students pay for their post-secondary education, and the tuition grant keeps pace with increases in tuition. This year, students in a university or college degree program will save \$1,730 on tuition, while students in a college diploma or certificate program will save \$790.

Our improvements are not limited to new grants for students. We've also improved the process for students to get their OSAP. If you visit campuses across the province this week, you won't find long lineups of students at their financial aid offices, thanks to OSAP express. Starting last year, we cut the red tape and streamlined the application process for full-time college and university

students. One change was to have their aid deposited directly into their accounts.

These investments and improvements are working. The results are clear. We have 161,000 more students attending colleges and universities than there would have been 10 years ago. Our attainment rate for post-secondary education has increased to 65%, the highest in the OECD. This is good news for students of Ontario. This is good news for the people of Ontario.

Once again, today I offer my congratulations to all the students who have made a choice to pursue post-secondary studies. Whether they're starting their first year or whether they're close to graduation, they have made a firm commitment to their future and ours.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** It's now time for responses.

**Mr. Rob Leone:** I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus to talk about a subject I know quite a bit about. I remember the days when I was in university for three degrees, actually, so the 10 or 11 years when this was the first day of school. I know that students always came to school with a lot of enthusiasm. They were excited to start their new classes; they were excited to start their learning and they were excited to see their peers, their colleagues, and to do what I think a lot of people want, which is not only to learn inside the classroom but also to learn outside the classroom.

Mr. Speaker, I have a connection to the campus that was in your riding, actually, Wilfrid Laurier University's Brantford campus, which was the final appointment that I had prior to entering politics. So I know it's a pretty important time of year in your riding as well, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very pleased to discuss this issue with members of this Legislature. I know students are very concerned always about the accessibility and affordability of their education, and it's something that we in the Ontario PC caucus care deeply about as well. In addition to the discussions that have been had with respect to—and I know all members of this Legislature have received commentary on the Ontario tuition grant.

What I want to point out is that I think a lot of students feel a little bit uneasy about what has transpired because, during the election of 2011, we heard that this Ontario tuition 30%-off grant was going to apply to all students. In reality, three in five students in the province of Ontario aren't getting this Ontario tuition grant—three in five students, and this was a policy that was designed to apply to all students.

In fact, on September 5, there was an email issued by the Ontario Liberal Party that said in the subject line, "All students can go back to post-secondary education." Well, if you're a student who's actually more than four years out of high school, you don't qualify for this grant. If you're a part-time student in the province of Ontario, you don't qualify. If you're a mature student—perhaps you're a single parent who in the early years wanted to raise children and wanted to go back to school—you don't qualify for this grant. There are so many loopholes

that were built into the policy that three in five students in the province of Ontario simply do not qualify for this grant.

To make matters worse, Mr. Speaker, in order to fund this grant, the government actually had to take away other scholarships and grants that applied before. So a student who actually was receiving a merit scholarship, for example, might have been able to receive that scholarship, but today that scholarship no longer exists. So they're losing twice. They're not getting the Ontario tuition grant and they're not getting the merit scholarship or grant that they had previously been awarded.

What makes me very interested is that I've been in this Legislature for almost two years—I understand that this is a topic that is of vital importance to this government, but it's also of vital importance to all members of this Legislature—and we haven't seen anything new. We're talking about old news. We're talking about an Ontario tuition grant that was talked about in the last election. Two years from that election, we still don't have a new policy. We've had lots of round tables; we've had lots of consultations; we've had lots of discussions—

**Mr. Rob E. Milligan:** Conversations.

**Mr. Rob Leone:** "Conversations"; that's the word. We've had lots of conversations but we've had very little action in terms of what we can do to have more people go to school and be able to afford it better. There has been not one cost-cutting measure that could be implemented, or perhaps having more time devoted for professors to do their teaching: The administration costs in our colleges and universities have skyrocketed, but nothing has been done to actually look at the costs of university and college education in the province of Ontario. There are very simple solutions that can be had. Tough decisions obviously need to be made, but we have not seen from this government any semblance of a desire to actually get to the heart, get to the root, of why tuition consistently goes up year after year after year.

**1530**

I hope that the next time the minister stands in this Legislature to talk about post-secondary education, they actually have some tangible solutions to get the costs down and get more folks into schools and into jobs at the end of the day once they graduate.

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

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** I want to take a moment to congratulate our new and returning college and university students as they begin a new academic year. Pursuing a post-secondary education is an important journey, personally and professionally, and I wish all Ontario students the very best. Frankly, they're going to need it, given this government's approach to their future.

After listening to the achievements claimed by the minister, it is clear that they have bought into their own rhetoric and are hoping Ontario families do too. It's difficult to hear how they are prioritizing training, colleges and universities in Ontario when they have changed ministers almost as frequently as they have changed their minds on subways.

Let's examine the evidence and, more importantly, the reality of the situation for Ontario students and their families.

Today, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives released their report, Degrees of Uncertainty. I quote: "Average tuition and compulsory fees in Canada have quadrupled since 1990, and according to the study, Ontario is the province with the highest fees and will see its tuition and other fees climb from \$8,403 this fall to an estimated \$9,517.... Newfoundland and Labrador remains the province with the lowest compulsory fees of \$2,872 ... rising to an estimated \$2,886...."

This government has no plans and no ideas to bring skyrocketing tuition fees under control. They laud their 30% tuition grant reaching almost 230,000 students, which is a good start; I grant them that. However, the reality is, their solution unfortunately excludes two thirds of all Ontario's PSE students. There are more than 900,000 PSE students in this province. Excluding almost 700,000 students from a plan to help with tuition is just bad math.

According to OCUFA, the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, in the last 10 years Ontario has invested less per student than any other province in Canada: "Universities in Ontario receive less funding per student than any other province in Canada. And per-student funding for Ontario universities has been in steady decline over the past two decades."

They go on to say that "continued enrolment increases and stagnant public funding mean that per-student dollars are once again in a worrying decline." This decline in per-student funding and investment means this government has prioritized our tax dollars on gas plants, eHealth and Ornge, instead of finding real answers to their chronic underinvestment in PSE.

The minister claims a commitment to providing our students with a great start and says how vital students are to building a stronger economy, yet he and his colleagues have continued to ask Ontario families to pay more and had asked our colleges and universities to do more with less, which can be understood by the rest of us as, "We still aren't giving you the funding you require."

We have all heard the arguments that things are more expensive now and that times have changed, and I agree with that sentiment. In fact, I know students' lives have changed dramatically since I and many of us here today went to college or university.

In the past, we could afford to work for a summer and save enough money to pay for our tuition for the coming year. This is no longer the case. Today, PSE students are borrowing more than ever and are unemployed in record numbers. Those who are working are typically in unpaid internships that demand excessive overtime hours; in other words, cheap free labour.

Ontario families and students deserve the best education we can give them, and I am disappointed that this government refuses to live up to its promises.

My suggestion? I encourage this government to go back to school, but quite frankly, they may not be able to afford it.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Further responses? I thank all members for their comments. It is now time for petitions.

## PETITIONS

### SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES

**Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** I've got a petition that I'm reading on behalf of the member for Toronto Centre, and it says:

"A 2011 study by the World Health Organization of the burden of disease indicates that alcohol ranks second out of 26 risk factors for death, disease and disability, behind tobacco but ahead of other health risks such as overweight and obesity, physical inactivity, illicit drug use, unhealthy diet and others...."

"We are asking you to find solutions for alcoholics and their families. Since the government of Ontario controls and sells the very substance that creates this desperate social problem, we believe the responsibility falls to the government to correct the ills it helps create.

"Therefore we, the petitioners, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the government of Ontario to introduce legislation similar to the Marchman Act, progressive legislation in the state of Florida, that provides an individual in need of substance abuse services with emergency services and temporary detention for substance abuse evaluation and treatment when required, either on a voluntary or involuntary basis.

"This legislation should empower family members or friends when a person suffering from alcohol or drug addiction abuse is incapable of appreciating the need for their own care or for the health of their unborn child."

I agree with this petition, will sign it and send it down with Aly.

### LONG-TERM CARE

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

"Whereas Ontario ranks ninth of 10 provinces in terms of the total per capita funding allocated to long-term care; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care data shows that there are more than 30,000 Ontarians waiting for long-term-care placements and wait-times have tripled since 2005; and

"Whereas there is a perpetual shortage of staff in long-term-care facilities and residents often wait an unreasonable length of time to receive care, ... to be fed; to receive a bath; for pain medication. Since 2008, funding for 2.8 paid hours of care per resident per day has been provided. In that budget year, a promise was made to increase this funding to 4.0 hours per resident per day by 2012. This has not been done; and

"Whereas the training of personal support workers is unregulated and insufficient to provide them with the

skills and knowledge to assist residents who are being admitted with higher physical, psychological and emotional needs. Currently, training across the province is varied, inconsistent and under-regulated;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“(1) immediately increase the number of paid hours of nursing and personal care per resident per day to 4.0 hours (as promised in 2008);

“(2) develop a plan to phase in future increases so that the number of paid hours per resident per day of nursing and personal care is 5.0 hours by January 2015;

“(3) establish a licensing body, such as a college, that will develop a process of registration, accreditation and certification for all personal support workers.”

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

#### FAMILY SAFETY

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly for which I’d like to acknowledge a number of individuals who sent it to me from Toronto, Burlington and the Hamilton area. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the Safer Families Program is a successful partnership of Catholic Family Services Peel-Dufferin, Family Services of Peel and the Peel Children’s Aid Society (CAS), receives year-to-year funding from the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, and is a critical component of social services to families within the Peel community; and

“Whereas the intervention model for Safer Families currently operates with no waiting lists, an important consideration for families experiencing domestic violence and child protection concerns, as they require immediate access to service; and

“Whereas the Safer Families Program is aligned with Ontario’s child poverty agenda, is committed to preventing violence against women, and contributes to community capacity building to support child welfare delivery; and

“Whereas currently, Safer Families serves 14% of all domestic violence cases referred to Peel Children’s Aid Society and has the” capacity “to double the number of cases it handles;

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

“That the government of Ontario adjust its funding to supply ongoing core funding rather than year-to-year funding, and realign funding to double the percentage of cases referred by the Peel Children’s Aid Society and served by the Safer Families Program.”

I completely agree with this petition. It’s a valuable program. I’m pleased to affix my signature to this petition and to send it down with page Massoma, who is from Mississauga–Streetsville.

1540

#### 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” has been “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 will give the petition to page Gabrielle.

#### TIRE DISPOSAL

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

“Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship’s eco fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or \$1,311.24;

“Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces;

“Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75;

“Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers and lost sales for our farm equipment dealerships;

“Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

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

“To suspend the decision to significantly increase Ontario Tire Stewardship’s fees on agricultural and off-the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs.”

Thank you. I’ll be passing this off to page Bridget.

## TIRE DISPOSAL

**Mr. John O'Toole:** My petition from the constituents in the riding of Durham reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or \$1,311.24;

"Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco" fee taxes "that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces;

"Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs" or charge a modest fee of \$75;

"Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers" and a loss of sales for our farm equipment dealers; and

"Whereas the PC caucus has" approved "a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

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

"Please suspend the decision to significantly increase Ontario Tire Stewardship's fees on agricultural and off-the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs."

It appears to me that the ministry did listen to this. I'm pleased to present this to Taylor, one of the pages.

## PUBLIC TRANSIT

**Ms. Soo Wong:** I have a petition 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" a multi-year plan "for the construction and operation of an extension to the Sheppard subway line."

I fully support the petition and give my petition to page Aly Muhammad.

## PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"That the delisting of OHIP physiotherapy clinics as of August 1st not proceed and that the provincial government guarantee there will be no reduction in services currently available for seniors, children and youths, people with disabilities and all those who are currently eligible for OHIP-funded physiotherapy."

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

## HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I won't read the petition on the tire stewardship thing. This is another issue, though.

"Whereas the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry generates \$2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario;

"Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry;

“Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;

“Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates \$1.3 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in the province for OLG;

“Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government \$1.1 billion a year and threatens more than 60,000” agricultural “jobs;

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

“Call on the” Kathleen Wynne “government to:

“(1) protect the \$1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program;

“(2) direct OLG to honour the contracts with race-tracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program.”

I’m pleased to sign and support this—this is the right thing to do for Ontario—and present it to Taylor, once again, who is a hard-working page.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER ACT, 2013

#### LOI DE 2013 SUR LE DIRECTEUR DE LA RESPONSABILITÉ FINANCIÈRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 11, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 95, An Act to establish a Financial Accountability Officer / Projet de loi 95, Loi créant le poste de directeur de la responsabilité financière.

1550

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Further debate?

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** I know my colleagues want to speak, so I’m not going to take a lot of time. I just wanted, for the record, to put a couple of things in the record from my perspective. What we have learned over the last number of years in this Legislature is that there are a number of instances where a government may be sometimes well intentioned—go out to try to do things—and end up boondoggling what it is that comes out the other end. What it ends up doing is costing the taxpayers, in certain cases, billions of dollars.

I look at this Liberal government since it came to power. It started with eHealth, I think an idea that we can all support in regard to trying to find a way to make records electronic when it comes to health care so that when you walk into a hospital or the doctor’s office, the

information is available to all. We ended up doing what? Spending \$1 billion and mucking up the process.

Then the government said, “We’re going to fix what was already a good air ambulance system,” one that had a good mix between public and private, that delivered services on time at a good, reasonable price for the taxpayers of Ontario. The government decided, “Oh, well, you know, we know better. We’re going to go out and reinvent the wheel,” and they invented this thing called Ornge. We all know that we spent another \$1 billion to try to fix an air ambulance system that was already working.

Next, we end up with what has happened with these gas plants. The government ended up siting gas plants where nobody wanted them, and then ended up cancelling contracts that were signed in such a way that it could cost taxpayers between \$640 million, which is the bottom number, and \$1 billion.

There are \$3 billion of money that was expended that shouldn’t have been. Andrea Horwath and the New Democrats are saying that we need some sort of accountability in the front end to make sure that those types of expenditures are looked at prior to the money actually being spent so that governments are less likely to do these types of things and get away with spending taxpayers’ dollars in the way that they do.

I look forward to this bill going to committee. There need to be some amendments made. We note that the bill has got some issues that we have to deal with, but I think those are doable. I believe that in the end, when we finally do pass this legislation, we’ll be in a position in Ontario where hopefully in the future we’re able to prevent the types of fiascos that we’ve seen such as eHealth, Ornge and what happened with the gas plants.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Further debate?

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I’m pleased to rise today to speak to the Financial Accountability Officer Act. I find it disappointing that I’m one of the few MPPs who will get an opportunity to speak to this bill.

This is a significant item: a creation of a Financial Accountability Office. After this government’s out-of-control spending and waste, such as eHealth, million-dollar grants to cricket clubs, Ornge, and the gas plants, I understand the need for financial accountability. But, once again, this government is choosing political expediency over doing the right thing.

Creating a new servant of the Legislature is an historic undertaking. It should be done with careful consideration and full and open debate, and with all members of the Legislature having information they need to make an educated decision.

For those who don’t recall, and for our five new members in the Legislature, I want to take a minute to talk about how we got to this point. Last spring, in an effort to get this budget passed, the Liberal government introduced a time allocation motion which not only limited debate on the budget bill that we were debating at the time; it included a requirement to introduce this bill and

limit debate and hearings on the bill, which, at the time, we had not seen. Mr. Speaker, that isn't fair, and it doesn't allow members to do the job that the people sent us here to do. The decisions that we make in this Legislature matter. We don't just take time to speak for the sake of speaking.

This Financial Accountability Office would be on a level with the Auditor General of Ontario, an office created by the Legislature in 1886. It would be equivalent to the Ombudsman of Ontario, which was created through the Ombudsman Act, which received royal assent on July 3, 1975. That act was introduced 13 years after the need for an Ombudsman was raised in the Legislature. It was introduced after 11 private members' bills to create an Ombudsman and after a commitment in a throne speech.

When this office was proposed, I read the debates from 1975, and it was interesting to see the concerns and proposals put forward by all the members. There was some great debate about what areas should fall under the Ombudsman and how broad or narrow the mandate should be. I found it interesting that the member from Sandwich–Riverside raised the concern that with the creation of a provincial Ombudsman, members wouldn't have to deal with constituency casework at all. I think we can all attest that that certainly hasn't been the case.

During the debate, the provincial secretary for justice stated, "Not only would the Ombudsman require the confidence of the members of this House, whom he serves, but he must also have the confidence of the public and the civil service." If this new legislative office is supposed to have the confidence of the members of the House, whom he serves, and the confidence of the people of Ontario, shouldn't we have a full, public debate? Shouldn't all members have the opportunity to speak to the creation of that office?

Reading through the many days of debate on the Ombudsman Act is quite a contrast with what we are being asked to do: vote on this bill only two days after it was introduced and with only two hours of debate—40 minutes for each party. If it passes in a few days, as laid out in the motion last spring, the bill would be pushed through the committee. Amendments to the bill are due the day after the hearings, which is the evening before clause-by-clause.

I'll admit that requiring amendments to be submitted in advance creates the benefit of allowing members to research the amendments before voting on them. However, it also limits debate and the ability of members to work together. It means that members only have the opportunity to look at amendments and vote "yes" or "no." There is no ability to make changes to the amendments. There is no ability for members to work together to come up with amendments that everyone could agree to. There is no ability for members to combine ideas from different parties to create amendments that work for the people of Ontario.

I remember that we put forward an amendment on an agricultural bill to allow the minister to create com-

mittees to ensure consultation. The government voted it down. The minister's office explained to my office that they liked the amendment, but they only wanted one committee; if we hadn't made it plural, the government would have supported it. But because the government forces through these programming motions, there is no ability to make changes to amendments in the committee, not even removing the "s" off "committees."

In total, the bill to create a new legislative officer will have four hours of debate in the Legislature—only four hours for all 107 members of this Legislature to raise their concerns, put forward proposals to improve the bill and share the concerns of their constituents. From a Premier and a government that are famous for offering conversations, this is shameful.

During the committee hearings on the Ombudsman Act, an NDP member said, "The Ombudsman, again, is a child of this House. He's not the child or the creation of the Premier of this province, nor in the first instance ought he have to attend on him." The government and the Premier are treating the Financial Accountability Office as if it belongs to them, not the members of this Legislature and the people they represent.

The people of Ontario are probably asking: If the creation of a Financial Accountability Office is so important, why is it being rushed through? The sad answer is that this is not truly about accountability or a desire of the government to do better. This is part of a backroom deal cooked up by the Liberals and the NDP. This deal was worked out behind closed doors to buy NDP support for the budget.

Ontario is being ruled by a coalition of big-spending parties. To see the impact of that coalition, all you have to do is look at page 208 of the budget and see that spending has actually increased by \$3.6 billion next year alone. All you have to do is look at the fact that next year the provincial deficit is forecast to increase to \$11.7 billion, even though the government is forecasting revenue increases. Under the Liberal/NDP government, spending continues to increase and Ontario sinks further into debt.

Should we have a Financial Accountability Officer? Looking at the increasing debt and the wasted money on eHealth, gas plants and Ornge, it seems like a good idea. But I'm disappointed that we won't have more of an opportunity to debate what the role of that Financial Accountability Office will be.

I think we need to have a broader discussion about what else the Financial Accountability Officer is required to do. As the bill reads now, there is no requirement for him to provide a costing on any government proposals unless requested to do so by a member of the Legislature or a committee. However, section 10 says that the Financial Accountability Officer may refuse a request from a member or a legislative committee.

I understand that allowing him to refuse a request from an individual protects his office from being used for political purposes. However, if a committee made up of members from all sides makes the request, I'm not sure

that the Financial Accountability Officer, a servant of the Legislature, should be able to refuse that request.

I find it ironic that we are being asked to support this proposal without knowing the full cost. We've been through not knowing the full cost before.

**1600**

On this side of the House, we have repeatedly raised the concern about government spending and finances, as have the people of Ontario. In fact, on the survey response to my householder last spring, it was one of the number one issues. I want to share a few of the comments I received.

A constituent from Tillsonburg said, "Cut taxes and stop spending like drunken sailors."

Another from Tillsonburg wrote, "The government must stop spending money it does not have. Everyone in government must be held accountable for their actions. Dalton McGuinty should be charged in court for wasting taxpayers' dollars."

From Brownsville, I heard, "Government spending should be better and more fairly controlled."

A constituent from Princeton wrote, "I'm a small business owner. If I don't have the money I don't spend it. Government should run as a business. Cut spending and minimize costs."

A person from Woodstock said, "Quit spending money on things that are not necessary. Set rules and pay down deficit, just like other people do. There is no excuse for this high deficit." It's priority number one.

Eliminating the deficit is a priority for the people of Oxford and for the PC caucus. Mr. Speaker, the truth is that neither of the other two parties is prepared to make difficult decisions required to make our province better, get our financial house in order and eliminate the deficit.

Ontario needs to learn from the examples of governments across the world, like Greece, Italy and Spain, who are struggling to balance their books before ever-increasing interest payments on their countries' enormous debt plunge them into bankruptcy. That's not a path that Ontario should be on, but if something doesn't change, that's where we're headed.

We believe Ontario can and should do better. That's a conversation worth having, as is the conversation about how a Financial Accountability Officer could help us get there. It's too bad that this government, despite their claims to be willing to collaborate, is shutting that conversation down.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me this opportunity—one of the few of us that is going to get it. I also do look forward to changes being made in committee to make sure that we get a bill that will actually work for the people of Ontario, not just satisfy the needs of the NDP in the province of Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** The member from Parkdale–High Park.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Quite frankly, the member from Oxford has reason to be concerned about a Financial Accountability Office, because his cousins in Ottawa, who of course tried to put the kibosh on their budget

office, learned from the budget office in Ottawa that the fighter jets they were going to invest in didn't cost \$9 billion, they cost over \$30 billion, and that old age security, instead of being a loss leader, actually was a good investment. That's what the federal equivalent brought forward. So I understand that he's defending the Harper government in a sense.

But let me take you on a little walk down memory lane. When I was first elected some eight years ago here in this House, there was the \$1-billion eHealth scandal, followed shortly—and remember, back in those days, there was a little bit of a surplus. I remember a \$35-million surplus where \$1 million went to a cricket club. Remember that? We seem to have forgotten that in this debate, so I just remind the House of that: \$1 million to a cricket club who asked back then.

Then there was Ornge; again another billion-dollar kibosh, really, and money paid out not for the services that we expected but to well-connected Liberal insiders—that's the reality.

Now we have the gas plants being moved. Again that's mounting up. That's going to be—plus, by the way, the \$85 million, so we're adding by the minute, for the cancellation of the LRT, if they go ahead with the subway.

We're really, Mr. Speaker, up around the \$3-billion mark—\$3 billion of absolutely wasted money. That's in the time that I've had the privilege to sit here in this House—\$3 billion. Think of the housing that would build, think of the poverty that would alleviate, think of the tuitions that could pay for our college students, think of the young people that that could put back to work. That is money lost.

Now it's absolutely appropriate that constituents get upset and that they've lost faith in a government that after 10 years has managed to make such a mess of the finances. What the Financial Accountability Office will do is to give us a window in, give us the ability, before they waste any more money, to actually get a handle on the true costs of what they're proposing. That's what we're talking about—no backroom deal. Absolutely what our constituents demanded, what they said was necessary in order to keep the promises—again, remember Liberals and their promises: not a good track record there, either—we extracted from the budget in two budget negotiations.

I'll leave some time for my colleague from Davenport to say a few words on this. But again, \$3 billion is a lot of money to most Ontarians. That could have done a lot of good. Instead, it was wasted. We want to prevent that in the future. That's why we're supporting this.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Further debate?

**Mr. Jonah Schein:** I'm really pleased to stand here today and speak to G95, the bill that will bring financial accountability to the province of Ontario through a Financial Accountability Office. This is something that we have heard clearly and I have heard clearly from constituents in Davenport for a long time. They expect

government to work for them. They expect all members of this House to work in the public interest, not in their own interests. Too often, what we've seen in this House are members who have used their power here to serve their own purposes, to serve the interests of private interests and to serve their friends in high-up places.

In the last budget, just a few months ago, we went back to our constituents and we talked to them and we asked them what they wanted to see in the budget. What people told me in Davenport was that they didn't want an election just now; we just had an election. What they did want was for us to go back in here and make this place work and make it work in the public interest.

We listened and actually heard concretely from constituents in Davenport that we need in Ontario what we have at the federal level. We have a budgetary office in Ottawa that has done its job to try to hold the Harper Conservatives accountable. When the Harper Conservatives said that fighter planes will cost \$10 billion, that independent office was able to hold them to account and say that they're actually going to cost \$30 billion.

We need an ounce—we need more than an ounce—of that kind of accountability here in Ontario because what we've seen is this government that continues to use the public purse as if it's their own private purse. We see it for political purposes. We've seen it most recently in by-elections where we have a pressing public interest, which is public transit in this province and the GTHA in particular. Instead of creating a public transit plan that will serve most people, that will be respectful of people's dollars, we have a plan that's made on the back of a napkin in minutes and is to serve just the interests of getting the Liberals elected here in Scarborough. We've seen that with gas plants in the past.

When I talk to people in Davenport, they need that money. They need that money for child care; they need that money to put food on the table when they don't have work; they need that in their classrooms. These are billions of dollars that have gone to waste.

I'm pleased that we're here to put this into place to create a Financial Accountability Office that will create objective oversight for all members of this Parliament.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Further debate?

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** It's a pleasure to be rising today on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus with respect to Bill 95, the Financial Accountability Officer Act.

Obviously, this legislation was time-allocated, so members of this assembly didn't have the appropriate time to do two things. One is to do their due diligence on the bill and have the opportunity to provide their input on the floor of this assembly. Given that that has happened, we are not going to be able to fully explore this bill through questions and comments, as well as through our own debate.

The second problem with this, Speaker, is that we will now be time-allocated when we get to committee. I serve on the Legislative Assembly committee as the Vice-Chair. We just had a meeting moments ago to determine

when we would go into public hearings. Those will be time-allocated next week.

Let me give you an example of why that is a problem. Generally, when we want to talk about creating an officer of the assembly—a pretty important business—or we want to talk about government accountability or how we spend people's tax dollars, we may want to actually go out to the public and ask them if they're interested. Well, because of the time constraints that the government House leader has put upon us, we are now forced to try to notify people through the government website and through Canada NewsWire but we are unable to put ads in newspapers, particularly national newspapers like the National Post, the Toronto Star, the Ottawa Citizen and the Globe and Mail, where people read these notifications.

**1610**

Finally, I would just like to say this: I think this is an area where people may be inclined to speak on this bill, given some of the challenges we've seen over the past decade. My colleagues have previously talked about the cricket club receiving an inordinate amount of money. We have talked about eHealth in this chamber, we have talked about Ornge and we have talked about the gas plant scandal. I think people across Ontario, not just people who live in the city of Toronto, would like to participate in these hearings.

I remember that when I first arrived at this assembly eight years ago, the committees of this assembly would travel. They would go bring the assembly to the people of this province. That has effectively been stopped in this minority Parliament, and it has effectively been stopped because it has been time-allocated.

I have concerns that given what I've read in the bill—it is actually a very limited bill, but it does deal with the fact that the person who takes on this gets to be in the Ontario pension plan. But it doesn't give a lot more details other than that this person is pensionable. The fact is, from what I can understand, it's based off of the Parliamentary Budget Officer in the House of Commons. I find that a bit interesting, because from my experience, the person who occupied that post became very self-important, the individual thought he was the leader of the official opposition in the House, and he was often wrong.

A lot of people will talk about the F-35s, but I happen to know a little bit about it. I can tell you, in justice, my husband was director of policy to Peter MacKay—still is, actually. So I would often know that the numbers that this budget officer was providing to the public were not only wrong, they were astronomically wrong.

Then, this summer, I had an opportunity to go down to the United States, and I had the opportunity to meet with the company that does the F-35s. Without telling them I was from Canada, I said, "How much do these cost?" And the Americans and the people who were with the company at the time cited the exact same number that our defence department in Canada was citing publicly, but it was because of the wrong numbers of that Parliamentary Budget Officer, which could actually happen here, that I

have great concerns, because I think it speaks to the role of that assembly.

There is another comment I would like to bring forward, and I'll leave Kevin Page for a moment, because it is unfair to pick on him while he's not here. I'll have that opportunity next week, through committee, because, again, I think that he has done a disservice to the role that the NDP is now trying to pursue here at the Legislative Assembly.

But what I would like to say is, we have an Auditor General, and I sat in a committee today where the government—sorry, the government actually supported our motion, but the New Democrats tried to suppress us from asking for more financial information in terms of accountability. I find it a bit rich now that they don't want the auditor to do her job, yet they do want to create another legislative office.

I think that is a bit of a conundrum they face, because I can tell you, if you are going to want financial accountability, two things must happen. One is that you must expand the role of the auditor. The second is to ensure that the government of the day is actually following their own laws. Now, this isn't the first piece of accountability legislation we have debated in this House during the time I have been in office. We had one over Ornge. We had one over eHealth. In fact, there was actually even a public disclosure bill under my name called the Truth in Government Act. The government decided not to support that, and then they didn't follow their own two laws.

In fact, let's even talk about another law that they have actually overlooked. We all know about those local health integration networks. In fact, the leader of the third party talked about the LHINs today. There was supposed to have been a mandatory review of the local health integration networks, and that was by law of this assembly, by the very legislation that was created; and not only did that law take effect, but the government then decided to ignore it. That is the problem that we're going to have. So we can pass lots of legislation here, but you effectively can't legislate accountability. You can't really legislate ethics, particularly when the government of the day has neither.

So I challenge any member of this assembly to effectively communicate here how this budget officer, or the Financial Accountability Officer, is going to be able to do exactly what is required, given the government has continually brought forward legislation that they themselves have ignored when it comes to accountability.

I spoke earlier about Ornge and eHealth, and I've spoken about the cricket club, and I point this out: Even had this Financial Accountability Officer been in place, it would have been a rare find for them to actually find out what the numbers and the waste actually were. We are still scrutinizing, for example, this gas plant scandal, and we still don't have all of the information.

I was in two committees today: the Legislative Assembly committee this afternoon and public accounts this morning. I met the new auditor, Bonnie Lysyk, and

had a good conversation with her. She explained her mandate and what she hoped to achieve. She told us that we would finally be receiving the Auditor General's report on the gas plant scandal this mid-October. The ONTC report will be available in December, and—something very important to me—the OLG modernization review will be available this January. Speaker, I know—because this is an issue very important to you—that the horsemen and horsewomen across this province, particularly in rural Ontario, are going to be awaiting that very important report on gaming modernization across the province, because I think you know, as do members in the opposition, that the way in which modernization of our gambling in Ontario has occurred has been inconsistent and unfair and it has unjustly attacked rural Ontario. I am looking forward to seeing that report, particularly as it pertains to the Slots at Racetracks Program, as it pertains to the mental health and addictions plan of the OLG, as well as the dealings the OLG is having behind the public's back, because I think it's time for them to be accountable.

Therefore, I will go back to my point that the most appropriate person, in my view, to scrutinize the public finances of Ontario is the Auditor General. The Auditor General has been above partisanship.

If I look to the experience on Parliament Hill and I look at Kevin Page, he was the most partisan legislative officer I've ever seen. In fact, I felt at times, when I would read his comments, that he felt entitled to do the work of the official opposition.

Speaker, here I am today, sitting as a member of the official opposition for eight years, and I can suggest to you that we have a role to play.

*Interjections.*

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I understand we have members from the back who are heckling—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Well, it appears we have some very vocal members who aren't even sitting in the House. That'll stop, and the member won't entertain it while he's sitting here. Thank you very much.

Continue.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** Thank you very much.

I would like to continue to point out that there is a role for members of this assembly. There is a role for the Auditor General. This bill is in place not to create better accountability—if the Liberals actually believed in that, they would have followed through, after eHealth and Ornge, and they would have supported my financial accountability package, the Truth in Government Act, but they didn't; they chose not to.

The reason this is before the House today, I'll tell my good friend Doug Holyday, our new member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, is because no one in the government wanted an election, because they wanted to save their jobs, and they had to give in to Andrea Horwath and the NDP. So we have a bill in front of the assembly because the NDP were bought off by the Liberals with this Bill 95.

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** They were bought off by Bill 95.

**Hon. Jeff Leal:** On a point of order—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Point of order from the Minister of Rural Affairs.

**Hon. Jeff Leal:** —informed opinion about the term “bought off.” That has interesting connotations. But I’ll leave it to your very good judgment in terms of the use of “bought off.” Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** You bring a very good point forward. I would suggest that the member from Nepean–Carleton might want to remove that phrase from her comment.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** Speaker, I’m happy to withdraw, but I am going to continue to speak about how ill-advised—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** No, I don’t need a speech. I just need you to withdraw it.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I withdraw. I’d like to continue to speak.

I look at this with utter amusement, because the only way the government thinks they can actually look after themselves is by creating another officer of the assembly. I think we all know that given the last year—they have given the runaround to the Information and Privacy Commissioner. They have not given us the full story in the justice committee, and they’re not prepared to give us the entire story on the teachers’ contracts. Why would we think they’re going to follow through and give the Financial Accountability Officer all of the details he requires?

Again, I go back. You cannot legislate ethics, and this government has very little of those, if they have them at all.

1620

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Further debate? Last call for further debate.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 5, 2013, I’m now required to put the question. Mr. Sousa has moved second reading of Bill 95, An Act to establish a Financial Accountability Officer. Is it the pleasure of the House that this motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of this motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

I believe the nays have it.

Seeing five members, we’ll call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** “Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on Bill 95, Financial Accountability Officer Act, 2013, second reading be deferred until deferred votes on Thursday, September 12, 2013.”

Agreed? Agreed.

*Second reading vote deferred.*

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 September 10, 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 (Mr. Paul Miller):** Further debate?

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I know it’s a great afternoon to be in the chamber, because you get to hear me speak about every single issue of the day. Whether that’s in question period, statements or the bills before us, I am happy to contribute.

I’m also happy to rise on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and our critic Randy Hillier to discuss the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families), 2013. Obviously, we’re pleased to support this bill. We are, obviously, humbled and gratified and really excited that the government has taken our many concerns and listened to our constituents last session by making significant changes to this piece of legislation in order to improve the bill that we had some concerns with.

The legislation is actually going to eliminate inconsistencies between the federal labour code and our provincial labour laws, instead of creating new ones. I think a streamlined piece of legislation is something we can support. Something that eliminates inconsistencies and duplications is also, in my opinion, a good use of our time in order to discuss this legislation.

I’d like to point out that the bill is proposing several amendments to the Employment Standards Act to mimic similar changes the federal government made to the Canada Labour Code. I’d like to specifically point out that it introduces a proposed family caregiver leave for up to eight unpaid weeks per year.

Speaker, I think this is becoming increasingly important for two reasons, and I think I speak on behalf of all members of this assembly when we recognize two very serious concerns in our communities today. The first is parents with children who have special needs. I think, as we now start to see many parents both working in order to pay the bills and prepare their families, it’s really important that they have the opportunity to take this leave in order to look after their children.

The second thing is something that I think is becoming more important: the recognition of the sandwich

generation who maybe have a child at home but are looking after their mom and their dad. As we have a big baby boom move toward retirement and also toward seniors' residences, I think that is going to be very helpful.

To qualify for the leave, the employee must be caring for an individual whom a physician has deemed to have a critical injury or illness and cannot care for themselves. I think many of us have met people over the years in our own constituency offices who do require this assistance. That allows them to take the time to be with their family to help them recover or to assist them by taking them to medical appointments.

It will also mirror the family medical leave significantly, except that it will not include the provision of a significant risk of death within a 26-week period. It will introduce a critically ill child care leave and unpaid job-protected leave for up to 37 weeks for parents caring for a critically ill child.

This speaks to the compassion that members of this assembly have for the people we represent. Honestly, I think there's not a person here who wouldn't agree with that initiative and wouldn't agree with that plan. When a person has an ill child, we all think of them. We know the stress that they are under. Any child, we hope, is going to live a happy and healthy life, but that is not always the case. In these circumstances, it is important for all of us to show that type of compassion and understanding for that family and the issues that they are confronted with.

It will also introduce a crime-related child death or disappearance leave: an unpaid job-protected leave of absence for up to 104 weeks for an employee whose child dies if it is probably the result of a crime, or up to 52 weeks for an employee whose child disappears if it is probably the result of a crime.

I have met parents who have lost children, as many of us have, and if it is to a crime, it is, I'm sure, horrific. It is very hard for those moms and dads to continue with day-to-day life, let alone go to their work.

I had an experience, as many of you know, a few years ago in this House where a young man—he didn't die as a result of being murdered, but he was at school. There was an incident and he passed away on school property as a result of what he was doing in shop class. I fought hard to get a public inquest for Eric Leighton. I know his mom and his dad, Sheri and Pat, quite well. I've gotten to know them over the past two years. I see the pain, every time I've seen them in the past two years, of having lost their son. I know first-hand from working with them and seeing them in the community that it's difficult. That's why I think it's important to extend, at this time, a crime-related child death or disappearance leave because life really doesn't go on the same way if your child is not there. I speak on behalf of a parent. I myself wouldn't know what to do, Speaker, and I know you would be the same way.

I would just like simply, in the last few moments I have, to talk about the legislation and how it was

originally introduced. It was introduced as Bill 30, the Family Caregiver Leave Act. It was introduced in the last session. Unfortunately, we saw prorogation; we saw some changes. That is always a challenge, Speaker: having to start back at square one, particularly when you have legislation that could have been improved in the last go-round. But here we are, starting over.

It originally only contained provisions to introduce family caregiver leave without any proper consultation with our stakeholders or a demonstration that there was actually a need for these changes. I think the fact that the government has taken some of Randy Hillier's changes has made this bill more suitable. It is important, but this legislation does something which is quite good. Far be it from me to compliment the Liberal government, but I will compliment the move to eliminate those inconsistencies between the Canadian Labour Code and the Ontario Employment Standards Act.

In June 2013, the federal government, under Stephen Harper, will start paying out benefits for the federal equivalent of the proposed critically ill child care leave. That's a good thing because June 2013 has already passed. That means the federal government has made good on their commitment. That means that that is starting to occur.

As of January 1 last year, the federal government began providing grants lasting 35 weeks for the equivalent of the proposed crime-related child death or disappearance leave. The provincial legislation will incur no costs provincially; it will just protect the job from termination. That is a great relief to me because I think the initiative taken by the federal government under Stephen Harper's leadership is important. It is something that I support. That is why I am pleased to see that this extension is happening in our provincial Legislature. It is the right thing to do, and I think most members would agree with that.

#### 1630

There are currently only two leaves available to workers in Ontario at the moment that are protected under the Employment Standards Act. The family medical leave is unpaid. It is job-protected leave of up to eight weeks in a 26-week period. And the eligibility, just for those at home who are watching, who may be concerned about this and may want to qualify—in order to qualify, you must be eligible by a qualified health practitioner, who would issue a certificate stating that the individual to be cared for has a serious medical condition with a significant risk of death occurring within a 26-week period.

Personal emergency leave is also a leave. Some employees have the right to take up to 10 days of unpaid job-protected leave each calendar year due to illness, injury and certain other emergencies and urgent matters. This leave is only eligible for individuals who work for a company that regularly employs more than 50 employees.

Speaker, I think what we're seeing as a whole here is a commitment by members of this assembly, regardless of

their partisan affiliation, to do more for those families who are dealing with very personal circumstances—health-care-related, death-related—in their families, and we're trying to be, I think, more compassionate, and by passing this act, we will be.

I am pleased to stand on behalf of Tim Hudak and Randy Hillier to discuss this bill. I think it's a good move for us to have this debate and ensure that as we move forward, we continue to improve legislation.

I might also say I'm pleased that I did have some time to speak to this and that this bill came forward because the NDP and the Ontario PC caucus together were able to have the tanning bed legislation moved forward into committee. I want to congratulate my colleague in the third party France Gélinas for doing her work over the past number of years to have that legislation put forward. Because of their efforts today and our efforts today, we now have that bill moving forward and we're able to focus on the Employment Standards Act this afternoon.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**M. Michael Mantha:** C'est avec plaisir que je rejoins les commentaires de ma collègue de Nepean–Carleton sur la 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.

Vous savez, la législation proposée ici est un bon pas par en avant. Elle est un petit pas par en avant. C'est vraiment une pièce de législation qui était extrêmement attrayante aux papiers et aux médias, mais en effet, c'est un petit pas comme je vous dis. Et puis, franchement, pour mettre, on va dire, un contenu dans ce projet de loi ici, pour certaines personnes qui se trouvent dans une position de prendre du temps pour être avec leurs membres de famille et les personnes qu'ils aiment le plus, le problème est qu'il n'y a pas de frais monétaire pour les compenser pendant le temps de maladie qu'ils passent avec leur famille. C'est un gros problème avec ce projet de loi.

Il y a seulement certaines personnes qui seraient dans une position pour prendre ce temps-là. Ce n'est pas tous les gens qui peuvent le prendre. Il faut qu'on regarde qu'il y a beaucoup de mamans et de papas qui travaillent les deux hors la maison et puis c'est difficile de prendre la décision financière. Il y a une perte d'un salaire qui rentre dans la maison pour prendre le temps. Ça fait que c'est vraiment une décision difficile. Mais c'est un bon pas. Au moins les gens ont la chance de prendre cette décision-là pour prendre soin de leurs bien-aimés. Et puis, c'est un petit pas. Je veux stresser ça, que c'est un petit pas et que c'est une belle annonce qui a l'air vraiment belle dans les papiers et les médias. C'est de valeur, mais c'est souvent ce qu'on voit et ce à quoi on s'attend de ce gouvernement. Merci beaucoup.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**Hon. Jeff Leal:** I was here for most of the address today by my friend and colleague the member from Nepean–Carleton on Bill 21. I thought her speech today was a very positive speech in many ways. It builds on the fine remarks that were delivered in this House yesterday by my friend from Prince Edward–Hastings.

We're seeing this momentum building on the side of the official opposition to get aboard and support Bill 21, which we see as particularly important. As I said yesterday to a wonderful audience in Peterborough—I think it was at the Peterborough Rotary Club, when I was asked a question about a week ago. I said, "We've got to remind ourselves, as Lester Pearson used to say when he was Prime Minister from 1963 to 1968, that when you're in a minority government position, we're all the government."

We all have the responsibility to make positive contributions—day in, day out, week in, week out, month in and month out. On this particular bill, and indeed on the Financial Accountability Officer and the tanning bed legislation, I think that in the last week, or few days, that we've been here, we've seen a real sea change in attitude. All three parties are coming together—the government, the official opposition and the third party—to really identify those pieces of legislation that are meaningful to the good folks.

I know that on Friday, when I'm at the East City Coffee Shop in Peterborough, having a chance to chat with my good friends and neighbours over lunch—you can still get a western sandwich and a coffee for under five bucks; I recommend that to people if you're in Peterborough—we'll have the opportunity to chat about Bill 21, chat about the financial officer and chat about the tanning bed legislation, to see that we are all moving together in the right direction on this bill. I want to thank the member from Nepean–Carleton.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Todd Smith:** It's a pleasure to join the L-Mac show this afternoon here in the Legislature, and to bring some comments on her fine performance on Bill 21 here today. As the member from Peterborough, the Minister of Rural Affairs, mentioned, I had an opportunity yesterday to speak at length about this bill and talk about what it contains and what it doesn't contain.

Really, it doesn't contain much as far as the province is concerned. They're waiting for the federal government to bail them out in this situation, but what it does do is ensure that if anyone has suffered or sustained a traumatic experience in their family or has someone in their family who needs care at home, it gives them the opportunity to go and help their family members, which is well-intentioned and a very compassionate thing for the government to do.

But I can tell you, when I'm going out for an omelette at the Northway Restaurant on North Front Street in Belleville—a great family owns the Northway Restaurant, and I would encourage anybody that makes their way into Belleville to stop by and grab a coffee and an

omelette there; the western sandwich isn't bad either—they're not talking about the caregiver leave act at Queen's Park. I can tell you that the ladies who are hard-working in my constituency office—well, the office on Millennium Parkway just closed at 4:30, but the phones are probably still ringing by the dozens, every day, because people can't afford their hydro bills in rural Ontario.

They simply can't afford to pay the bills, and that's the number one issue the people in rural Ontario are facing right now. They're not so much worried about this bill, but this government is doing absolutely nothing about it. As a matter of fact, a story came out today that they're going to pay wind companies not to produce power. That's what's happening with the Green Energy Act. It has caused chaos on the grid. That's a priority for people in rural Ontario: getting those hydro bills under control.

While we will support Bill 21—and I think the comments from our member from Nepean–Carleton indicated that we are in full support of Bill 21—we will take it to committee and discuss it further there.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments.

**Mr. Jonah Schein:** I'm pleased to stand on behalf of constituents in Davenport and speak to Bill 21, the Employment Standards Amendment Act, but I would also just like to take a moment to welcome Grandma Grace for another season of the parliamentary channel. Grandma Grace tunes in regularly to this show. Grandma Grace, thank you. Welcome her to this afternoon's show.

Grandma Grace, this is proving to be not that exciting a season when it comes to content. We're here debating a bill that is important, but not ambitious. We do have some new characters on our show: Peggy Sattler, this year. Welcome Peggy Sattler to the House, a very exciting character on the show.

But we are speaking to employment standards, and the government has introduced a bill that will entitle employees to take care of somebody who is sick at home, which is a good thing and something that is worthy of support. It's not an ambitious program in any way, though. It doesn't provide any kind of financial support to people, and this is a government that, after 10 years, is spinning its wheels, quite frankly.

After 10 years, and almost two years of this particular government, it has not taken steps forward to actually protect families when it comes to income security. For someone to take eight weeks of leave to take care of a family member—for most people, it's just impossible if it is unpaid, because people I speak to in Davenport do not have that kind of money, they do not have that kind of resource and, quite frankly, they do not have that kind of job security, no matter how it's legislated. That's why we see the kinds of issues around unpaid internships right now, people who are working for free in this province. We have a government that has been here for years. We still have a frozen minimum wage in this province, and people can simply not pay the bills in Davenport if they make the minimum wage.

**1640**

If this government was serious about moving forward right now, they should be delivering a more ambitious agenda and doing the things that will actually protect families in my community of Davenport and right across the province.

And welcome, Peggy Sattler, to the Ontario legislative channel.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** The member from Nepean–Carleton has two minutes.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** It's a real pleasure to once again rise to respond to the comments. I would like to thank the member for Davenport, because you pointed out something that I think has been consistent among members of the official opposition as well, that we are really light on content this session, and we would like to see a more ambitious jobs creation strategy from this government. However, we do have a piece of legislation that is consistent with federal legislation, that is good for people across this province. Although there is no new money from this current government, it is important that we are consistent with the federal legislation that does support these folks.

I'd like to say thanks as well to his colleague from Algoma–Manitoulin. He's calling for more in this legislation, and I appreciate that. I always appreciate him bringing his passion to the floor of the assembly, and I thank him for that.

To the Minister of Rural Affairs, I thank you for your kind words about me. I will cherish them forever, because I'm sure they will be short-lived. But it was very kind of you to make the positive comments about my remarks, and I do appreciate it.

My colleague from Prince Edward–Hastings I think has brought a great deal of thought and substance and depth to the debates that he participates in, including this current debate. I thank him for his comments, and I look forward to obviously working more with him on this legislation.

But I must say, this is legislation that is not time-allocated. Therefore, we were able to, in my view, have the opportunity to have that great debate, which is, by the way, the reason we have this assembly: to have the great debate, be thoughtful on legislation, be critical when it is required, make amendments when necessary and pass strong legislation. And that really hasn't been happening—to the point of my colleague from Davenport—that often, so I encourage the government to bring [*inaudible*] to this assembly.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Further debate?

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** It's an honour always to rise on behalf of the people of Parkdale–High Park, the New Democratic Party and the people of Ontario, of course, too.

I want to start with a comment that was made by the member from Nepean–Carleton and kind of riff on that for a minute because, quite frankly, although we support this bill, Bill 21, for caregiver's leave—and I'll talk about

that in a minute—the fact that it has taken this long to get to this bill and the fact that there's really a lack of any kind of large vision across the aisle on the government side is a problem. It is a serious problem. This is a government that clearly has run out of ideas, clearly run out of any kind of vision to solve the substantive problems of our province, substantive problems like poverty. You heard the member from Davenport speak about that: the fact that our minimum wage has been stalled, that it's well below the poverty line now, that the government broke a promise to raise it to \$11 some time back, and by that condemned a whole raft of working people to live below the poverty line and yet work full-time. This is a reality, and those people cannot afford to take eight weeks of unpaid leave, which is a critical point to make about this bill—unpaid leave—to look after a sick or ailing relative. They simply cannot, so it's not doing them any favours.

Here is a government that has not raised the minimum wage, has talked about poverty but not really addressed it. Certainly for those families that are living long-term with a member of their family who has a severe disability—there are thousands of them on waiting lists for assistance from this government, thousands of them waiting with no light at the end of that tunnel at all. We've had instances of families, and we all have seen it, who have dropped their child off at a government office saying, "I can't do it anymore." This is the government that has not addressed that core problem. Those are people who are not living just for eight weeks with a member of their family who is suffering, but for lifetimes. In the last budget, I think about 14% of that waiting list were assisted—14%. That leaves thousands of families still struggling long-term with a member in that family who has a disability. That's long-term.

We see in this society a whole swath of workers—we saw an uprising in the United States, south of the border, of retail workers. Some of the wealthiest companies in the world—I don't have to mention them; we all know who they are—most of them American, some of them Canadian, who make billions of dollars and yet pay their workers minimum wage. Again, it's a minimum wage they can't live on. Those workers cannot afford to take eight weeks off.

We've seen a government that has directly attacked the labour movement with bills like Bill 115, attacked the collective bargaining process, when we all know, or should know, that unions, that organized labour, is one of the best ways of addressing poverty, that if you have a union to fight for you, to work for you, to speak for you, you have a better chance of making a living wage. Yet we saw this government directly attack collective bargaining in its process with Bill 115.

So we see the negatives; we don't see the positives. The positives that came out of this last budget were actually our ideas. The New Democratic Party put forward proposals which the government accepted. Those are really the only vision operative in this place right now.

Then we have these smaller bills. They're not bad. There's nothing wrong with them. There's nothing wrong with assuring people that they can't be fired if they take eight weeks off. Quite frankly—especially the small business employers I know—most employers already have compassionate leave programs in their work. Most good employers have already addressed that. Again, who will this really affect? How many will it really help? It's hard to say.

Speaking about business, small business produces about 90% of the new jobs in the province of Ontario, and yet there's not a lot of vision about small business. I was talking to some small business owners, small business associations, who said that many small businesses in the city of Toronto are now actually paying more in taxes than they are for rent for their businesses. There's no alleviation from this government for small business, no help for them, really, in terms of allowing them to hire folk. Again, any ideas on that front come from us, come from the New Democratic Party, with our leader, Andrea Horwath. That's where the fresh ideas are coming from. That's where the big picture ideas are coming from. And the government comes at us with a bill like this, which, again, is not bad, but it's pretty small fry.

We are dealing with substantial issues in the province of Ontario. I've said before that my parents' generation—most people here's parents' generation—could afford to buy a house and put a car in their driveway on one salary back then, and some particularly fortunate ones—maybe back then, but really, middle-class earners—could afford a cottage as well. Now in downtown Toronto, two salaries will barely get you the down payment for a house. Most people will never own their own home because they can't afford it. Most young people graduating from school will never get a job in their profession.

We have ministers across the aisle from the government side who stood up and crowed proudly that we spend less per capita on social services for our citizens than any other province. This is something they're proud of? This is something you should be ashamed of.

The government should be ashamed that we pay less per capita for our students to get an education than any other province. You should be ashamed of that. You should be ashamed that our students graduate from university with the highest debt load in the country—and the least chance of finding a job, by the way. What is a BA these days? What does that guarantee you except debt? That's the reality.

Yet at the same time, in the universities and colleges, the CEOs are doing very well—very well, thank you very much—because this government rejected another good idea that the NDP put forward, which was to limit those on the public purse salary to \$500,000 or less—\$500,000. Can't you live on \$500,000? Apparently not. If you're a CEO in a hospital or in a university, apparently that's not enough. Yet the students—you know, the people we should be speaking for—are suffering.

**1650**

Look at transit. Remember MoveOntario 2020? Remember Transit City? Wow, what happened to Transit

City? We were all in favour of Transit City. “Yes, let’s go,” we said. David Miller was mayor in Toronto. “Let’s go. Let’s build Transit City.” You know what happened to Transit City? Kathleen Wynne was the transportation minister back there under Dalton McGuinty. She yanked about \$4 billion out of the purse under David Miller. Remember those subway ads with Dalton stabbing Transit City in the back? “Dalton McGuinty kills Transit City,” and there was some truth to that when Kathleen Wynne was the transportation minister. Had that moved ahead on schedule, we wouldn’t be in the pickle we’re in now with a different sort of mayor with a different sort of agenda.

So again, you know, transit promises from this government 10 years later don’t hold a lot of water, especially when they’re done and made on such flimsy ground, without talking to partners. So again this is part of a broader vision, a broader vision we don’t see. We see hit-and-miss promises, really, mostly aimed at gaining Liberal seats or gaining Liberal jobs for Liberal insiders. That seems to be the real focus of this government in the eight years I’ve been here: to gain Liberal insiders good jobs and to gain Liberal seats and maintain them. That seems to be the focus. Quite frankly, if there is a big vision, that’s the big vision of the Liberal Party.

I get it. We all want to win. But at the end of the day, after 10 years in government, you might think there might be a bigger vision, a vision that actually has to do with making a better world for the people in Ontario, many of them who are suffering. You heard people talk about high hydro rates. Ah yes, that’s just one of many issues facing the people in Ontario.

Things are not getting better for the average Ontarian—not in the last 10 years and not under this government—but things have maintained themselves pretty well for the Liberal Party of Ontario. That much is clear. So maybe that is the big vision of this government. If it is, it’s a sad, sad vision, because we are facing some serious problems. They’re not going to get better; they’re going to get worse unless some real action is taken and some real platform and positions are put forward.

So yes, Bill 21, eight unpaid weeks of leave for those who could afford it for ailing relatives, absolutely. Why not? But, really, this is a very small step when we need to be running a marathon in this province.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments? The member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** Thank you very much, Speaker. Do you know what kind of vision is really important here? It’s a vision shared with the Multiple Sclerosis Society, the Parkinson Society, the Alzheimer Society, the Canadian Cancer Society and the Caregiver Coalition. It’s a vision that says, “Let’s get on with this. Let’s get this bill into committee. Let’s see if there’s any changes needed. Let’s get it back into the Legislature, and let’s get it adopted,” instead of just going “blah blah blah” and talking about everything except what’s in the bill. Let’s get it to committee. Everyone supports it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments? The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I can assure the member for Mississauga–Streetsville that if and when this comes out of committee, you can rest assured that your government won’t be attaching any dollars to it that were unattached to it before. You know, again it’s fluff. The government is trying to portray itself as being compassionate, but the reality is that it doesn’t matter who you are. If you said to someone, “You know, the Ontario government is bringing out legislation that is going to give you eight weeks of compassionate leave for various reasons, as indicated in the bill,” you’re going to say, “Oh, that’s fantastic. You know, I could really use that, because you know how expensive it is to take time off.” And then you say to them, “Oh, wait a minute. Wait a minute. You’re not getting any money for this. You’re just allowed to take the time off.” They would ask themselves, “Well, what the hell do I need a bill for? Why did they need to bring this piece of legislation forward? Don’t they realize that you can’t wish to have food on the table; you actually have to go out and get it? You have to buy it. You have to be able to pay for it. You have to be able to pay your bills.” There’s no money attached to this.

When I travel through my riding—and you remember this bill pre-prorogation? It was such a priority for them that they prorogued the House, but we’re not going to spend too much time—only 12 seconds left? Speaker, nobody has ever brought this bill up to me in my riding. They’re worried about getting by in the Liberal Ontario and how difficult it is. That’s the problem.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** It’s always a pleasure to be in the House when the member from Parkdale–High Park puts a different narrative on what these bills can actually do and the benefit it will bring, and when she actually talks about the social injustices that are out there and how this bill does little to address those needs for her constituents—and not just hers but, quite frankly, for constituents across the province. That’s what we really need to do, Mr. Speaker, look at putting some meat behind the bones that we’re trying to feed this province.

Again, I always enjoy listening to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. He has such a way of being very assertive and very detailed in regard to his comments, but has a very pleasant way of bringing them across so that we can actually smile once in a while in this House. That is also something that we lack sometimes in this House; our work is very serious, but we sometimes forget to enjoy life just a little bit. I enjoy listening to the member. He always tends to put a smile on my face once in a while—once in a while. He often makes my head shake, too, but we won’t go into those discussions today. But again—

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** You should hear him sing.

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** Pardon me? Oh. Apparently he’s a good singer. Hopefully, next week at the plowing

matches we'll be able to hear some of that with his boots on.

The bill essentially is a challenge for a lot of individuals across this province. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke just hit it right on the head: Why would I put myself in a position where I'm going to have debt? It's so difficult making ends meet as we're going from day to day, paycheque to paycheque. How does an individual take that decision? It's a difficult one to take, especially when most of our households are relying on two incomes and you're asking to take one away. That's the tough part. If we're going to make these bills—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Thank you.

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** —we need to make them—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Thank you.

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** —in a way that is going to be beneficial to everybody.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** I'll remind the member from Algoma–Manitoulin that when I say "Thank you," you're done. Thank you.

Member from Brampton West.

**Mr. Vic Dhillon:** I'm very happy to rise to speak on Bill 21, which provides job-protected leave for families who are facing some very difficult circumstances.

One of the themes of our throne speech was to provide for a just and caring society and, among other things, other major elements of the throne speech, such as having a strong economy, having a strong health care and education system. This is a perfect fit to address our theme of having a just and fair society.

This past summer in Brampton West, a family that I know, their child went missing and is still missing. I can only imagine the sorrow, stress and pain that this family is going through. Like I said, we can only imagine; it's only the family that knows how hard it is to cope with such a thing. I was reminded of this last week when I found out that there was a wedding in the family. It's supposed to be a happy occasion for the whole family, and one can only imagine the sombre and the sad mood on this very auspicious occasion. Although we can only share in their grief—we can't do much—this bill goes very far in our understanding of people who go through these difficult situations. This bill is about compassion, and it's simply the right thing to do to make sure that working parents have peace of mind when they're going through some very difficult circumstances.

1700

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** The member from Parkdale–High Park has two minutes.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Thanks to all who weighed in on this. Thank you for your comments.

Again, we're talking about a bill that gives eight weeks of unpaid leave to folk to look after a sick relative. I have to tell you, for the tens of thousands of folk who are waiting, languishing, on waiting lists to look after their relatives with disabilities—and only 14% of those concerns were addressed in the last budget by this government—to tell them that, "Hey, now you get another eight weeks of unpaid leave," many of whom have had to

leave their jobs, period, is not a blessing. It is not a blessing. It's a very small step addressing an issue that is huge and that will not be solved by this.

Most good employers have compassionate leave programs already. Again, most bad ones you'll never find out about because only 1% of employers ever see anybody from this government so that any employment standards are upheld. We have employers right now not even paying the folk who work for them, and yet somehow this is going to be enforced? I doubt it. Again, a very small step when we need so much. We, in fact, need a vision for how to govern the province of Ontario and those who are marginalized within it. What we get here is a sop. What we get here is more spin.

Quite frankly, 10 years later, it's just not enough. There's a message here: Stop relying on the New Democratic Party for all the good ideas. Start coming up with them yourselves. I know you have it in you, my friends in the government. I know you've got some good ideas. I know you have a vision out there for the Ontario we all want to live in. Why don't we see it? Why don't you give it? Put it forward. Meanwhile, of course, yes, let's pass this bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Further debate?

**Mr. Rob E. Milligan:** It's always a privilege to rise in the chamber here and take part in our democratic rights that we have and enjoy here in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill 21 that we're debating this afternoon actually has been debated here. We've had many a discussion. Many good points have been made. I would like to thank the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, my esteemed colleague, who always puts things in a quite robust and eloquent way. But he makes the point that, again—and I'm here almost two years, but one thing that I have noticed is the pattern that has been developed with this Liberal government. They're tired. They're weary. They're bringing forth legislation, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, that is, as the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke pointed out, fluff, window dressing—things that people back in my riding of Northumberland–Quinte West aren't talking about. As the member from Prince Edward–Hastings pointed out, they are not talking about it in the coffee shops.

When people are trying to struggle out there making ends meet—my esteemed colleague from Nepean–Carleton pointed out the sandwich generation. I myself, am a parent of two young daughters and with aging parents, who aren't at the point now where they're going to need attendants, but certainly in the near future I'm sure we're going to have that challenge ahead of us. We have to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that people are employed, first and foremost, in this province. This is something that this government has not focused on: an economic plan to get people working. Yes, this is a fluffy piece of legislation that actually brings forward ideas brought forward by our federal cousins. Mr. Harper, Mr. Flaherty and the Conservatives federally are trying to

bring forward some legislation. It's finally nice that the Liberals acknowledge that our federal cousins are doing a fantastic job. But again, this piece of legislation, Bill 21—I have some concerns, and I hope that when it does go to committee, there will be concerns that are amended or provisions that are made.

One of the things that I hear back home is, “My mom” or dad” has to go and have dialysis done two or three times a week, and I have to take time off work, without pay, and that's fine,” or they have to get the neighbours to take their parent or loved ones to go for dialysis. Under this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker—and I like to read the bills because I think it's extremely important that we look at the wording and what's actually being brought forward. So one of the first things I would like to touch on is, it says here, under subsection 5 of the family caregiver leave act, “An employee may take a leave under this section only in periods of entire weeks.”

That's fine, but what happens when, again, as I hear more and more, people are taking a day or two, or three days to take their loved ones for dialysis? Does this mean that they have to take the entire week off? I'm sure they've already made arrangements with their employer, but again, as the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke pointed out, why do we need a government to bring in regulations that make no sense? So that's just a point I would like to make about this legislation that I'm sure was an oversight or perhaps something that could be amended, but a week at a time is something I think that most employees would find, as pointed out, financially unsustainable.

Going on through Bill 21, we have the critically ill child care leave portion of it. One of the things that I would like, again, to point out that I have some difficulties with and would like to see changed is subsection 5 under this part: “Subject to subsections (6) and (7), an employee is entitled to take up to 37 weeks leave under this section to provide care or support for a critically ill child of the employee.”

Well, we can have 52 weeks or 37 weeks. I don't know where the number 37 popped up. I mean, if I, as a father, was in a situation where my child was critically ill and my 37 weeks was up, I would have an issue. Now there is a provision in there, Mr. Speaker, before I go forward, that does say that an extension could be warranted, but these are inconveniences. Again, you have to provide written proof to your employer; your employer has to agree to the terms as set out etc. I can't begin to imagine the hardships, the emotions that a parent who has a terminally ill child is going through already, and yet here we have a government trying to regulate something on how parents can conduct themselves when it comes to employment.

The terms and definitions of “a week” are also troubling. A week, of course, as set out, is beginning Sunday, ending Saturday. That's standard; that's your typical definition for a week. However, in this bill, it points out that the leave required, upon death of that child, is terminated the week after. So if, for instance, the

child passes away on a Friday, and the week ends on a Saturday, that parent only has one day, under this bill, to prepare arrangements.

Mr. Speaker, I know everyone here has witnessed family, friends or neighbours who have gone through these types of hardships. It takes more than a day to prepare. I would like to think that we don't need legislation brought forward by any government to have compassion and human caring and dignity for those who are experiencing this type of traumatic event in their lives. I would like to think, and I still believe, that if I were an employer and one of my employees were going through a difficult time in their lives, my compassion for my fellow man and woman would allow me the dignity and the right to give my employee as much time as he or she required when it came to dealing with these events.

**1710**

**Mr. Jonah Schein:** No regulation needed?

**Mr. Rob E. Milligan:** No regulations when it comes to that.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Rob E. Milligan:** No.

As my esteemed colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke pointed out, again—he's so wise, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes when we're in caucus, I just sit there in awe of his brilliance and insight. Perhaps it's the years of being here in the chamber. But again, there are no monies attached to this bill. This government can go forward all they want and say, “Look at how wonderful this bill is, this regulation that allows you to take time off work,” but we're not going to pay you one red cent.

I think that this is a major flaw in the legislation, but as pointed out by my colleagues, it's a bill that we're willing to support. It's a bill that, I think, has some merit but, again, looking at the wording, there are some sections in this bill that I would like to see amended and ratified. My recommendations will be coming forthwith with regard to that when Bill 21 does indeed get to committee.

Thank you very much for your time this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** I've got to say that I kind of agree with what was being said here by the member. I'm not sure to what degree we have the resolve to deal with this in the same way. What's clear is that there is a real issue here. In our society, more and more people are living longer and longer, and it's becoming much more complex to care for people as they get older. Hence, at the same time, we have a problem: We're taxing—and I don't mean taxing as in money—our health care system in the sense that our health care system is having a bit of a struggle to deal with making sure that people are able to be cared for.

It just seems to me, as an Ontarian and as a legislator, that if we can find a way in order to engage family members to be able to help care for those people who are sick and need help, that is a savings to the system. That is

a savings. We don't have to put people in long-term-care institutions, hospitals or complex care of some type in order to be able to deal with those people's infirmities, malady or whatever it might be.

The problem with this bill is that it speaks to the need to do that, but it doesn't do a lot when it comes to figuring out how people can afford to do this. This is really the tough part. It seems to me that, at one point, we have to decide as a society how family members can play a larger role in the care of loved ones and those that we care for within the community and within our own homes. It seems to me that if people decide to do that—maybe by way of tax rebate, maybe by way of some sort of stipend, or maybe by some other means that I haven't thought of—we can find a way to actually allow people to do this where they're not going to be completely out of pocket when it comes to being able to pay their own bills.

The frank reality is that we all work hard and harder to pay the same amount of bills that cost far more money these days, and it's difficult to make ends meet. Having to quit your job or work fewer hours to care for a loved one can become rather difficult, and I'll speak to that in my comments later.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** I just wanted to point out that this legislation—the speaker before me said that it was window dressing and fluffy, but when you have a need within your family, whether your child is missing or your elderly parent has gone missing, it's not fluffy and it's not window dressing.

This legislation is addressing a gap in the current leaves of absence under the Employment Standards Act, because the ESA, right now, doesn't currently provide for a long-term unpaid job-protected leave for employees that want to care for a family member with a serious medical condition where there's no risk of imminent death—no risk of imminent death. There are other leaves that address that. This is really a question of addressing a gap that exists right now.

The member lauded the federal government, and I know that they recently passed the Helping Families in Need Act that introduced new employment insurance and special benefits for parents of critically ill children. These benefits will provide support for up to 35 weeks to eligible parents caring for a critically ill child under 18. The federal government also made amendments to the Canada Labour Code to allow for a corresponding unpaid job-protected leave for employees in the federal jurisdiction, such as banks, airlines and telecommunications. The ESA currently does not offer an unpaid job-protected leave that matches the specific terms of the new federal leave and the EI benefits income support. So this is addressing a gap for people that may find themselves in these critical situations, and that's needed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** It's a privilege to stand up and comment on my colleague from Northumberland—Quinte

West and his very astute comments about this bill, and to talk about some of the issues of it. We're glad—this was the second run at this bill; it was lost during prorogation—that the government did listen to some of our comments on it and made some of the changes that we were looking for. But there is no money attached to this. It is a bill that actually, in a lot of ways, saves the government money.

Unfortunately, I guess, too many of us know people who this bill would be a help to. Recently, somebody that I knew, a friend of ours, lost somebody after a long bout of cancer, a young child. It's protection that I think is warranted. I think it has the support right across this House. Saying that, it is something that I think we're looking forward to see go through. It has a lot of merit. The member from Timmins—James Bay reaffirmed some of the issues that he's seen on this bill. We're looking forward to seeing this coming through.

It doesn't provide much—or any—financial help to these families. We see generally they're in need. They need to put—the person I knew—just food on the table. The community came together and helped out, but there's only so much the community could do. We have to sometimes turn back to the government to look at help. This person stayed at home to look after her daughter so that she could stay at home and not have to stay in the hospital. Certainly, very tough times for them. When you add the issues that go along with that, which are trying to stay in the house, pay the rent, pay the utilities, it makes it very difficult. Certainly this legislation is well warranted, and we're looking forward to it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Jonah Schein:** I'm speaking again to Bill 21, the Employment Standards Amendment Act. Speaker, we've heard several members of the House this afternoon comment on this bill, a bill that does provide employees with up to eight weeks of leave to take care of somebody who is sick or in crisis. Obviously, that's a principle that we all support. How we go about doing that varies. My colleague to the right over here was saying that it should just be in the interest of the individual to make that decision. We do hope that people will act in a responsible manner individually. But we're here as legislators, I think, to actually legislate a framework that will make sure that people behave in a responsible way and make sure that employees in times of need are supported when their families are in critical situations.

Speaker, the level of conversation, the level of debate in here, I don't think actually matches the reality on the streets. Certainly in Davenport when you knock on doors, people are in very desperate situations. If a family member is ill, or if they have a disability, the whole family is in crisis, and it warrants a real response. It's not just a personal response. People are always willing to go and make a personal sacrifice for a family member, but families in Davenport and across Ontario need the support of the provincial government of Ontario to step in and protect them and support them.

1720

We can, as legislators, do the things that will protect families, and it is a shame that days go by, hours spin by and years go by and yet people who are sick in this province, people with disabilities, are not being supported. The fact that people who are disabled are doomed to a life of poverty in the province of Ontario is a shame, and it's a responsibility that we all own as legislators here that that goes on and that that exists.

There is so much that needs to be done here. An eight-week unpaid leave for a family member might help some folks, but for most folks that is just not enough.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** The member from Northumberland–Quinte West has two minutes.

**Mr. Rob E. Milligan:** I want to thank the members from Timmins–James Bay, York South–Weston, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and Davenport for their comments.

I would agree with the member from Davenport that there has to be some kind of framework perhaps in place, but I think, again, this Liberal government overregulates. There are over 385,000 regulations on the books right now, and that's hindering our growth economically here in the province of Ontario, when you talk to small businesses throughout the riding etc. When it comes to family, particularly, I think obviously there are things within this bill that are very good. There are accomplishments that can be made moving forward with this bill.

One of the things I would like to point out, that the member from Davenport would like to see framework-wise, is that this bill currently only looks at missing children, and a child by definition is the age of 18. Well, perhaps there should be an age increase because there are a lot of students in colleges and universities that go missing, that are abducted or whatever. So if the member from Davenport wants to bring in some kind of framework regarding that, I would recommend that the member from Davenport look at that because if my 21-year-old daughter goes missing, I would like to think that the courtesies of this bill would also include that.

When it comes to the financing of this, or lack thereof, I think, again, pointing to the member from Renfrew, he has banged it right on the head, and I want to congratulate him for that.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Further debate?

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate having a few minutes to speak to this particular bill. I want to expand on what it is that I had said in the previous two-minute response to the Conservative member who just spoke on this particular issue.

It seems to me that where we're at in Ontario—as across most jurisdictions who operate in the public health care system—is a bit of a crossroads. Well, I wouldn't say crossroads; that wouldn't be fair. We're at a bit of a decision point when it comes to, how do we deal with an aging population that's living longer and longer because we're living healthier and healthier lifestyles and our

medical system is better able to treat disease so that people actually live longer?

If you look at 40 or 50 years ago, the morbidity rate, when it came to the age at which people died, was much sooner than it is today. We look today and it's not uncommon to see men and women live into their late 80s, early 90s and in some cases into their 100s. I was reading an article the other day where unfortunately a gentleman got involved in an altercation with the police at 107 years old. I only wish I have that problem. I don't think it was unfortunately a good outcome and I won't speak to it, but my point is that we are living longer. It's a healthier lifestyle. We're just a lot better at treating disease, and diseases that used to kill people but 20 years ago we're able to cure or at least manage, and people live longer.

That causes a lot of hope for people, as far as their ability to continue a long life, but also creates some challenges in our public health care system. It just seems to me that at one point we've got to get our heads around this issue. Now the government says they want to pass this particular bill because it's going to put it in line with what the federal regulations and laws are when it comes to being able to take family leave and not be penalized by your employer. I think that's a good thing. That's why I and New Democrats will vote in favour of this bill. But does it respond entirely to the problem? I don't think it responds to it as much as it needs to, and let me explain.

In our constituency offices or in our families, we all see people who are challenged to be able to provide health care services to their family members or loved ones—and it's not that the public system is not able to deal with that. It deals with it in a fairly good way, compared to other jurisdictions, I would argue, like the United States, where they don't have a public health care system. But there are challenges. For example, there are many members of families who say, "Listen, if I can stay at home and care for my aging mother," or father or in some cases a sibling, whoever it might be, they would choose to do that rather than have that family member or friend have to be in an institution. The problem is, they can't afford to do that, because the reality is that we're all struggling to make ends meet. Nowadays, people are really having difficulty to pay their hydro bills, to pay the groceries, to pay the car payment and gas for the car, and rent for the house or the mortgage or the taxes.

I have a friend who I've known for years and years, who's a neighbour close to where I live, who unfortunately became disabled as a result of an accident he had in mining and doesn't qualify for workers' compensation. All he gets is CPP. It's a bit of a complicated story, but he is forced to sell his house that's free and clear as a way of getting cash so that he can continue to buy groceries and pay the basic bills for him and his wife. So they're selling their house of many years and taking the equity from that house and moving into something a lot smaller to find a way to make ends meet.

My point is, families are struggling; people are struggling. We're having a hard time trying to make ends meet.

At the other end, we're struggling, as a province, to figure out how to pay for a health care system that's becoming more complex, that's becoming much more efficient, that's making people live longer and costing a heck of a lot more money. When I first came to this Legislature, the expenditure of the Ontario Legislature was about \$50 billion, of which a little bit more than half was on health care: about \$30 billion. Our budget last year was some 120-billion-odd dollars, of which over half is health care. The dollar only goes so far.

It seems to me we have an opportunity here to engage families and members of our society who wish to do so to be able to help care for people who otherwise would end up in institutions but could stay at home if somebody was able to care for them. Sometimes it could be as simple as, maybe a family member is able to arrange their schedule at work to be able to go in and check in on their loved one or their friend or their neighbour on a regular basis, to make sure that they take their medication or get a bath or whatever it might be. Yes, the CCAC system is there to have that happen, but some family members would rather do it themselves.

I have a sister who's schizophrenic: Louise, who is now 60 years old—luckily for us, Louise is doing quite well—and complicated by her having terminal cancer that has gone into her bone. She is probably going to be around for a long time yet, but at one point, we as a family may want to do this ourselves.

But how can you afford to do it if you can't take the time off from work to care for that family member? So it seems to me that one of the issues we should be thinking about is, how are we able to compensate those people who choose to do that for legitimate reasons. I don't mean, "This is a great way to make a paycheque and not do anything," but actually be engaged in the care of a family member or others. Is there a way to provide some form of compensation or some kind of accommodation to be able to do it? We do it, for example, for kids. There are foster parents who care for children, and we have a per diem allowance that we give these families in order to care for children. That, rightfully so, is a good way of dealing with this, because otherwise, we'd have to pay full-time staff to care for these kids inside group homes, and that's not the way to raise a child. A child should have a family and be nurtured and be within a home structure.

Is there something similar that we can think about and do and challenge ourselves, as legislators, to be able to deal with it, so that our family members or friends are better able to take care of those who are in need rather than taxing our health care system? Sure, you'd still be able to utilize the services of a CCAC, community care access centre, or whatever it might be, in order to provide the medical and physical needs that person has, to a degree. But if the person is able to stay at home and have the kind of supervision and care that a family member can give and not have to go into an institution, think of how much money we save. Putting somebody in a long-term-care institution—I think our provincial per diem is

up to about \$140 a day in a municipal home for the aged, plus what the family has to pay for the person to be there, plus the municipal portion. So we're spending probably \$180 to \$200 a day of taxpayers' money to maintain somebody in a long-term-care facility. If we do that in a hospital, the cost could be \$700 to \$1,000 a day, depending what unit they're in. Maybe there are ways that we can say, listen, rather than spend 200 bucks and put the person in a long-term-care institution, the person is able to live in their home; maybe you build a granny flat or maybe you move them into your home, if that's what you choose to do, and we offset the cost to the family by freeing up some of the money that would normally go to building long-term-care beds or keeping them in a hospital, as a way to be able to reuse the same money—not invent a new pot of money, but reuse the same money so that the person is able to live at home.

**1730**

This is just something that I've been thinking about for a while, and it's out of necessity, because as I look at people in my constituency, more and more they're facing these challenges. It just seems to me that, at one point, it would be interesting to hear people come before this committee, when this bill finally goes to committee. By the way, let me make a point here: That's why we have committees. Why did New Democrats not allow the government to truncate the process on the tanning bill from second to third reading? The public has the right to know. The public has a right to be able to comment on legislation. This is the people's Legislature. This is the people's government and the people's opposition. People have the right to come to committee.

Now it looks like that's going to happen, because we moved motions that I hope by now have passed or are about to be passed in order to make that happen, but that's why this bill has to go to committee as well, to have the public come and challenge us as legislators and ministers and bureaucrats and others, to say, "Maybe there's another way of looking at this. Maybe there's a way of finding savings in the system by not having people in institutions and utilizing that money to help those people who are trying to get leave to be able to care for a loved one at home," or to find some other form of accommodation that maybe none of us have thought about, but somebody else may have a better idea.

I look forward to this bill going to committee, and I truly hope that we can start thinking about how we go to the next step. This is a good first step. We'll vote for this because it's a step in the right direction, but I think it would be very useful for us to think about how we get to that next step so that we can engage families and others in caring for the people we care for and love and want to see live in an independent setting and not have to have them in institutions prematurely.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**Ms. Mitzie Jacquelin Hunter:** This bill is about care and compassion. The bill, if passed, would recognize the importance of family and job security by creating unpaid job-protected leave for hard-working Ontarians.

I know in Scarborough–Guildwood, whether it is to provide care and support to family members with a serious medical condition or care for a critically ill child or just to take some time to deal with the death or disappearance of one's child as a probable result of a crime—when someone needs a leave, it's no time for us to be wondering whether or not we have it. It's important that we all have that standard in place so that we can make plans and care for our loved ones. That consistency and predictability is also important to employers, who will also be able to plan.

What's important here is that there is flexibility and that there is choice for people, so that they have the option to take this time to spend it where their priorities are deemed, which is with their family and with their loved ones. With this protection, they won't be worrying about their jobs. Rather, their efforts will be made in ensuring that their loved ones are cared for.

From the discussions we've had, it's clear that this bill makes sense and we should ensure that this bill gets into committee as soon as possible, where it can be further refined and we can make some of those revisions that we have discussed to ensure that we have those standards in place that are fair for everyone and that are consistent and clear.

People do not take leaves unless they need them, and if they need those leaves, they should be in place so that they can have the choice to care for their family and their loved ones.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** I'd like to comment on the member from—

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Timmins–James Bay.

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** —Timmins–James Bay; I'm sorry.

I want to tell you about a few experiences I've had in the past with injuries. When I was a teenager, I got caught in the power takeoff of a tractor; I was on crutches for a number of weeks or months. Fortunately, I had my family at home to look after me, and that's the way we did things back then.

I spoke to the Legislature about my brother-in-law passing away in February from ALS. His wife—my sister—was able to stay home with him. Financially they were all right, and they could do this type of thing. Then my mother went and broke her leg in November and spent three months in the hospital over that. Fortunately, they are retired, and—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** Yes, don't be around me.

Anyways, fortunately they are retired and well off, and my father was able to care for her. But I heard a statistic on the radio this morning that was rather shocking. I think the figure is 46% of those working right now could not afford to lose one paycheque before they would have financial problems. That's scary. One paycheque, and they can't pay their bills. As we've seen with escalating hydro costs, gasoline costs and things like that, it's going

to be difficult for people to take advantage of this bill. That's the flaw that I see in this bill. I think that has to be addressed in committee before this bill comes back for third reading. I really don't think that people are going to take advantage, no matter what we say in this bill, because of the financial situations a lot of families face in Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments.

**Mr. Jonah Schein:** Again, speaking to Bill 21, the Employment Standards Amendment Act, it's interesting to hear the comments of my colleagues from the Conservative Party speaking quite accurately about the lack of financial support provided in this bill. When this bill goes to committee—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Jonah Schein:** No, I'm agreeing with you. I think that this bill does far too little to support families in crisis, but I would like to see the Conservatives step up and actually put some money on the table to support families in need. It's one thing to talk about it in here, but at the same time, your cousins in the federal party are cutting employment insurance benefits, or freezing them. Speaking across the aisle here, the government is saying that this is a bill that will help. This is a bill that, at best, does no harm, but it does very little to help anyone.

My colleague from Timmins–James Bay puts this, actually, in the kind of contextual light that it deserves: This is a health care issue. This is a province that spends most of its budget on health care issues, and if we actually did things in a different way, we would be able to support people in a real way. The bill before us does nothing but pretty much keep the status quo in place. If you're well off in this province, you can afford to stay home and take care of your family, but if you're not well off, you're not going to be able to do that. This bill just does not substantially address the real situation of people in this province.

Just before coming to House duty today, I had a meeting with stakeholders. These are people who would never be supported by this, people who are deemed as independent contractors, but they are employees; they just don't have any rights at work. They're bike couriers, they're bike messengers. They're on the streets every day, delivering and making this city function, and yet they don't have any benefits at all. They don't get any sick days. If they have a family member in crisis, they're not going to get paid that day, and that reflects the reality of probably 50% of people in the GTA. This bill will do nothing to help those members. It will do something to help very few people here, and it's worth supporting for that alone.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** It's a pleasure to join the debate. I'm starting to hear the same thing over and over again: that most members, if not all members, in this House support this bill. However, they need to express their opinions on what's wrong and what's right, what

they'd like to see in it. That, generally, is the role of the committee, without taking away the right of anybody to speak in this House.

We've all said that this bill is going to do a lot of good for people. Some people say it's not going to do a whole lot of good, but I don't think that anybody has said that this bill is bad for anybody. It's something we can do for the people of Ontario that's going to make their lives better. The sooner we're able to do that, the sooner those lives will get better. The sooner we are able to bring our legislation into line with the federal legislation—with the new federal leave, and the employment insurance benefits and income supports that are being introduced by the federal government—as soon as we bring the Employment Standards Act into line with that, more people will be able to avail themselves of those benefits.

That, to me, is a positive. It's a step forward. I hope we can move to the committee very, very shortly.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** The member from Timmins–James Bay has two minutes.

1740

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** I want to thank all members for their comments. I've got to say, in regard to the last comments I just heard, like, "Hurry up, get it to committee because"—excuse me. This is the Legislature, and all members of this House have a responsibility to be able to, as best they can, represent the view of their constituencies or others they would have met with in regard to a bill. I hadn't had a chance to speak on this bill, because of the way the schedule works in this House, and there was 10 minutes afforded to me in order to put something on the record that I don't think anybody else talked about. I was trying to be thoughtful in regard to how maybe, once we get to committee, one of the things that we could look at is, how do we find a way to move money within the system to assist those people who are currently or want to in the future care for people within their own home or somebody else's home? I hear the government get up and say, "Let's get it to committee." Well, excuse me, it's the Legislature. This is not a sausage factory where we're going to throw legislation out as quickly as we can without any thought. There's a process, and the process is to raise issues in this House that we think are important.

Now, I think this thing is pretty close to ending; I think we're on day 3 or day 4. I don't think it's unreasonable to believe that a bill should be in the House for three or four or five days. What the heck is wrong with that? People have lived without this provision for how many years? Certainly to God—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** —and the government prorogued last year. There's nothing here, no attempt to try to slow down or to filibuster. All we're doing is making suggestions on how we can make the bill better. I presume this bill is not going to be here much longer, but I resent the fact that members would stand and chastise members for debating this bill and bringing new ideas to what is, I think, a very weak bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Further debate?

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I'm pleased to rise to speak to 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. That's the title of the bill. It is one of these unique situations we're debating in this Legislature where the debate has actually worked the way it was supposed to. This bill was first introduced as Bill 30, the Family Caregiver Leave Act, and at that point there were a number of problems with the bill. During second reading, members got up and pointed out those problems and talked about ways to improve it—and, for once, the government listened. Last October, Bill 30, like many other good bills, died when the Legislature prorogued, but instead of reintroducing the same bill, the government took the time to make some improvements and introduced one that was better. I want to recognize them for that. It's something we wish had happened on a number of other bills.

After the Legislature prorogued, I had to reintroduce my private member's bill, the Hawkins Gignac Act, which would require carbon monoxide detectors in all Ontario homes. This is a bill that has unanimously passed second reading twice and committee once. Last spring, the Premier announced that her government would be supporting mandatory carbon monoxide detectors in homes. So just before the end of the session, I wrote to the House leaders and to the Premier to tell them that I would be asking for unanimous consent to have second and third reading to get this life-saving legislation passed. I was surprised and disheartened when the Premier and the government House leader were among those who said no. That doesn't seem like working together to get things done.

Mr. Speaker, there were many other bills like the Family Caregiver Leave Act and the Hawkins Gignac Act that died when this Legislature prorogued. One other example is the Local Food Act. When it was introduced last October, we heard from agricultural groups, farmers and local food groups who were greatly disappointed. A food act is an opportunity to do something significant that will impact our food system from field to fork, and this government missed that opportunity. However, unlike Bill 30, in the case of the Local Food Act the government chose not to listen to the concerns that the opposition had raised and introduced virtually exactly the same bill again.

People send all of us here to make a difference, not to talk to the cameras but to debate the merits of legislation and point out where it misses the mark. I'm disappointed by the recent comments made by the government House leader criticizing members for not doing exactly what it is we were sent here to do. The majority of the delay for the Local Food Act was not caused by second reading debate, which only took 20 hours over five weeks, a debate which included a number of ideas and initiatives that I think would have greatly strengthened the bill. The

delay was caused by proroguing the Legislature and the fact that the social policy committee was not allowed to sit over the summer. As a result, the committee is still working on the report on diluted chemotherapy drugs so we can ensure that no one else in Ontario has to suffer through that situation. That report that our committee is working on is a reminder that the work we do here has a significant impact on the lives of Ontarians. It means that we shouldn't be rushing bills through without taking the time to examine them thoroughly. It also means that we should, as happened with this bill, listen to all the concerns raised in the Legislature and, where possible, amend the bill to address them.

I think that together we've made this bill better. This bill now closes the inconsistency between the Canada Labour Code and the Ontario Employment Standards Act.

There are a few concerns still remaining in the bill, which I'll speak to in a minute. First I want to talk about the goal of this bill: ensuring that people can be there for critically ill family members or that parents have time to mourn the loss of a child. It would also allow an employee to take up to eight weeks to care for a spouse, a parent, a child or a number of other close relatives. I've heard from constituents who have lost their jobs as a result of needing to take a long leave, something this bill would have prevented.

I was talking recently to one of my staff who took some time when her mother was critically ill. She said it was one of the greatest gifts she could have been given: that when her mother passed away, she never had to feel like she hadn't been there for her mother, and she has never had to feel like she had missed out on time together in that last year. I think there are many people like my staff who are already taking family leaves when required or working out arrangements that work for them.

I have a concern that this bill may be too restrictive in two places, first in defining a week as being from Sunday to Saturday. In most offices, that may be the way they schedule, but I'm not sure that all businesses run on that schedule. For instance, some restaurants do the scheduling from midweek to midweek. While I understand that this clause is to make it easier for employers to keep the job open by allowing them to manage staffing, in some cases it may have the opposite effect. By making that definition a little more open, I think it would make it easier for everyone.

Likewise the clause requiring the employees to take full weeks: For some people and companies that might be easier, but for others, it might make more sense for the employee and the company to agree that it will be a partial leave for a few days a week. For instance, that might allow siblings to share caring for a parent.

All of these situations described in the bill are a difficult time in people's lives. Some are among the most horrific that any of us could imagine. Giving people and employers the flexibility to handle the leave in a way that suits them best is probably the kindest thing that we can do for them.

For my staff member who took time, she was allowed to go as needed on the days that her mother was most ill or needed assistance. As a result, she was also able to keep doing her job until about a week and a half before her mother passed away while still being there for her mother.

If we are too restrictive, we may actually end some of the more flexible arrangements that employers are currently offering. I think we all agree that giving people the option for leave when a family member is critically ill is the right thing to do.

I think we would also all agree that no two situations are the same and that, for many people, taking leave is not an easy decision. They need to work out whether they can afford the financial costs. People struggle with when to take it. How do you know how long your family member has left? While some may want to take it earlier to help with treatments or to be there as the loved one goes through chemo, it's hard to know what is coming next and whether the leave would be needed more in the future.

These are all tough decisions, Mr. Speaker, decisions that people need to deal with. Having this act will make it a little easier on those people. I think that looking at those two items to create a little more flexibility will help make it a little easier, too.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this. It's much better than the version we had before. I'm often disappointed by the fact that government makes long speeches about wanting to work with the opposition and then ignores our input, and in fact complains when we take time to put forward suggestions. It's nice to see that, for once, they have taken our suggestion and created a bill that will be stronger and work better for the people of Ontario, and I hope that this won't be the only time they do so. I hope that instead of complaining to the media, they will look seriously at the suggestions that we've put forward on the Local Food Act, such as including a requirement for food education in the curriculum for all grades and creating a tax credit for farmers who donate produce to food banks. It's not enough to say you want to work together; you have to demonstrate it. The government has done in this bill, but there are too many cases where the opposite is true.

**1750**

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I had the opportunity—not because this bill was in place, but when my mother passed away, as a staff member I had that opportunity. I come from a large family. She didn't want to go to the hospital and we sat with her for about four months, 24 hours a day, everybody sharing it; and those were the most important days of our lives that all of us could share with my mother at that time. I think this will provide that opportunity for people who are not self-employed and who cannot take that time off at their leisure.

I very much support this bill, but I think much more needs to be done to make sure that it works for all the people, not regimented so one size has to fit all.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak to this bill, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments.

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** The comments that I'm making now are comments that I made when this bill was Bill 30, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver leave, and I thought it was important for me to bring them up again.

The definitions of "family member" are indicated here, 1 through 8, and particularly number 8 is the one that I want to highlight right now: "Any individual prescribed as a family member for the purpose of this section." I'm not sure if that determination refers to the above 7, but I want to talk to you about a neighbour I have.

Her name is Georgine Boucher. She's a fabulous neighbour; she's a great lady. She's getting up there in age—and I hope she's not listening to the program today, because I'm going to get an earful when I get home this weekend. But she is a wonderful woman. Fortunately, as neighbours, my wife and I, if anything was to happen to her, would be in a position to help her out. I'm really glad that we're going to be able to do that for her. But in certain instances across northern Ontario, those family members just aren't close. Those family members are your neighbours down the street. That family member is someone who is just, lo and behold, a quarter mile down the road. We would often like to take care of the individuals that we have in our community, but these definitions don't include those individuals, so it's of concern to me.

The other concern I have is "a copy of the certificate." As hard as it is for an individual to take this time off, you're going to have to get the certificate, and guess what? You're going to have to pay a doctor for the certificate, creating further hardship.

Those are the concerns that I have and I thought it was important for me to raise them again, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments.

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** I'm glad to have a couple minutes on this issue. I want to congratulate our Minister of Labour for bringing this forward, Bill 21, the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families), 2013. The reason that I want to congratulate him—specifically the part of the legislation that I really like and I would assume others in the Legislature also really like—is the job-protected component of this for caregivers.

Now, the categories—I'm assuming most of them have been raised here—are a spouse, parent, stepparent, foster parent of the employee or the employee's spouse; child, stepchild, foster child of the employee or the employee's spouse; grandparents, 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; and a relative of the employee who is dependent on the employee for care or assistance. So it's pretty broad in its application—job-protected leave.

I wanted to mention the job-protected piece in a second—I want to underscore that a little bit—but just to mention as well some of the groups that are very supportive of this. The MS Society, the Parkinson Society, the Alzheimer Society, the Canadian Cancer Society and the caregiver coalition are all on side in terms of supporting this legislation.

The job-protected piece reminds me of back in 2002, when I was asked to run provincially. I remember that my employer of the day basically was telling me, "Well, Billy, if you go, you're gone. There's nothing we can do for you." I said, "No, I don't think that's the case. The legislation says this." In any event, I remember having to get a lawyer to get a letter. It cost me 3,000 or 5,000 bucks to try to tell my employer, "No, you have to protect my job for a little while." As it turns out, I think it ended up being five years. But it was a risk for me.

I'm not comparing my circumstance to the seriousness of this issue, but I am simply underscoring the fact that job-protected leave for people who find themselves in difficult health care situations is real, it's relevant and it's consequential for the people we represent.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments? The member from Oxford.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Durham.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Actually, what happened was the two of you stood up, so I was confused.

The member from Durham.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** That would be enough to confuse me, Speaker, looking at the two of them.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** We look a lot alike, I suppose.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to take one or two minutes of time here.

I do want to comment on the member from Oxford, when he personalized it by talking about his family and his mother in the last stage of palliative care, I suppose. I think for everyone here, whether they're in the House or listening or even, for that matter, at the table, that's an important component of it.

As well, the member from Algoma-Manitoulin personalized it by talking about the neighbour and how it would work there and how he and his wife would certainly step in.

Generally, I think we all agree on the sentiment of it. In fact, yesterday the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane said that it was a feel-good bill. So we generally agree on the intent, the sentiment of it all. The disagreement is really on a completely other side.

It's important to note that the people most vulnerable probably couldn't take a day off without pay. In fact, now I'm working with a lady in my riding who has been called for jury duty, who can't afford to take a day off work.

They're living hand to mouth in Ontario today, with many of these jobs. In the case of the individual who wants to take care of, with all the best of intentions—they're not able to because of the high cost of electricity

and other impinging expenses: the cost of gas etc. today in Ontario.

We agree with the sentiment, we agree with the bill, and it should probably go to committee. But really, even small employers, a mom-and-dad shop, a Mac's—if they're to give the employee—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Thank you. Questions and comments?

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** I think the debate is showing that, in fact, there's some thought being put to how we're able to better this bill. I think that's a good sign that legislators are taking this seriously and trying to grapple with how to deal with the complexity of providing health care to people in today's environment.

We all know that it's costing more and more money to run our health care system because people are living longer. We're really getting a lot better at how we care for people, and that's really expensive. If you take a look, people from 20 or 30 years ago were dying of diseases that today you can treat and, in some cases, cure. Obviously, our health care needs are changing over time.

As I said earlier in my discussions on this debate, we should be thinking about how to find ways to allow people to live independently at home longer. The first stab at that was to create—and it was created under our government, under the NDP government—a system of long-term care that was able to bring services into the community. There was a hodgepodge of different agencies that were out there, and our government tried to redirect long-term care in such a way that we had some form of dispatching and some form of organizing health care so that it was a little bit easier for people to get those services in the home. Each government since then, the Conservatives and the Liberals, has tried to improve on that and has done some improvements on how to get services in the community. But what we missed along the way and I think what we're starting to realize is we need to find a way to engage family members and others, if they so choose, to be part of the caregiving circle that allows people to live at home independently. In some cases, it might mean a leave from employment for a short period of time or in a part-time kind of way, or maybe a permanent thing. I think it's one of the options we need to look at—and how we fund that, which is a weakness of this bill, as I think the question we have to ask ourselves is, how can we do that?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** The member from Oxford has two minutes.

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I'd like to thank the members from Algoma–Manitoulin, Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Durham and Timmins–James Bay for their comments.

I also want to point out to the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan that obviously the only purpose of this bill is what he says he likes about this bill, and I agree with him: the job protection. Obviously, without this bill, everybody can take as much leave time off as they like, except that they aren't guaranteed to have their job. This bill will make sure they can do that to keep their job, and taking that leave.

That also brings me to the point that I think it becomes important that we need to look at the bill as the definition—he went through it—about who was eligible, under the act, as a family member. I think it's important. One place that I think that needs to be looked at is that anyone who has been working for an employer for six months or more—now, what happens if I just changed jobs or somebody has just changed jobs? After 25 years in one job, they got laid off and they found another one, and five months later they have to take leave, and then this bill says it doesn't apply—why should it be any different for someone depending on the length of time? I can see that it would not necessarily apply for part-time workers, but I think there needs to be a better description of making sure that we don't work on trying to eliminate people who would not qualify, and make it as broad as we can to make sure everybody is getting the same protection.

I think it's also important to look at some of the length of time. I think that was spoken to in some of the other comments, the length of time that's available and how you can utilize that time eight weeks per year. It seems to me that if you could take 16 half-weeks, you could likely do a lot more good for that same individual. Incidentally, I've been an employer who has given that time off. It's also easier to replace an employee for a longer period of time. So I think that the bill needs to look at that in committee. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** It being past 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

*The House adjourned at 1802.*

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Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
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Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
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Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
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Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
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Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
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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	
<b>Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)</b>	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	
<b>Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)</b>	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**

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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**

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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**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Rick Bartolucci  
Laura Albanese, Rick Bartolucci  
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield  
Mitzie Jacquelin Hunter, Jim McDonnell  
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 Qaadri  
Teresa J. Armstrong, Steven Del Duca  
Bob Delaney, Frank Klees  
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely  
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qaadri  
Jonah Schein  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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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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