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Tuesday 24 September 2013

Mardi 24 septembre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 24 September 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 24 septembre 2013

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WASTE REDUCTION ACT, 2013
LOI DE 2013 SUR LA RÉDUCTION
DES DÉCHETS

Mr. Bradley moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 91, An Act to establish a new regime for the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 91, Loi créant un nouveau cadre pour la réduction, la réutilisation et le recyclage des déchets et abrogeant la Loi de 2002 sur le réacheminement des déchets.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Ottawa–Orléans. I rise today to begin second reading debate of Bill 91, the proposed Waste Reduction Act.

Before I begin, I would like to recognize a delegation from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, who are here in the gallery this morning. In no particular order of importance—we're going to share the level of importance today: Catherine Brown, senior adviser at AMO; Ben Bennett, executive director of the Municipal Waste Association; Dave Gordon, manager, sustainable waste management for the regional municipality of York; Laura Malyjasiak, from the region of Durham; Russ Powers, president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario; Nicholas Ruder, policy adviser, Association of Municipalities of Ontario; Vincent Sferrazza, director of solid waste management services, city of Toronto; Monika Turner, director of policy, Association of Municipalities of Ontario; Pat Vanini, executive director, Association of Municipalities of Ontario; and Peter Veiga, supervisor of waste operations, region of Durham. Welcome.

In June, I introduced this bill as a way forward to break Ontario's recycling logjam, boost diversion rates and establish a system that encourages the private sector to invest in more recycling and jobs in our province. The central pillar of the act is individual producer responsibility for the environmental fate of the products they sell.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind the House why Ontario needs this proposed legislation. We

know recycled materials have tremendous value as a resource. In Ontario, we are seeing more and more companies seizing the opportunities recycling presents and boosting Ontario's economy when they do so.

Canada Fibers created 100 new jobs when it opened a new recycling facility in Toronto this summer. This plant has the capacity to process more than 60 tonnes of blue box waste every hour. It is the largest single-stream recycling facility in all of North America.

Progressive Waste Solutions opened a new processing plant in Concord that has the ability to process 100,000 metric tonnes of waste wood, steel, aluminum, cardboard, plastics and drywall every year from the construction, demolition and renovation sector. Up to 85% of that waste will ultimately be turned into new products and green fuel for power generation. This new plant is creating 50 new jobs.

These are examples of the positive impact recycling has on our economy. The Ontario Waste Management Association tells us that the waste management sector in this province generates more than \$3 billion in revenue and invests \$300 million in infrastructure annually.

A separate study found that for every 1,000 tonnes of waste we recycle, seven new jobs are created. In fact, recycling generates 10 times the number of jobs as disposal at a landfill.

While we are deriving some of the benefits of recycling under the current Waste Diversion Act, we are missing many more environmental and economic opportunities to recycle. Here is the size of the opportunity we are missing without the reforms embodied in the Waste Reduction Act: up to \$1 billion in private sector recycling investments, generating 5,000 direct jobs, and more when the spinoff of employment is counted. We are currently wasting far too much recyclable material in landfills.

While Ontario's waste diversion programs recycle just over a million tonnes of waste every year, our overall waste diversion rate lags behind other jurisdictions in Canada and around the world. The industrial, commercial and institutional sectors generate the majority of waste in the province but recycle only a small portion of it—a mere 11%.

Some companies are taking the challenge of waste diversion very seriously. General Motors of Canada has achieved diversion rates of more than 93% at its Woodstock parts distribution centre. Exhibition Place, Toronto's largest entertainment venue, has more than 5.2 million visitors a year and diverts 79% of its waste. Teknion, the Toronto office systems and furniture pro-

ducts manufacturer, increased its waste diversion rate from 40% to a very remarkable 88% in 2011.

These are great successes, but it's clear we need to see much more in the way of leadership in this sector. Recycled materials use less energy, produce fewer greenhouse gas emissions and have fewer environmental impacts than extracting raw materials. For example, one tonne of recycled paper uses 50% less water than virgin pulp and results in 74% less air pollution and 35% less water pollution.

Composting organic waste diverts a large portion of the waste stream from disposal, produces high-quality soil enhancer with a variety of end uses, conserves landfill space and reduces the production of leachate and methane gas.

More recycling keeps more waste from littering our land and fouling our lakes and streams.

0910

Householders are doing an admirable job—that's through the blue box—keeping beverage containers, plastics and printed paper out of our landfills. Individuals also recycle their used tires and old electronics, as well as paint and other hazardous household waste, to keep these from polluting our lands and water.

But taxpayers and consumers are paying for the costs of recycling when they buy some products, and their taxes also pay for the end-of-life management of these same products. For these reasons and more, the proposed Waste Reduction Act is needed to fix what essentially, in my belief and I think the belief of many, is a broken system. We need the Waste Reduction Act to attract new investment, create new jobs, foster innovation, conserve resources and better protect our environment.

The new proposed Waste Reduction Act, if passed, would make individual producers responsible for the end-of-life management of their products and the packaging. It would also reintroduce competition into the recycling market, spurring much innovation. Under the proposed act, producers would have a financial incentive to develop products that are designed, manufactured and distributed in ways that reduce their impact on the environment. Their recycling costs would be, in fact, lower. The act would also allow us to kick-start recycling in the IC&I sector by designating waste for diversion. The place to start would be to designate paper and packaging supplied to the sector.

The proposed act recognizes the important role that municipalities and property taxpayers play in recycling waste by lifting the 50% funding cap on producers' contribution to the blue box program. That has been a matter of contention for years, where municipalities believe they shouldn't be paying that 50%; they believe that the producers themselves should assume a greater cost of that and municipal taxpayers a lower portion of that. A new balance would be achieved through negotiations with the municipalities and the producers. It would protect consumers from surprises at the cash register by requiring recycling costs to be included in the advertised, displayed and shelf prices of products; and it would

transform Waste Diversion Ontario into the Waste Reduction Authority, with compliance, oversight and enforcement powers. The authority would also be responsible for ensuring a timely transition of existing diversion programs in a way that is easy and convenient for our residents.

The Ministry of the Environment has had a busy summer consulting with municipalities, producers, retailers, service providers and others in the waste management system to get more in-depth feedback on the proposed legislation. We have been carefully reviewing the public and stakeholder feedback on the act and accompanying strategy. In listening to our partners, we have heard broad support for the approach proposed in the Waste Reduction Act, which ensures that individual producers take responsibility for the end-of-life management of the products that they sell.

The Ontario Waste Management Association told my ministry, "The proposed Waste Reduction Act and strategy reflects a reasonable balance of the solutions brought forward through numerous consultations and proposals from all political parties." The Association of Municipalities of Ontario confirmed that with their quote that said, "AMO is supportive of the proposed Waste Reduction Act and Waste Reduction Strategy and the environmental principles embedded throughout the documents." The Retail Council of Canada, which represents thousands of department, specialty, discount and independent stores and on-line merchants, said, "Clear and achievable recycling requirements are essential tools to create a level playing field between all stakeholders involved in waste diversion and that retailers are consulted in their design."

Sims Recycling Solutions—a global leader in the recovery of waste electronics, I think people would agree—congratulated the Ministry of the Environment for seeking to make changes that will lead to a more effective waste and resource management reality in Ontario.

There are, of course, many differing opinions on the specifics; that is to be expected. That is why we are continuing to work with our partners to strike the right balance between the many different and sometimes competing needs and priorities involved.

If the proposed bill becomes law—of course, I would be delighted if it were to do so—we intend to roll out the new waste reduction framework in an integrated fashion that will maximize opportunities to engage with stakeholders. That's extremely important. We understand it is a complex issue, and we are fully prepared to roll up our sleeves and work with our stakeholders to make sure we get this right.

Without the new approach to recycling embodied in the Waste Reduction Act, we run the risk of not only jeopardizing future achievements in recycling and economic growth, but also rolling back the successes we've achieved to this date.

I want to make it clear that the government recognizes the important roles municipalities, producers and service providers all play in the success of the proposed framework. Municipalities have spent hundreds of millions of

dollars on infrastructure, public education and the collection and diversion of products for recycling. Municipalities are accountable to their residents for the successful delivery of diversion programs in each and every one of their own communities.

Currently, municipalities bear the burden of residential waste management but have little ability to affect the amount of waste that is created in the first place. Municipalities have indicated they're willing to work with producers. They're open to a change in roles and responsibilities, recognizing the strengths they bring to the collection of materials and the potential for producers to take on greater responsibility for post-collection management.

Producers are ultimately responsible for environmental performance and achieving recycling results and targets. Under an individual producer responsibility model, they can also address the amount of waste produced in the first place, and how easy and inexpensive it is to recycle. The waste management industry also has an important role to play, as these companies provide innovative solutions that support transforming waste into new products that create new jobs.

The proposed act would provide authority to make individual producers legally obligated to meet the waste reduction objectives for their products. The changes we are proposing will have a positive impact on the marketplace: It will free up and unleash the innovative energies of competition.

Managing waste is also affected by the increasingly complex global manufacturing and supply systems of national and international companies. We want to ensure that our approach gives producers that operate in a global marketplace the flexibility to decide on how to meet their recycling requirements. The proposed act will help, not hinder, national harmonization programs. We are listening to stakeholders to achieve a balance that ensures the impact is a net positive for everyone involved.

We recognize the important roles of producers and municipalities alike. Take, for example, the blue box, the crown jewel of Ontario's recycling programs. For more than 25 years, producers, municipalities and service providers have worked together to build the blue box into what it is today: a highly successful program that enables residents to conveniently recycle material that otherwise would be destined for a landfill. Producers and municipalities have together invested more than \$1 billion in a successful program that is now emulated around the globe.

Currently, municipal taxpayers foot the bill for half the cost of the blue box program. A move toward greater producer funding aligns with the overall principles of individual producer responsibility.

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At the same time, we also know that as we look to the future we may need to think about better, more efficient ways to deliver and fund the blue box. Coming up with those solutions needs to be a collaborative effort between producers, municipalities, service providers and the

provincial government. These solutions have to be fair and balanced and reflect the unique advantages and strengths that different stakeholders bring to the table. This may require stakeholders to work together to discuss what, if any, changes may be made to the existing provisions of regulation 101 to reflect their proposed solutions.

I understand producers feel that if they pay more, they should be more involved in how their money is spent and managed. I recognize those concerns. No one wants to write a blank cheque. I do not believe municipalities are asking for a blank cheque, and it is certainly not the intention of the proposed legislation to provide one. Under the proposed act, municipalities and producers are free to negotiate agreements that reimburse municipalities for their reasonable costs incurred when collecting designated wastes.

We will propose clarifications to address the concerns we have heard when the bill goes to committee. We will also consider what other changes can be made to mitigate the potential cost impact on producers. My colleague and parliamentary assistant, Phil McNeely, will speak to the Waste Reduction Authority and how we intend to transition to the new model in a few moments.

In summary, why do we need to replace the Waste Diversion Act? Well, it has some success in recycling selected end-of-life products, including household hazardous waste, used tires and electronics, but the successes have been limited by a lack of legislative teeth and enforcement, and unacceptably low rates of recycling in the industrial, commercial and institutional sectors.

We have seen some companies step up, and it's always a delight to do so. Brampton's Loblaw diverts 81% of waste generated by its network of distribution centres and has reduced the number of plastic bags in stores by more than five billion—yes, that's billion—since 2007. Unilever Canada, through a combination of source separation, reuse, recycling and composting programs, sends no non-hazardous waste to landfill from its manufacturing facilities and continues to work to design packaging that minimizes material use. Walmart Canada's Canadian stores divert more than 80% of waste, with the goal of recycling 90% of waste by 2015.

Despite the best efforts of householders, municipalities, stewardship organizations and progressive producers and retailers like these, the old system simply is not working. Recycling progress in our province has bumped its head on the Waste Diversion Act's ceiling for too long. The purpose of the proposed act is to boost recycling and reduce landfill disposal. The strategy of the Waste Reduction Act is to use individual producer responsibility to unleash the innovative energies of competition in the marketplace. Ontario needs the Waste Reduction Act to forge a new partnership between those who make up Ontario's waste sector. The success of our strategy depends on a collective vision and effort to harness the value of waste to create new opportunities, investments and jobs. Realizing that means building on the strengths of our partners and working together. In this regard, I

urge all members to give serious consideration and ultimately support this legislation.

When legislation is brought forward to the Legislative Assembly, where we are fortunate to sit this morning and to deliberate on important subjects of this kind, there is an opportunity for all to have input. It was my goal, and the goal of the Ministry of the Environment and the government, to involve many different sectors, many different individuals and many different groups in the development of this legislation, and so there was widespread consultation previous to the bill. I welcomed the opportunity to meet with both of the opposition critics, the one for the official opposition and the one for the third party, and I found their input to be of value. They as well would have heard from various sectors the views that might be brought forward on legislation of this kind.

Ultimately, I think that the bill that we see before us and the strategy paper that went with it both reflected that widespread consultation. It's nice when you're in government to be able to bring forward legislation of this kind, because ultimately government has that responsibility and opportunity, but what we have seen with this legislation is the opportunity for all members of the House who have an interest in it to have brought forward their ideas. Their ideas, from time to time, are reflected in components of the legislation.

We also know that legislation goes through various steps. First of all, we have the introduction of the bill; normally, there is not a debate and often not a standing vote on that, and it receives approval on its introduction. That is routine. Second reading allows us an opportunity to canvass the various issues in a general sense that revolve around a bill of this kind, and we do look forward to some debate in that regard. In a bill of this kind, I think what is going to be particularly significant is the committee stage, where we have the opportunity to hear from the various sectors out there—from individuals, from environmental groups and so on—that they might have some concerns, recommendations or endorsements of particular parts of the legislation. I look forward to that particular aspect of this legislative process.

I think this bill is a good bill, quite obviously; I would not have brought it forward. When I listened to those I talked to, including the opposition critics, I was keen to hear in principle, before the bill came before the House, what their concerns would be, what they felt would be a reasonable component of the bill and what their approach would be. Not all of that is ever going to be reflected in legislation, but I think you can see some of it in this legislation. I don't look at this as a bill brought forward by an individual minister—an individual minister's bill or a government's bill. I look forward to it as a bill that is debated and ultimately a bill for which all of us in the Legislature can claim some considerable credit. It's a bill that is required.

There have been some significant efforts in the past. Those efforts have, as I mentioned in my earlier remarks, borne some fruit, but we also see the frustration of it not working as well as it might. In fact, Environmental

Commissioner Gord Miller, early on, when I became the Minister of the Environment, commented on the lack of progress that we have made as a province in diverting waste and said that this would be a challenge we should be looking forward with. I appreciated his activity as an independent officer of this House in bringing people together from various sectors to get their views and to try to forge the best consensus possible at the time. There were others who played that role along the way.

Some of us have also had an opportunity to tour some of the new recycling plants that are out there, and "astounding" is not too strong a word when you look at what is being done in that sector today. If you had said to me a dozen years ago that we would see the kind of plants that we see out there now, creating jobs, diverting waste and making money in doing so, one might have said, "That is a lofty goal, but it will not be achieved." We see concrete examples of that, and I believe we will see more of that in the future.

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I know that my parliamentary assistant, the member for Ottawa-Orléans, shares my enthusiasm for this particular piece of legislation. Indeed, I welcomed his input, and he has welcomed the input of others he has talked to around the province, just as, I think, all members of the Legislature have welcomed the input.

We recognize that, as I say, there's some great support. I've read a couple of quotes, but there are other quotes as well, supportive of this legislation. There has been some editorial support across the province for the legislation as well. We recognize, when you get down to the details, that there are going to be compromises that always have to be worked out. I think all of us in this House are going to be interested not only in hearing from one another—and that's going to be important: to have people taking notes as others are speaking in the House to see what they have concluded and ideas they've had that perhaps might be included in the bill and might alter the bill. So that's going to be an exceedingly important aspect of it as well. But it is my hope—and it's a hope, I think, that is based on confidence that members of this House believe this is an issue that must be tackled, and tackled soon—that we will see a passage in this House that is faster than some of the legislation I have seen in the past. As I say, getting to the committee aspect is going to be exceedingly important.

So I thank all members of this House for their input; those who have written to me, written to the government or made presentations when there was an opportunity to do so. I think we have an opportunity together to achieve considerable success in this province with the passage of this legislation.

I'm never presumptuous. First of all, one is in contempt of the House if one presumes that legislation automatically passes. But in my experience in this House—which has been a few years—I have noted that the most successful legislation is that which is appropriately debated, which has excellent committee time to deal with it and ultimately is legislation that will benefit the people

of this province. I believe that the Waste Reduction Act is that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments? The member for Ottawa–Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured to join Environment Minister Jim Bradley in supporting the proposed Waste Reduction Act this morning. Minister Bradley has already set out the main goal of the proposed act: to make Ontario a leader in keeping waste out of the environment by recycling its value back into the economy. Other jurisdictions have already realized the benefits of adopting an individual producer responsibility model of waste management. It's time we did the same.

We need to work together to capitalize on the innovative ideas here in Ontario. We have an opportunity to open our doors to new investments, new factories and, most importantly, new jobs.

We're proposing an individual producer responsibility model that is made-in-Ontario. That means building on the unique strengths of Ontario producers, municipalities and other partners, and using them to transform the waste management in this province.

Today I want to take you through our proposed waste reduction strategy and some of its economic benefits. The strategy is a blueprint for how we could make this approach work in Ontario.

As Minister Bradley has pointed out, the success of this strategy depends on a collective effort amongst all partners involved in managing and recycling our waste—producers to processors, service providers and municipalities—which have been effectively delivering local recycling services for years to our residents.

Our strategy is based on achieving six key results:

- drive economic and environmental innovation by holding individual producers responsible for waste reduction outcomes;
- transform Waste Diversion Ontario into a strong oversight and compliance authority;
- use all-in pricing to ensure consumer protection and incent improved product designs;
- increase support for municipal recycling;
- increase the diversion of a wider range of wastes; and
- transition existing programs in a timely and smooth manner.

Today I will focus on the proposed transformation of Waste Diversion Ontario to a new Waste Reduction Authority with more robust oversight and compliance responsibilities. I will also talk about the importance of a timely and seamless transition to the new system.

First, the Waste Reduction Authority, or WRA: While there is general support for a new authority, there are some concerns about oversight, the composition of the board and whether the authority is the right model to ensure compliance with the new rules. We have proposed an approach that includes several provisions and requirements to ensure appropriate oversight, accountability and transparency. The province would establish collection

and processing standards. The proposed WRA would have powers to ensure compliance with the new rules and take enforcement action when necessary. It would provide oversight and compliance of the proposed Waste Reduction Act and oversee existing waste diversion programs until they are transitioned to the proposed act. The WRA would have inspection powers and be able to issue compliance orders and administrative penalties to producers and to other intermediaries that failed to achieve outcomes.

The WRA would have a number of key responsibilities, including:

- receiving and storing information from producers;
- assessing producers' performance;
- taking graduated compliance and enforcement action against individual producers who perform poorly or don't comply;
- overseeing integrated pricing by undertaking inspections and taking action against non-compliance, false or misleading representations;
- advising governments on specific waste diversion issues;
- facilitating the resolution of disputes between producers and municipalities;
- developing formulae to address municipal compensation;
- educating the public about the act; and
- reporting to the minister and public annually on results.

We recognize the importance of maintaining effective oversight of any external authority. That is why we are proposing the following provisions to help ensure accountability and transparency: We would require the WRA to provide an annual public report on results and compliance actions, including the issuing of administrative penalties and how that revenue was used. The minister could request the WRA to provide advice on specific waste reduction issues and request that the WRA establish advisory councils or processes to seek input from stakeholders on a range of issues. The minister could issue policy direction where it is in the public interest with respect to the performance of the WRA's powers and duties under the proposed Waste Reduction Act. The minister could also require that a review be undertaken of the WRA, or appoint an administrator under special circumstances; for example, if the authority was non-compliant with the act, making it fundamentally unable to perform its duties under the act.

We would enable the Auditor General to audit the WRA. We would limit the WRA's ability to engage in commercial activities with related entities unless the Lieutenant Governor in Council makes a regulation authorizing that activity. We would require the WRA to provide services and information in both English and French. The authority would be independent from the government. Its board may establish bylaws with respect to conflict of interest for members of the board and for the authority's officers and employees.

We heard from stakeholders that there needs to be a mechanism to control the authority's costs. We also heard views about whether the authority's board should be skills-based or representative. We will be considering all of the feedback we've received as we take the next steps with the proposed act.

We've also heard many comments and suggestions about making the transition to the new model. What would it look like? How fast would it happen? What happens first, and what will be the impact on consumers and on producers? We would first repeal the Waste Diversion Act and incorporate specific provisions relating to the existing four programs and three industry-funded organizations into the proposed new act. This would enable the existing recycling programs under the current act to continue until they can be transferred over to the new individual producer responsibility regime.

We heard from stakeholders that this transition needs to happen in an orderly fashion to minimize the impact on consumers and support producers as they take on the responsibilities that were performed by the industry-funded organizations. We agree, and want to ensure that consumers are always able to rely on accessible and convenient services, so we intend to make this transition gradual.

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The proposed approach recognizes the challenges that may be faced in transitioning the existing waste diversion programs and the potential implications of dissolving industry-funded organizations that were specifically created to develop and deliver programs. The province will help ensure that the WRA works with impacted organizations to mitigate the risks of any interruption to convenient and accessible waste reduction services. We'll also be working extensively with the existing industry-funded organizations, producers, municipalities, waste management service providers and the public on how to make this transition as seamless and as efficient as possible.

We will recognize the success and uniqueness of the blue box program as we begin discussions on that program, as well as regulation 101, which sets out municipal roles and responsibilities. We'll also consult on the best timelines for designating waste under the proposed legislation. In fact, as Minister Bradley has noted, we'll be consulting extensively every step of the way.

All of the partners involved in managing Ontario's waste have a vested interest in making sure this system works as efficiently and effectively as possible. We are all, as consumers, producers, municipalities or service providers, accountable for responsibly using the value of our waste to build a stronger, cleaner future for us all. So we all have an opportunity to really change how we deal with our waste. The existing system is broken. I ask all of you to join the minister to make this a collaborative exercise in making Ontario a leader in waste reduction.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: Good morning. I'd like to take the opportunity, first off, to thank and welcome the folks from AMO. I would particularly like to thank them for participating last week, too, on the second reading of Bill 73, my Fair and Open Tendering Act. I'd like to thank you for being here again. I know we're talking about different things today, but I did want to make a special mention of my appreciation on that. Unfortunately, we didn't get it past the second reading hurdle, but we will not give up on that one.

That brings us back to Bill 91 today. We're on to newer things. I wouldn't say "bigger and better things"; we are on to newer things. Today we're talking about Bill 91. It was interesting to note how the minister did reference our dismal waste diversion rate: 23%, in fact. The IC&I sector, which represents a significant portion of our waste in Ontario, hovers at the low teens. That really has been, for the last 10 years, a stagnant number. That is a dismal number; in fact, one I know the minister, a former teacher, would say would likely not be a passing grade, should he be marking his own paper. Twenty-three per cent would be, "Try it again. Come back with some better ideas." Ultimately, it's that dismal 23% rate that we desperately need to tackle.

In fact, we ship a third of our waste to the United States every year. I've been on the record of saying that we need to really harness the economic opportunity that comes from within Ontario's waste, when we know that is truly a green economy that we can create, unlike the green economy that we've seen over the last little while, which is actually a job killer. We believe a plan that we announced just last November could really harness that economic opportunity.

I know I'll have plenty of time to get into the depth of our arguments on the next hour that I'll have, and so I'll sit down with that, listen for questions and comments on the initial ministerial remarks, and look forward to joining the debate. Take care.

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

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm happy to respond to Bill 91 and also to welcome our guests from AMO to the House today. Thank you for being here.

Over the last few months, I've met with many representatives from industry and from waste management, and we spoke with many environmental groups and municipalities about Bill 91. We've heard, from all corners, support for the principles of the legislation, but we've also heard clearly that there are imperfections. The legislation as it stands is not perfect, which is why we need to have this conversation and this debate. But we have heard a real commitment to reduce the amount of waste in our environment and that stakeholders are willing to do that.

There are legitimate concerns raised by all parties. As the legislation goes forward, we must work to balance and address these concerns. We should work to ensure that Bill 91 works for producers, for service providers and for municipalities. Most importantly, though, of

course, we must work to make sure that Bill 91 works for all people in the province of Ontario. As has been mentioned here this morning, Ontario's diversion rates are languishing at, I think, less than 25% right now. Our industrial, commercial and institutional sector is even worse.

It's clear that the system is broken. It needs to be fixed. It's also clear that we can't wait another 10 years to fix it. We need to get down to business and to make this work. The people of the province of Ontario deserve a healthy environment, they deserve good, green jobs, and they deserve timely action from this government. I look forward to continuing to hear from the many stakeholders across Ontario on how to make Bill 91 work. I want to thank them now for the knowledge and the expertise that they have been sharing, and I look forward to continuing this debate.

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

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, I'd like to congratulate the minister and the ministry for bringing this bill forward. All I can say is that we probably should have done this four or five years ago so that the eco fee disaster that I was involved in in those days simply wouldn't happen. The reality is that government has to take control of the situation. It is to everyone's benefit that more recycling takes place.

He talked about a number of companies, quite frankly, that are involved in the proper recycling and reuse of those products by either building new material or what have you. I would want every member of this assembly to go out to some of these companies that do the fantastic work that is being done in electronic recycling. We always talk about mining the material for new products etc. Well, the best mining that can take place is the existing material that is no longer utilized for that.

We absolutely have to make the producers of the product responsible for the ultimate cost of disposal—either a new product or whatever. The proper cost of disposal, the proper cost of reusing that material, should be just as much a part of the price of the product as labour and material costs. Once we start accepting that principle of making the producer responsible, the producers will come up with the best methodology from a cost viewpoint to actually make that happen.

I just want to congratulate the minister and the ministry for bringing this bill forward. Let me say something: If any bill, for the benefit of all of the people of Ontario, both today and tomorrow, cries out for support from all sides of the House—leave your partisan politics aside. This is a good way to deal with the environmental situation. Support the bill, because it's good for everyone in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Good morning, everyone. I also want to join in welcoming my friends from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario as we debate Bill 91. I look forward to our critic, Michael Harris, the member

for Kitchener–Conestoga, speaking in a few moments on some of the comments that the minister and the parliamentary assistant made today.

It's interesting how they frame their words regarding committee. Even AMO, in their letter to MPPs on the 23rd, talked about getting this to the standing committee and refining it, improving it. I think there's an acknowledgement by the minister that when this bill hits committee—I think we need to have a very structured format on how hearings will take place. The previous speaker, the Attorney General, talked about co-operation. I think there needs to be a general discussion on how this bill will move forward.

I would like to say, on behalf of my municipal friends, that I was disappointed when the Premier met with our leader, Tim Hudak, that some of the bills that this government promised you at AMO would move forward weren't on that list that the Premier gave Mr. Hudak: things like Bill 34; Bill 40, which I want to appreciate you for supporting; Mr. Wilson's bill on arbitration, and I know we're going to have some continued dialogue about that; Bill 73, Mr. Harris's Fair and Open Tendering Act—I appreciate your support. But there's one other issue that I think needs to be addressed by this government when it comes to municipalities.

0950

I had spoken to Mr. Bartolucci when he was minister, to the Premier when she was minister and to the present minister. We've got some municipal elections coming next year, and we've got no movement by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs to put forward legislation regarding much-needed changes to municipalities. They need to get moving; time is of the essence.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: I am delighted to hear the initial positive remarks of members of the Legislature. I think one of the things we determined here is that the need for the legislation is something that all of us agree upon. You don't always get that. Sometimes you'll hear in the House, "Well, we don't need more legislation; we don't need regulations; we don't need policy changes."

In this case, I think there's a recognition that in this province, if we are going to make progress in this field, both environmentally and economically, we're going to have to move forward with legislation that ultimately leaves this House in the form that it does after all considerations have been given. I was pleased that both the official opposition critic and the member for Leeds–Grenville were positive in that fashion, although they did begin to talk about some other bills after that. I am pleased with that.

I think the member for the NDP has really pointed out, appropriately, that we've had a wasted opportunity. Whenever you're sending things for disposal that could be recycled, could be reused, I'm going to say that that is a wasted opportunity environmentally and economically, and I'm glad that he raised that as being pretty fundamental.

It is always easy to oppose and just take all of the arguments of people who don't like legislation and reflect them in your remarks when you're in opposition. Take it from me. I was in opposition and probably guilty of that from time to time. We have an opportunity to turn over a new leaf, however, and I am looking forward to the very positive and constructive comments that will be forthcoming from my friends on the opposite site, particularly the critics, who have taken it upon themselves to become very familiar with the issue and the bill.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: I know I've got now 60 minutes on the clock, and I'm going to take every last minute of it, because I know, as the minister stated earlier, that good pieces of legislation from the government in fact require thorough debate and discussion, and that is exactly what I know the Ontario PC caucus will want to add to this.

Before I get into the major components of my remarks, I think it's important to just quickly address some of the comments that he initially made. I want to thank the minister, obviously, for his speech, but I do want to point out some of the inconsistencies that need to be clarified right up front.

First, the minister said that his bill will introduce individual producer responsibility, or IPR. You'll hear a lot of acronyms, but IPR will be one of them going forward. But anyone, or everyone, actually, following Bill 91 knows this statement simply isn't true. In fact, first, the bill sets up a convoluted process for businesses to join collectives called intermediaries. After joining, the individual business is no longer held responsible; the intermediary is. So the minister's claim about IPR actually contradicts the very system the bill seeks to set up.

Second, IPR would mean, as it has been defined in other jurisdictions, that businesses would be required to actually manage the recycling. Again, Bill 91 does not allow this to happen; in fact, it actually creates a massive bureaucracy to prescriptively manage the entire system.

I would ask that we drop the jargon on the other side. As I'll mention in my remarks coming forward, a big concern for us is that the bill completely ignores the PC plan for waste diversion that we outlined last November; in fact, it continues Waste Diversion Ontario under a new name, the Waste Reduction Authority—so the same folks; just a new sign at the street.

What's more troubling is that this authority will be permitted to impose new taxes and dictate how much businesses will have to pay for the blue box. It will set up a system that will entrench both sides—municipalities and producers—in a constant battle over money when we should be working together to actually improve our environment. As I mentioned before, we introduced a policy last November that actually takes into consideration this important aspect, because we are talking about, first off, the economy, jobs, a green economy that we truly believe will spur economic activity but also help our environment, which is very, very important.

Back to Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act: I will say that it's disheartening, or I'm disappointed, perhaps, that we're actually considering or debating what I would say is a poorly drafted piece of legislation at this time. But for some reason or another, the minister actually thinks he can slap a bill together, push it through to second reading and get it to committee while doing really no due diligence on the important issues at hand. I've said, and I'll say it again, that I believe they've neglected the basics. For instance, and I mentioned this before, he says his bill is about producer responsibility, yet he forgot to define what a producer actually is. I think you can agree that government bills shouldn't be handled in a haphazard manner, in a way that this one has.

I know you will also agree, Speaker, that pertinent questions should be answered with facts, not lofty rhetoric and conjecture. Unfortunately, though, all we've heard from this minister up until now is a bunch of tall tales and outlandish claims based on nothing more than empty talking points. I know folks are getting tired of that. So I would like to separate some of the spin from the actual contents of the bill that is now before the House. I would like to point out pitfalls, problems and potential for disaster, of which we see many.

I'll briefly outline some of the concerns of the Ontario PC caucus—I know many of them will want to add to the debate with their comments—before dealing with our stance on the bill in greater detail later in my remarks.

Our first concern is that the Liberals have completely ignored the PC waste diversion plan, which would have provided better protection for consumers, taken greater steps to improve the environment, and harnessed the ingenuity and innovation of the private sector to create good-paying true green jobs. Instead, the Liberals claim to have followed our lead while their flawed bill reveals that they really intended to take Ontario in a totally different and completely counterintuitive direction, a direction that involves new taxes—I know they're famous for that; more bureaucracy; less accountability—we all know that that's a track record of this current Liberal government; and of course, the continuation of Liberal eco-tax schemes.

As a result, we know this bill will be bad for consumers, who will have to continue to pay eco taxes and will also be forced to pay new taxes, in fact, to fund the Liberals' expansion of its recycling bureaucracy, which you heard of earlier this morning. In fact, we know this bill will be bad for our economy because it allows government to siphon money out of our productive businesses and consumers' pockets in order to subsidize certain industries. We know this bill will be bad for Ontario businesses, which will have to raise prices at a cost of driving consumers to make more purchases perhaps online or even across the border. We know this bill will be bad for our environment because it focuses more on perpetrating a fight between municipalities and businesses over money rather than setting priorities to reduce the amount of waste actually going into our landfill. We know this bill will not help job creation because the new

taxes and red tape contained in it will force a loss of jobs in one sector to order to replace them with new, subsidized jobs in another sector.

In short, we know this bill is the wrong direction for Ontario consumers, a wrong direction for Ontario businesses and a wrong direction for our environment, our economy and our province. That is why, unfortunately, the PC caucus does not support Bill 91.

1000

I will return to these points and dissect the problems that our caucus sees with this flawed piece of legislation later on. But first I think it's really important to provide some context for the debate. It has now been more than 10 years since the former PC government took a very bold step forward to protect our environment by passing the Waste Diversion Act, which was designed to encourage Ontarians to, of course, reduce, reuse and recycle. We took this action not only to increase diversion, but also to help our municipal partners by creating a more stable funding formula for the blue box. Unfortunately, the Liberals then used this act to develop new excessive taxation powers and a massive new bureaucracy.

We all know it was the Liberal government who took this action, and nobody else. Still, that hasn't stopped the now environment minister from making up some silly, silly stories. This year I have in fact heard him and his colleagues repeatedly blame the Waste Diversion Act for the creation of their eco tax problems. We've been told to forget about the Liberal operatives who devised a way to use the act to create three massive tax schemes that cost Ontario consumers more than \$200 million—in fact, that was \$200 million a year. It wasn't their fault, they say; it was the act that made them do it. Of course, any thinking person knows that this argument is in fact beyond ridiculous. That's like a criminal converting a legitimate investment fund into a Ponzi scheme to defraud investors and then saying the fund made them do it. Clearly, the criminal used the fund to create the Ponzi scheme, not the other way around.

This same simple cause-and-effect relationship disproves the Liberals' poorly constructed and juvenile argument about the Waste Diversion Act. Clearly, the Liberals used the act to create their eco tax programs, not the other way around. The act didn't compel the Liberals to take this action. That's because inanimate objects or things do not force people to do anything. Those who claim otherwise are either not well or deliberately trying to avoid accountability. Speaker, I know my honourable colleague is a smart man. He has been here quite some time. So I think it's fair to assume the latter is true. Not only does simple logic prove this fact, but so does the historical context. As we have seen far too often with the Liberals, they actually avoid accountability wherever and whenever possible. That's because accountability to a Liberal is like sunlight to a vampire—I know we're getting close to Halloween, but I had to bring that in there early—in fact, as soon as they're exposed to it, they're destroyed. So they do everything in their power to hide

and subvert the truth, even when everyone knows what the truth is.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask the member to withdraw. You can't impute motive.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'll withdraw.

Speaker, I believe this desperation is a sign of the Liberals' failure to properly manage waste diversion in our province. But here's the really troubling aspect of this pattern of behaviour in government: When a government is willing to do anything to protect and preserve its own power, everything else, including health care for our seniors, education for our young people and support for our economy, comes second. This is a picture of the Liberal government in Ontario today and over the past 10 years, and this is the Liberal government that actually wants you to believe that it has brought forward a serious bill for our consideration. With such ridiculous claims and deliberate misinformation being peddled as truth, further context on the Liberals' eco tax history is needed to actually understand how we got to this point, a point at which we are debating a bill that is claimed to be reform but yet is actually taking us backward.

As we all know, eco taxes in Ontario were created by the godfather of the eco tax himself, Dalton McGuinty. He, along with his Liberal cabinet colleagues, rubber-stamped the idea during a closed-door meeting in 2008. The hope was to appease their leftist base while winning corporate support from large companies looking to monopolize the recycling market in exchange for subsidies to waste haulers and processors, and of course there was a cut in it for the Liberals.

Premier McGuinty and his cabinet, which included the now-Premier and the environment minister today, decided to move ahead with this taxation scheme, knowing that they could collect double HST on each individual eco tax charge paid by the Ontario consumer. For years, the Liberals have been embedding millions of dollars of hidden HST charges into eco taxes which they again tax with HST.

In other words, the Liberals have been forcing Ontarians to pay a tax on a tax that includes, actually, a hidden tax, and the results have been staggering. In fact, the Liberals have secretly collected more than \$100 million over the last five years through this double-taxation scheme. This scheme is just part of their never-ending pursuit to squeeze more money out of the pockets of hard-working Ontarians, all in the name of actually protecting our environment.

Back in 2008, during the era of Al Gore-ism, the Liberals decided to exploit people's legitimate concern for the environment by introducing the province's first eco taxes under the Municipal Hazardous or Special Waste Program, also known as the Orange Drop program. This scheme included eco taxes on everything from a can of paint to a pack of batteries to a new oil filter in your car. After seeing these levies on their receipts, most consumers were surprised, and many were actually downright angry. When they tried to protest, they were simply told at the cash register, "Hey, trust us:

Your money is going toward making the world a better place.”

This was the same argument that was used by the Liberals to sell their carbon tax. Still, many consumers didn't believe what the Liberals were actually saying. As with every Liberal tax scheme, Ontarians knew their money was being funnelled through a labyrinth of bureaucracy before a portion of it was eventually used for the stated purpose of the program. I don't need to remind you of some of those programs; one would suggest that the health tax or health premium is a good example of just that.

Consumers acted again to voice their frustration, but to their dismay, the Liberal minister responsible for consumer protection was actually silent. One of her main roles—her actual main responsibility as a minister—is actually to protect the interests of consumers. What's worse, she let the former environment minister—who I know just left moments ago—spend week after week, month after month and year after year working against consumers by defending eco taxation at all costs. Over and over again, he would tell reporters and the public that eco taxes are just the cost of dealing with waste.

Although most Ontarians hated these taxes, the overall protest was quiet enough to let the Liberals feel confident that they could move ahead with even more eco taxes, so they did. In fact, in 2009, the Liberals introduced a new round of eco taxes, this time for their e-waste program that was established under another Liberal regulation for waste electrical and electronic equipment. With this scheme, the Liberals not only introduced eco taxes on everything from iPods to TVs to computers; they also set up a new unaccountable recycling monopoly called Ontario Electronic Stewardship, or OES. This recycling monopoly, or what the minister would like to call a cartel, derives its powers from regulation 393/04, which was established, in fact, by the Liberals. Under this corporatist system, OES takes money from consumers and doles it out to a select group of recycling companies that haul and process the materials.

Last year, I pointed out that this system was on the verge of financial collapse while the program itself had actually achieved little to no results. Instead of trying to balance the books, OES tried to justify its existence by attempting to boost waste diversion through increased subsidies to recycling companies. The scheme was simple: The more free money they got, the more materials they would collect. At no point in time did the Liberals raise any concerns about how these eco taxes were actually affecting consumers; they just continued to sanction OES's activity, though publicly they started to distance themselves, in fact, from the system.

Still, because OES knows the environment minister will approve whatever eco tax increases they ask for, they continue to hike costs for consumers to provide even more lavish subsidies to the recycling industry, no matter where the materials were coming from. In fact, it even has gotten to the point at which recycling companies are actually importing materials from other provinces—true

story. That means Ontario consumers are subsidizing recycling for other jurisdictions.

As a result of receiving what seems to be an endless stream of money, recycling companies have become addicted to OES's free cash. This system couldn't be anything more than an anti-free marketplace. It has stifled competition and limited the ingenuity and creativity of individual companies, so it's not hard to see why it didn't take long at all for costs to skyrocket.

Any guess as to how much eco tax revenue OES collects? I know you won't be able to respond, but I'll tell you. It's \$90 million a year. I think if more Ontario consumers knew that the \$40 they have to pay for an eco tax each time they buy a TV is going to bankrolling a \$90-million organization, they would be outraged. Unfortunately, Bill 91 does nothing to correct the situation and actually continues the Liberals' e-waste program, along with all its anti-free market policies.

I know I have just a few minutes left, but I think it's important to move on to the tire tax program that I know a lot of our agricultural partners in Ontario were extremely disappointed about earlier this year—the tire tax program, which the government created for no other reason than they wanted to help some more of their buddies set up another recycling monopoly. They did this by establishing regulation 84/03, which actually gives Ontario Tire Stewardship the power to impose massive eco taxes on all sorts of tires—of course, only after the minister has signed off on them.

The Liberals went ahead with this unnecessary recycling program a few years ago even though more than 90% of tires were being diverted from landfill under a free market system that worked. The old system was achieving great results for the environment at a low cost to businesses and consumers. Yet in spite of this success, the Liberals thought they would try to improve their tire recycling rate by a couple of percentage points while charging consumers tens of millions of dollars to do so. In fact, since 2009, tire recycling costs have soared as the Liberal bureaucracy has rapidly expanded. Just think that, today, Ontario Tire Stewardship now has a budget of \$70 million, and the redistribution of wealth in the system is even more convoluted and actually involves forcing consumers to subsidize the recycling of off-the-road tires.

I guess I'll end there for now, as I know we have to break for question period, but I'm looking forward to resuming the next opportunity we have to speak to Bill 91.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The time has passed for this session.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): We are recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Hon. Deborah Matthews: A point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on a point of order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I believe we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear these lovely purple ribbons in recognition of Epilepsy Action Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is seeking unanimous consent to wear the ribbons today for epilepsy awareness. Do we agree? Agreed. Thank you.

It is now time for introduction of guests.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're jumping the gun there, but I'll recognize the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. On the same topic, I'm delighted to welcome Rozalyn Werner-Arcé, executive director of Epilepsy Ontario, and Gino Piazza, president, Epilepsy Ontario. I know many members will be learning more today about epilepsy.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I would like to welcome the Co-operative Housing Federation, Ontario region: Dale Reagan, managing director; Harvey Cooper, someone we all know and love, from government relations; Diane Miles, manager of co-op services; Simone Swail, program manager, special initiatives; and Judy Shaw, program manager, co-op services.

From the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada: Keith Moyer, program manager, communications; Denise McGahan, program manager; Nicole Waldron, president of Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada; and Judith Collins, program manager of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto. They're here for an important vote. Welcome.

M. Grant Crack: C'est un grand plaisir pour moi ce matin de présenter deux personnes qui habitent dans ma circonscription de Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. Elles sont des membres des Egg Farmers of Ontario : M. Marcel Leroux et son épouse, Sylvette. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to welcome the grade 5 class from Maurice Cody Junior Public School in my riding of St. Paul's. They'll be joining us shortly.

Mr. John O'Toole: I would like to welcome three members from the epilepsy group this morning that people are meeting with: Dianne McKenzie, who's the executive director, Epilepsy Durham; Cynthia Milburn, executive director for Epilepsy Halton, Peel and Hamilton; and, finally, Jessica Scheffee, outreach coordinator in Durham. Welcome to Queen's Park and best wishes on your three requests from the Ministry of Health.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not sure. The member from Eglinton-Lawrence, are you standing for—

Mr. Mike Colle: I'm just stretching.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just stretching. Sorry.

Further introductions?

Mr. John O'Toole: I am also anticipating the visit from two of my favourite constituents: Lisa Streets and Jack Ballinger. Jack Ballinger is a regional councillor in Durham. They're here to fight for the restoration of the Ontario Ranger program. I'd encourage the minister to listen to it.

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

On behalf of the member from Scarborough Centre, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, to visit with page Ravicha Ravinthiran, are her mother, Santhy Sangarapillai, and father, Ravi Siva, now in the public gallery. We welcome our guests on behalf of our page.

Today, in the Speaker's gallery, we have with us a group of delegates from across Canada—taking part in the Parliamentary Visitor Services Association conference. We welcome them as they welcome us in all of our Parliaments. We're glad you're here joining us for your conference. Thank you very much for joining us.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): They're the ones who make all of our Legislatures very hospitable and welcoming. So we thank them for the good work that they do, particularly the one here in Ontario, Debi. Thank you very much.

I got brownie points for that, just to let you know.

MEMBERS' PHOTO

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to issue a gentle reminder to all of our female members that the group photograph will be taken of all currently serving women parliamentarians today. The photo will be taken on the steps—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to get through this.

The photo will be taken on the steps outside the legislative chamber, and I would ask those involved to remain behind following question period in order that we can organize the photo without delay. We've spoken to security, and what I'd like to have happen is for the women to please line up inside of the doors just before we go out together as a group, to make it as quick as possible for others to respect their commitments. Also, the media has been notified and are willing to delay scrum for just a few short moments for us to take the pictures, and I'd appreciate your co-operation. Thank you very much.

SPECIAL REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finally, I beg to inform the House I have laid upon the table the 2012 Annual Energy Conservation Progress Report Volume One from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario,

entitled *Building Momentum: Provincial Policies for Municipal Energy and Carbon Reductions*.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question this morning is for the Premier. I'd like to acknowledge a dubious anniversary today that no one outside of the Liberal Party is celebrating. Two years ago today, you as campaign co-chair put in place an expensive Liberal seat-saver program. Of course, I'm talking about the cancellation of the Mississauga power plant; it's the anniversary today. Let's call it the crowning achievement in a career of Liberal self-interest. I'll tell you who is not celebrating today: It's the Ontarians who've seen their taxes and their hydro rates skyrocket because they simply did not care what it cost to win those seats.

We've learned, Premier, that you've spent \$275 million to cancel the Mississauga power plant. Would you take this opportunity to tell Ontarians what it cost to cancel the Oakville power plant?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I am answer the question, but before I do that, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all of the women from the Legislature who attended the Habitat for Humanity build yesterday, the Women Build. And I want to congratulate the member for Huron-Bruce for winning the hammering contest. Awesome.

Interjection: Now the leader.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Yes, and she's in the leader's chair today. You win a hammer contest, look what happens. There you go.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to recognize that the issue the member opposite raises is one that we all agreed on. Every party in the Legislature agreed that the siting of those gas plants was not what it should have been. In fact, Thursday is the two-year anniversary of the Leader of the Opposition's promise to move those gas plants. We implemented the promise that all of the parties in the Legislature had put in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I know you don't want to talk about your cancellation of Mississauga, but we also know that you have been given a draft copy of the Auditor General's findings on Oakville. Will you tell us what it cost to cancel the plant, or will you continue in a long line of Liberal operatives who have dodged, deleted and destroyed documents?

While you're at it, will you please tell us when the overdue documents will be turned over? These are the ones your team was to turn over to our committee last September 12. Your energy minister, his deputy, the IESO and the OPA have all failed to turn over their documents on September 12. Premier, your operatives are all risking contempt. You say one thing but you do

the other. Will you order those documents to be turned over to our committee today?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the government House leader may have something that he wants to say on this, but I will just say first of all that we do not have a copy of the Auditor General's report. No matter how many times the member opposite suggests that we do, we do not have a copy of it. When we do, obviously, it will be available.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The draft.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I do not have the draft report. I do not have the report. I have seen neither. That's in answer to that part of the question.

On the other issue, I just want to outline what has been provided: 135,000 documents have been provided to answer the questions that have been asked; 95 hours of testimony—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, Premier. Final supplementary.

1040

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Let's recap where we are: On this second anniversary of your cancelling the Mississauga gas plant, you've spent at least \$585 million of Ontario taxpayer and ratepayer money, and we're not done yet. You won't tell us the cost of the Oakville cancellation, even though you already know it, and you won't turn over the documents that were due two weeks ago. Furthermore, you won't expand the mandate of the justice committee to allow us to talk about influencing the Speaker's office.

Your buzzwords are not—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I caution the member and I ask again—a reminder to all members: We do not comment on an already-ruled-upon issue. Thank you.

Reword that question.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, your buzzwords are not “open” and “transparent”; they're “clam up” and “cover up.” You're not fooling anyone, Premier. We want answers on Oakville—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I withdraw, Speaker.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: We want answers on Oakville, we want an expanded mandate and we want our documents now.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I came into this office, Mr. Speaker. I said that we were going to open up the process and we were going to provide answers to the questions that were being asked and that we were going to provide the documentation. That is what we've done. As I said, 135,000 documents have been provided; 95 hours of testimony; 55 witnesses, and that goes on and counting; 32 motions. There has been a lot of work done to determine exactly what the issues were surrounding the relocation of the gas plants.

I asked for the Auditor General to look at both the Mississauga and the Oakville plants. I thought it was important that both plants, both situations, be looked at, so that's why we are getting a report on the Oakville plant. We do not have that report yet, so I do not know the deliberations or the conclusions of the Auditor General. Our process in this has been to provide the answers to the questions that have been asked, and that's what we've been doing.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. Premier, it's been two years since the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals cancelled the Mississauga gas plant in the middle of the 2011 election and nine years since the local community made the government aware of its opposition. It took months of obstruction from your House leader before a committee was finally able to look into the scandal, and since then you've taken every opportunity to undermine its work.

You've sworn repeatedly that all the documents have been turned over. But here we go again: Another deadline passed two weeks ago and we're still waiting for 20,000 pages of documents.

Premier, are you ready to admit that you really don't want the truth to come out and that you're hoping that if you stall this long enough, it'll just go away?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The opposition just came off a policy weekend and there's a lot of bluster, criticism. Their job is to oppose, but it's also their job to provide policies. They issued a white paper a number of months ago dealing with privatizing Ontario Power Generation and the nuclear fleet.

What that liberal newspaper the Toronto Sun had to say was, "Hudak should keep in mind the last Tory government in Ontario that tried to do that with electricity generation, promising it would lead to lower ... rates.

"Instead, it led to the exact opposite—rates skyrocketed amid rampant Tory patronage and the Conservatives"—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. As a reminder to everyone, when I stand, your mikes get turned off and the time stops.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Comments while I'm trying to speak are not helpful at all, including trying to shout down the member from trying to answer. I would ask everyone to have that same dignity that everyone deserves when asking a question and when answering a question.

I will remind you again, when the questions get put I'm still hearing noise from the side that's putting the question, and when somebody is answering, I'm hearing heckling from the side that's putting the answer. It's not conducive to this place.

Please finish. You have a wrap-up.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Thank you.

The liberal newspaper the Toronto Sun said, "Instead, it led to the exact opposite—rates skyrocketed amid rampant Tory patronage and the Conservatives, faced with rising public fury, abandoned the scheme, leaving a financial disaster in their wake."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the Premier: Sometimes you've got to put your money where your mouth is. It's not enough to say you want the committee to do its work; you also have to direct your Liberal operatives to stop obstructing.

This afternoon, after repeatedly refusing to testify in the lead-up to the by-elections, we will finally be hearing from the Minister of Energy's former issues manager, Mr. Ryan Dunn. When staff at the OPA withheld documents that should have been released, Mr. Dunn was named as having given the order. When we asked witnesses who was responsible for the lowballed and inaccurate cost of cancelling the gas plants, again, Mr. Dunn's name was invoked.

Premier, if a miracle does occur and Mr. Dunn remembers who in the Liberal Party ordered him to obstruct the work of the committee, will that person be fired today?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We appreciate the fact that they're going to continue to criticize. That's part of their job. It's also part of their job to be clear on their own policy. The leader of the official opposition seems to change his mind daily when it comes to wind contracts.

At the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, he said he would not rip up existing contracts. Yet, just the other week at the International Plowing Match he seemed to flip-flop and announce an end to wind. I don't know if this is a flip-flop or part of Mr. Hudak's hidden agenda. What does he mean? Is he going to cancel existing contracts? Yes or no? You guys have to be accountable for your policies—

Interjections.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, the minister certainly is an expert on wind because that's what we're getting from over there.

Premier, by refusing to hold Liberal partisans to account for their actions, you're daring the public to hold you accountable for your inaction. Mr. Dunn has been named by no less than five other witnesses as being a key player in the Liberal Party strategy to withhold documents and obstruct the work of the committee.

If he comes before committee this afternoon and claims not to know anything and that sworn testimony by other witnesses has been false, you will be sending a strong message about your kind of leadership: Under a Kathleen Wynne government, Liberal partisans can destroy documents, ignore members' privilege and mislead the public, and all they—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm concerned with the way in which it's being used. You can say

something on the side that tries to—and say the same thing. So I'm going to ask the member to withdraw. I'm also going to ask the member to refrain from using personal names, as I will remind the government-side members to refrain from using names. We always refer to members either by their title or by their riding.

The member will finish his question, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw.

All they get as they make their way out the door is a pat on the head to thank them for a job well done. Premier, before you became Premier you stood for something more than that. What—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Again, they are really tremendous critics. We hear them day in and day out. But they're coming off a policy conference; they needed to clarify some things there, and they haven't done so. You know, the Leader of the Opposition came out with a new policy several weeks ago to support industrial energy rates in the province of Ontario. He said he was going to fund that by cancelling renewable energy and remove that from the grid. Well, we did some calculations and the calculations show that the 4% of renewable energy that's in the grid—there's no way it can support any industrial program.

Once again, their numbers just don't add up. You analyze their whole platform, and none of their numbers will add up. It's time they came clean on their policy. We know they're good critics. Now, they can't stand for anything that's clear, concise or adds up.

1050

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Last spring, New Democrats pushed hard to make life more affordable and provide relief for drivers facing the highest auto insurance rates in Canada. Is the Premier still committed to delivering results for drivers?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Yes, and I've made that clear in a number of instances when the leader of the third party has asked me that question. I have made it clear that reducing auto rates was something that was very much on my radar before I came into this office. We've made a commitment to reduce auto insurance premiums. That's our target. We are working with the industry to get the costs out of the industry so that those average costs of auto insurance premiums can go down. That's our commitment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Two years ago, Ontario's Auditor General noted that part of the formula used to set rates was badly out of date and ensured insurance companies a profit margin that was hard to justify. The Liberal government promised a cut of 25% to insurance companies' return on equity. Did that happen?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The leader of the third party is talking about the ROE reduction that was incorporated, but it's not the measure that's going to make the difference here. Really what makes a difference is us getting at the anti-fraud task force recommendations. It's working closely with a very competitive insurance industry in the province of Ontario, which, I may say, has now come forward initiating reductions publicly on insurance rates. Both The Co-operators and the CAA have made reference to that. We have encouraged the public to shop at various other insurance providers who have now come forward with reductions. The industry has noted that, even prior to us coming forward with our policy and initiatives to reduce rates, they did decline by 0.4%, even prior to us making those calls.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: While the Minister of Finance loudly promised a major reduction in the House last spring, when the time came for action the Liberals quietly backtracked in the dead of summer. The Liberal government promised to take a stand for drivers, and in the end they didn't keep that promise. Does the Premier think that that's delivering results?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have been working on reducing auto insurance rates for a number of years. We are the ones who actually initiated the anti-fraud task force. We are the ones who introduced legislation in 2004 to reduce insurance rates, which, by the way, neither party had been able to achieve during the time that they were in power. We will continue to do what's necessary and work with the opposition, as well as all others in our province, to get those rates down. I'm pleased to say that the actions we have taken are now proving to show results.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Premier with my question: In hearings last week, New Democrats pressed for details on this issue, and government bureaucrats admitted that this broken promise would create a barrier to lowering rates and getting the 15% reduction that the Liberals promised but drivers aren't seeing. Does the Premier agree?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: No, I don't agree, because we made a commitment in our budget that we would work with the sector to reduce auto insurance, and that is what we're doing. As the Minister of Finance has said, we established the anti-fraud task force. We're implementing the recommendations. We need to get those costs out of the system in order for the average auto insurance rates to go down.

Rates are not increasing, on average. In fact, on average, rates are going down. That has already happened. Reductions for individual drivers will be different depending on a number of factors, including their driving record.

I think the members of the third party know that even the 15% reduction is an average reduction across all the drivers in the province. That reduction is spread across the province. We are working to make sure that we hit those targets, and a 15% reduction is the target that we're aiming for.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Drivers were promised relief, but it seems like when the government should be putting the plan into overdrive, they're shifting into reverse instead.

Christine from Mississauga tells us this: "I received my insurance renewal [this summer] and it has not gone down; it has gone up—by \$60 per month!

"I've had to take a second part-time job just to afford a car, and now with this latest, even higher increase, I really don't know how I will be able to keep my car."

After backtracking on yet another commitment to drivers, what does the Premier have to say to people like Christine?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let's be clear: Members within the NDP have actually written on this issue and cited the following, "We cannot truthfully say they've broken a promise," in reference to what we are doing here in the government.

I've already stated very clearly that as a result of the initiatives that we've taken, rates have been going down. In fact, rates went down by 0.3% even prior to us making the call.

While the member may want to talk about individual issues, we are talking about the industry average. We are citing and noting that both Co-operators and CAA already made a pledge to bring it down. We are providing new licences for medical clinics, and fines are already being levied. We have provided new powers to FSCO so that we can enforce and ensure that those savings are transferred to the public.

The public has means and ways to go to make those complaints official so that we can make certain that they're all being protected.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I have no hesitation in standing in my place right now and saying the government broke their promise on reducing the return on equity that they said they would reduce for the profits of insurance companies. Drivers were promised that the government would take the tough steps needed to bring down rates. Instead, the Liberals did break that promise. Drivers were told the government would heed the advice of the auditor. Instead, the Liberals ignored that advice. Drivers were promised that rates would go down. Instead, many drivers with clean records are seeing their rates climb drastically.

Does the Premier think that this is delivering results?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Achieving reduction in premiums is giving results. Achieving reductions in their claims costs is enabling those premiums to go down.

The member is making reference to ROE at a benchmark of 11% or 12%. The fact of the matter is, those insurance companies are receiving much less, at about 3%. So that's not the issue.

There is a hotline. For an individual who feels that they're being discriminated against or caused to receive harm, there's a hotline that they can call to ensure that they get the best value and the best results.

But, Mr. Speaker, for the member opposite to suggest that we haven't maintained or kept to our promise—the facts are, we are delivering on those results. We have initiated the changes, we've provided more powers to FSCO, and we are acting on the very initiatives to champion and protect consumers.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the Premier. We know that your government is fond of having conversations when they suit you, but you ignore conversations when they don't. For example, the House is well aware that your government didn't care about conversations when it came to siting power plants in communities that didn't want them in Oakville in Mississauga. But when it comes to email conversations between backroom political operatives about how to spin the power plant scandal and intimidate members of this Legislature, there are conversations aplenty.

When the Premier was called to the justice committee earlier this year, she said she wanted to be open and accountable for all conversations. But now, in the position to act, she prefers to not have these conversations with the committee to find out about this intimidation.

This has been dragging on for months, Premier. Can you tell this House right now that you will expand the scope of the justice committee to investigate these kinds of intimidation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, we've addressed this several times in the House, and I think your ruling has been clear.

But I couldn't help but listen to the opposition earlier talk about anniversaries. Today, actually, is the anniversary of a press release put out by Geoff Janoscik, Saturday, September 24. This is what it says: "The only way to guarantee this power plant does not get built is to elect a Tim Hudak Ontario PC government. A Tim Hudak government will cancel this plant."

In a few days from now, we're going to have another anniversary: of the famous YouTube video where we got to see the Leader of the Opposition stand up and say that if he was elected Premier, it would be the end of that plant. It would be "done, done, done."

1100

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

Mr. Rob Leone: While the Premier loves a good conversation, the government House leader is a man of few words. I find it passing strange that while the Pre-

mier ducks behind the hedges, she sends her House leader out to take the fire.

On September 18, our House leader called for unanimous consent to expand the scope of the justice committee, and the government House leader said no. On September 19, the member for Whitby–Oshawa called for unanimous consent to have conversations about developmental services, and the government House leader said no. And just yesterday, the member from Timmins–James Bay called for unanimous consent to expand the scope of the justice committee again, and the government House leader said no. He sat there, while we asked for conversations, surrounded by dozens of Liberals, and said no, no, no. The people of Kitchener Centre deserve better than a Dr. No.

Premier, will you look to your left, walk eight feet over to your House leader, and have a conversation about accountability in your government?

Hon. John Milloy: Let's talk about—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will look to each individual members now. I would also ask the government side not to do the same.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Let's talk about accountability on the other side of the House here. April 16: four opposition candidates invited to testify at the justice committee, including PC candidates Geoff Janoscik, Zoran Churchin—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Leeds–Grenville, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: They all declined.
Interjections.

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

Hon. John Milloy: April 30: Tim Hudak is asked to testify; he declines. Backup witnesses Janoscik and Churchin also decline.

We then invite PC candidate Mary Anne DeMonte-Whelan. She accepts and is scheduled to testify, then surprisingly calls back a few hours later to cancel.

May 2: Janoscik, Churchin and DeMonte-Whelan are called to testify. Janoscik tells the Clerk to “stop calling,” and the other two do not respond.

May 7: Tim Hudak is once again invited to testify; he declines—

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 all had to endure the sight of politicians from all three levels of government fighting to claim political credit for a subway extension in Scarborough. The people of Scarborough aren't interested in which rooster can crow the loudest. They just want good public transportation. I

don't blame them for thinking that all three levels of government laid an egg on this issue, but Scarborough residents deserve results, not a freshly hatched transit plan every morning.

Does the minister really think this is the best way to plan transit for the people of Scarborough?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Next week, the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of Infrastructure, the growth secretariat and Metrolinx will release some of the most detailed data and metrics on ridership impact, job creation and evaluation of routes. The iCorridor tools that have been developed by the ministry are arguably the best in North America. This government will let the evidence speak for itself on ridership, access, job creation, affordability and impact.

I think once people see the evidence—it was interesting that when I read the TTC report, there wasn't even a ridership projection. We're not a government that wants to build subways that are going to be running empty, or the inappropriate technology. We'll get value for tax dollars and we'll choose the options that meet the needs.

Mr. Speaker, this isn't about a politician; it isn't about a game; it's about not waiting—

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Everybody's making announcements, but announcements alone will not get the shovel in the ground. To get this done we will need sustained and steady leadership.

When will the minister stop freelancing, stop the chaos, stop drawing lines and dots on a map, and focus on getting transit built for Scarborough?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I have one question: When will the member from Trinity–Spadina's party read the map and realized it hasn't changed? I've never pulled out a pencil or a crayon or changed a dot or an “i” on a map. It's the same map.

The members from Scarborough–Guildwood all the way to Don Valley West will tell you that the line is the same. Other governments have changed lines and have not written cheques. This government is committed to two things: not changing the lines on the map and writing cheques. We are the only government investing in a significant way—\$50 billion in the Big Move, 15 projects across the GTA; 19% of that is funded by the government of Ontario and has been the policy of the Liberal Party of this province.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: My question today is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. It's regarding Ontario's auto sector, which is a vital part of our economy both across the province of Ontario and locally in my constituency of Oakville, where the Ford plant is located. I know the auto sector is an important part of the economy, a significant employer in the province of Ontario and it's an integral part of Oakville's local economy.

It's important that we continue to create and retain jobs across the province, and we need to ensure that we're supporting key sectors like the auto industry. These are very competitive times globally. Ontario has proven that it can compete on a global stage, and we remain one of the top auto producers in all of North America.

With last week's announcement in my riding, many of my constituents are asking what this announcement actually means for the local economy. Will the minister please update the House on what our government's recent announcement at the Ford plant means in Ontario and to the auto sector in this province as a whole?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thanks to the member from Oakville for this great question. He joined the Premier and I last week for this announcement. It's an exciting time for Ford Canada, as the member mentioned.

Our government, as did the federal government, made a \$70.9-million investment to support Ford's overall investment of more than \$700 million in this province. This investment will secure 2,300 high-quality jobs at the Oakville plant, as well as the many thousands of spin-off jobs in the supply chain leading into that production and help Ford, quite frankly, build one of Ford's nine global platforms in Oakville. This will position the facility to be among one of the top-tiered platforms for Ford in the entire world. It's great news for our auto sector, as Ontario produces right now more vehicles than any other jurisdiction in North America. In fact, we're on track for a record sales year this year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thanks to the minister for that update.

Auto workers in Oakville and across the province should continue to see the strong commitment our government has and continues to make in the auto sector, but there's still some concerns from my constituents about overall growth in the auto sector. We know Ontario as a province has fared far better than many other jurisdictions in North America. Our economy is back on track, having recovered all of the jobs that were lost during the global economic downturn and much more. But despite investments like this, having a good job to wake up to and to go to every day is what's going to keep this province strong in the long run.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment, what is our government doing to support the continued growth by helping to create good, meaningful jobs in Ontario's auto sector?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I want to commend, first of all, the hard-working employees at the Ford plant and in the auto sector right across this province—and Unifor was there as well. This is a great example of a partnership between both levels of government, the private sector and our labour friends.

The sector is responding very, very well. In fact, since the bottom of the recession, we've added more than 13,000 new jobs directly to the auto sector in this province. Of course, in St. Catharines recently, General

Motors announced that they were adding 50 new full-time employees at the St. Catharines plant. These are full-time positions, as I mentioned, at the Powertrain facility there. They are being filled under the terms of the local agreement with their Unifor partners.

There are also a number of other investments through the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, Armo Tool, North American Stamping Group and Linamar who produce the parts and materials that are sold through these auto manufacturers and are keeping our province strong and thriving.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: My question is for the Premier. Before I ask the question, though, I would like to just clarify one matter: The mistake with the gas plants wasn't taking them down; it was building them in the first place, and only your government did it.

Well, Premier, here we are on another beautiful day. You've had all night to think about it. Perhaps you've even been able to have a conversation with the minister from Winnipeg—oh, sorry.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. One time is one too many. The next time I hear it, I'm going to move on to the next question. The member will withdraw and then use the proper title.

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will withdraw that.

At any rate, what I would like to know is whether you're now in a position to join with the federal government, the city of Toronto, the TTC, the residents of Scarborough and Tim Hudak, support the transit plan passed by Toronto council and get on with the job.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Transportation will want to speak to the supplementary, but just let me reiterate what I said yesterday, which is: I am very pleased that our government has been investing in transit since we came into office. I'm very pleased that we have put \$16.4 billion into transit. I'm very pleased that there are lines being built at this moment across the GTHA and I'm very pleased that our \$1.4 billion for the Scarborough line has leveraged the engagement of the federal government.

Now it's up to the city to decide what it is going to do, but our \$1.4 billion stays on the table. We will build subway in Scarborough, and I'm very pleased that the opposition has come to the party this late in the game.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: Premier, the score is still 64-0, and I'm asking now for the third time, will you please tell me when you plan to open a subway station? Maybe you can't tell me the exact day or month, but could you please at least tell us the year?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's interesting that it took six months, and yesterday, we had a first discussion between

a federal and provincial transportation minister in Ottawa—which went very well.

I think now, having six months of being nice got us nothing. Turning up the heat got us more press releases and more time with federal ministers. I said that from now on, we should be able to keep that conversation chilled so that we can actually get work done, which is finally happening after six months.

The second thing: We are building more subway stations, digging more tunnels than at any time in the modern history of Ontario. We will shortly, within the next few years, have a better record than the party opposite.

The problem is that almost all the members over there weren't part of that era of subway-building; they were famous for the era of subway closing, cancellation and fill-it-in.

We can measure now—

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

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question to the Minister of Energy: Today, Ontario's Environmental Commissioner stated that when it comes to energy conservation, "there has not been much provincial policy activity ... to talk about."

One glaring government failure on energy conservation is its commitment of hundreds of millions of dollars to refurbish the Darlington nuclear power plant before it has even considered the energy conservation alternatives.

Why is the government putting expensive nuclear power expansion before cheaper energy efficiency?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The critic from the third party will know that we have issued a conservation paper as part of the long-term energy plan review called Conservation First, and it is going to revolutionize conservation in the province of Ontario. There will be a policy in place, when it's adopted, which says that if it can be done cheaper by conservation, then that will happen before we do generation. It's responsible, it's revolutionary and it's going to make a significant difference—and, coincidentally, we have done some significant conservation already under the old policy from the 2010 plan; and that is 1,900 megawatts we've conserved since 2006. That's like taking 600,000 homes off the grid.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's an interesting answer.

Today, the Environmental Commissioner was clear that it's cheaper to conserve energy than to build new power plants. The government knows this. The minister knows this. In the summer, it released a discussion paper he mentioned, entitled Conservation First, but even as it consults on this paper, it's allowing Ontario Power Generation to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on nuclear expansion projects. Why is the government undermining its conservation-first policy by proceeding with this nuclear refurbishment?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: This government supports nuclear energy. I know the opposition party supports nuclear energy. Today, over 53% of generation is from nuclear. It has served this province well. It is going to continue to serve us well in the future.

We have willing hosts in this community for nuclear power. It's a tremendous boost to the economy. Nuclear energy is clean, it's renewable, it's cheap, it does the job and, above all, as I mentioned yesterday, nuclear energy is extremely safe. We have the best, safest power plants in the world, and we are going to continue to use them.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. For most Ontarians, their homes are their sanctuary, providing a sense of comfort and security, but for women who are victims of domestic violence, their homes can be a prison that they are often afraid to leave. When they make a decision about whether they should take their children and leave this often dangerous and potentially life-threatening situation, the decision becomes even more difficult, especially when they have no place to go and no one to turn to.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, I, and I'm sure this whole House, would like to know what the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has done to help out these women and families in their time of need.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I thank the member for asking this important question. Our government believes in providing safe and affordable housing for all those in need. Yesterday afternoon, we actually had a chance to put that belief into practice in a practical way when the Premier, the minister responsible for women's issues and the member for Etobicoke Centre—I know she was there at 6:30 in the morning—building a house for Habitat for Humanity. We were there to participate with many members in the House on Women Build day to provide housing for six families with access to affordable housing, and housing that they will own.

We believe that having a place to call home is the first step in realizing new opportunities and a first step to a better quality of life. Our special priority policy requires service managers to place victims of domestic violence into safe, affordable housing as quickly as possible, potentially saving the lives of those vulnerable women.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to thank the minister for that answer. Habitat for Humanity built some homes for new Canadians in my riding of York South-Weston a few years ago; I participated in that build, and it was a great experience.

Our government's protection of vulnerable women and families is very important, and I'm sure the minister will agree that all Ontarians need safe and affordable housing. When a senior, a young adult or a family is unsure of where they will go to spend a night, they are more likely to fall through the cracks and not receive the services that they need.

I understand that earlier this year the federal government had announced that they would continue their cost-sharing with our government for another four years. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, could she explain what work has been done with the federal government to ensure that all levels of government continue to work together and invest in Ontario's most needy?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I am very grateful to the member for asking this question because I believe we have a shared obligation, a moral imperative as legislators to stay at the table and work to deliver affordable housing to Ontarians in need. The reality is that a healthy housing market serves all Ontarians and makes our province stronger. Our government has been working with our federal partners to begin the investment in affordable housing program, which is a 50-50 cost-sharing agreement that will guarantee over \$480 million of new funding over four years.

Though our government welcomes the recent announcement of the federal government to extend its commitment to affordable housing, the fact remains that the federal government's contribution to social housing will evaporate unless they continue and decide to return to the table. I continue to ask and urge parties opposite to stand with our government to ask the federal government to commit to stable and predictable funding for all of our housing providers over the long term.

1120

CHILD PROTECTION

Mrs. Jane McKenna: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, in January, we learned that hundreds of key recommendations to prevent the deaths of children in custody were ignored by government agencies. Now we are left wondering if children continue to be in danger because ministry-approved policies and procedures are not being followed.

On May 27 and August 16 of this year, as part of a three-year performance review, your ministry issued 12 directives to Chatham-Kent Children's Services. Among them, all CKCS child protection workers were ordered to review the province's child protection standards, and all CKCS supervisors were ordered to receive clinical supervision training from an approved trainer within 90 days. That was May 27, 120 days ago. How many of those employees have completed their training?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: With respect to CAS accountability and CAS directives that have been issued, our ministry is working very closely with that particular CAS and has been working closely with that staff and with that director to ensure that our mandate, our objective of ensuring that all children are kept safe, is maintained. That is our goal, and it is what we will continue to do across the province with all our CASs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Minister, I'm not sure why you put a 90-day deadline and it's now 120, but anyway, you have said that young people in the child welfare system

are your priority. Your government talks about the right care at the right place at the right time, but you've given the public reason to question these claims. I have to ask: Isn't it better to train child welfare employees before a crisis occurs rather than after?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you again. Further to that, Speaker, again, we are continuing to work with that particular CAS. Of course our staff are trained when they're out at our agencies, working with our children across the province.

We will act on anything that comes forward, and we did act in that situation in terms of doing a review and determining what recommendations and directives needed to come forward. We will continue to do that for our communities, our neighbourhoods and our families to ensure our children are kept safe, and that is absolutely our goal at that CAS and at CASs across the province.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. I think the Premier would agree that nobody wants to be in the hospital and that, when we're sick, our ability to eat fresh, healthy and carefully prepared food in the hospital can do wonders for patient morale and for recovery. The patients at Scarborough Hospital have been benefiting from an innovative and much-lauded program that brings fresh Ontario food into hospital rooms. All that is about to go out the window with the forced merger of Scarborough Hospital and the Rouge Valley Health System. Does the Premier believe that this innovative program deserves to become another budgetary casualty?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is going to want to comment in the supplementary on this particular issue, but I want to make a general comment, wearing my Minister of Agriculture and Food hat, because I think that the Local Food Act is the framework within which we want to promote exactly what the leader of the third party is talking about, so that public institutions, wherever they are, would be looking to local Ontario food for that fresh nutrition that we know is so good for people.

I don't know the specifics of this particular contract situation, but what I do know is that the Local Food Act is the mechanism whereby we want to promote exactly what the leader of the third party is talking about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Once again, the Premier is good at conversations and talking but not very good at actually getting things achieved.

This government brags about transforming health care and bringing local food to Ontarians, but instead of supporting Scarborough Hospital for transforming patient menus with healthy meals made with ingredients grown in our own backyards, the health minister is working at cross-purposes. She is sitting on her hands and letting the Central East LHIN focus on damage control rather than on patient care. Now, this is actually a chance for the Premier to walk the walk and not just talk the talk. Will the

Premier stop the plug from being pulled on this valuable local food-based nutrition program?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: My understanding is that there is no final merger at this point, that it's a discussion that's happening, so we need to let that roll out. One of the reasons that the transformations that are happening within the structure of LHINs are working is because they are local decisions, and so we need to let that happen.

What I want to reinforce is that the local food bill will support and promote exactly the kind of initiative that the leader of the third party is talking about. I made an announcement a few days ago about the \$30-million Local Food Fund that is going to allow institutions and businesses and groups to promote local food and find ways of making sure that people get more local food on their plates. We are completely supportive of what the leader of the third party is talking about. We want local food to be available in institutions, and if the bill is passed, which I hope it will be, then we will be able to operate within that framework and promote great Ontario local food.

SPORTS AND RECREATION FUNDING

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. During this summer in our Scarborough community, my colleague the member for Scarborough Southwest and I were visited by the minister, where he toured the West Scarborough Neighbourhood Community Centre, a community organization providing valuable community services to children, youth, families and seniors. We had a wonderful time playing basketball with some young people that day.

Our government understands the importance of a healthy, active lifestyle and thus strives to integrate physical activity, recreation and sport in our lives and in the lives of our children. We also understand the importance of providing opportunities to allow people to engage in community, sport, recreation and physical activity. Speaker, through you to the minister, can he please explain what our government is doing to ensure that all Ontarians have access to sport and recreation opportunities?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the member from Scarborough–Guildwood for the question. Yes, I did go to west Scarborough for that basketball game with the kids. Unfortunately, I did not score one basket.

I'm delighted to share that our government has made it a priority to increase opportunities for participation in sport and recreation activities for people of all ages and all abilities. This is why in January 2013 my ministry launched the Ontario Sport and Recreation Communities Fund program, in order to encourage lifelong physical activity and, as a result, enhance community engagement. The funding allocation for this year's program is over \$7 million. The fund is a short-term, cost-sharing program available for projects that address community need and promote physical activity.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Minister, for that response. It is always great to hear about how our government is improving the quality of life and creating better opportunities for Ontarians.

Building a foundation of lifelong physical activity for a healthier lifestyle is important to our government. This fund will definitely be beneficial to the provincial organizations that apply for the funding. However, the local sport and recreation organizations are important as well. The people in my community of Scarborough–Guildwood want to know what this funding program will do for them. Speaker, through you to the minister, what is the government doing to ensure that small local organizations have access to this fund?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you again for the question. I'm pleased to say that this fund, the Ontario Sport and Recreation Communities Fund, supports over 130 provincial, regional and local projects all across the province, including group walks for seniors, aquatic fitness, and skating, just to name a few. Local service boards and municipalities can also apply for funding to support local projects over a period of one or two years. This fund addresses small local organizations, and in fact the West Scarborough Neighbourhood Community Centre will receive support through the Ontario Sport and Recreation Communities Fund program.

Speaker, supporting local community programs that are accessible to everyone and assist people in staying active is part of the Ontario government's efforts to help families lead healthy lifestyles.

1130

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is to the Premier. As you know, your government has managed to pass just one piece of legislation since February. Last week, you met with our leader, Tim Hudak—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask all of us to come to order and allow the question to be put.

Mr. Steve Clark: We tried to help you yesterday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Also, the member from Leeds–Grenville is speaking while I'm speaking.

I would ask that the question be put without interruption and the answer be put without interruption.

Please.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Premier, last week, you met with our leader to seek support in passing nine of your hand-picked bills. One bill that was not included was Bill 69, the Prompt Payment Act, a bill that has broad support from all three parties in this House because it is vitally important for Ontario's small and medium-sized construction firms. The Prompt Payment Act is also supported by stakeholders such as the Council of Ontario Construction Associations and the Ontario Road Builders' Association.

Premier, if you do the work, you should get paid. Do you believe this, or is there some other reason you didn't include Bill 69 on your personal wish list?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I believe that the piece of legislation that the member opposite is talking about is the member for Vaughan's bill. Let me just say this, Mr. Speaker: I'm very pleased the PCs, the opposition, have agreed that there are some pieces of legislation where there is enough common agreement that we can move ahead and move those through the Legislature.

The reason that I asked for the meeting with the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the third party was just that: to say that I think there are some pieces of legislation where we've got all-party agreement or we've got enough agreement that we can move them ahead. I'm very pleased that the opposition has agreed with that, that we're going to be working together. The House leaders are working together. I'm pleased that the Legislature is working as it should in a minority Parliament.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I was just going to recognize the member for a supplementary, but there were people on his own side who were preventing me from understanding that you would hear me when I said, "Supplementary." As soon as the answer gets started, we hear the same thing. I'm asking the member to put his supplementary question without interruption, and I'm asking for the answer to be heard without interruption.

Please.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you, Speaker.

Premier, that kind of answer simply won't cut it. The construction industry employs over 400,000 men and women, approximately 6.5% of Ontario's total workforce. Many of these people are in small and medium-sized firms. Prompt payment legislation already exists in the majority of US states, the UK, Ireland, the EU, Australia and New Zealand.

Premier, over 50% of your caucus was hand-picked by you to join your ever-expanding cabinet, and I'm willing to bet your cabinet colleagues always receive their payment promptly and on time. With all three parties supporting prompt payment legislation, is it because the MPP from Vaughan is not one of your cabinet insiders that you haven't bothered to move forward with his Bill 69, or do you simply not believe in the principles of prompt payment?

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As much as it might be fun and frivolous and filled with jocularity, it's still an interruption to the House.

I also want to remind the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke that you can actually make a disruption in the House without even saying anything. I don't want to have to dig up the video. You know what I'm talking about.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The list of bills that the Leader of the Opposition and I talked about and that the leader of the third party and I talked about were some initial bills that I thought there was enough common ground on that we could get some movement. But there are lots of other pieces of legislation where I think that we can work together.

Obviously, the member opposite has identified another piece of legislation. I'm sure the member for Vaughan is very happy to have the support. I think there are obviously more areas of common interest, so I look forward to getting the pieces that we've identified and then moving on to other pieces of legislation. In fact, we're suggesting a couple of other pieces: the employer health tax exemption and the Waste Reduction Act. Those are areas where I think we can find agreement as well.

There's lots of work to be done. I look forward to working with the opposition on it.

TOURISM

Ms. Sarah Campbell: To the Minister of Natural Resources: Minister, yesterday the Ontario government unveiled a fall-colours campaign encouraging people to travel Ontario. But in my riding alone, seven parks have already closed for the season, and that does not include the northern parks that were permanently shut down by this government last year, without any notice or consultation.

What's worse is that all 10 of the suggested routes in your tourism guide are in southern Ontario. The guide also encourages people to stop in at their travel information centres, although this government has already shut those down, too.

Minister, did you even consider northerners when this fall-colours campaign was put together?

Hon. David Oraziotti: As a northerner, certainly we consider the priorities and interests of northerners on this side of the House. With respect to the parks, it's very, very clear that our commitment to managing the 334 parks in the province of Ontario is an incredibly important priority to our government.

The member opposite is well aware that in last year's budget, with respect to the fiscal challenges that we're facing in the ministry and the transformation efforts that were being made, a number of parks were converted to non-operational status. It didn't mean they were closed; it meant that there would not be staff present, and individuals could still explore those parks and have that opportunity.

In the recent year, we've been able to develop partnerships with four communities to reopen and create the operational status again at four of those parks, which we are certainly very pleased with. There are ongoing efforts to continue to work with communities to reopen parks or to create the operational status designation, and I look forward to working with the member.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Minister, earlier this year, the MNR closed seven parks across the north permanently. I agree that northern parks are beautiful and that they should be enjoyed, but this government has locked the gates. It shut down travel information centres across the northwest and replaced them with an app that doesn't have our content and doesn't work in the north. We have "Travel Manitoba" signs dotting our highways, and now it unveils its tourism strategy in black and white: "Travel Southern Ontario."

Minister, is this what your government means when it tells us, "Trust us. We have a solid tourism strategy for northern Ontario"?

Hon. David Oraziatti: I hear the bluster from the member opposite. The reality is that the government is committed to ensuring that we provide positive experiences and opportunities for everyone across this province, whether it's in northern Ontario or southern Ontario.

As the member is well aware, there was a decision made last year with respect to the operational status of our provincial parks. I'm very pleased with the partnerships that we have been able to deliver on. The parks in the province operate at 82% cost recovery. We are still not recovering the level of funds that go into the investment that we make in Ontario parks. We're continuing to make our parks more accessible with our online registration for camping and other opportunities in our parks. We're continuing to look for new ways to support our parks and programs like Learn to Camp at Ontario Parks, and Learn to Fish.

So I certainly hear the member opposite's concerns. We are concerned around these issues as well in ensuring that Ontarians have a great experience in our parks.

FIREFIGHTING

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. I'm aware that your ministry announced in July of this year that you were rebuilding the fire attack base in Armstrong, north of Thunder Bay, a major capital investment from your ministry into northern Ontario. Armstrong is a small community, and I'm pleased that this investment was made by your ministry and by our government. Not only will this investment—and it's interesting that we have this question now, just following on the heels of the last question—from your ministry be an essential safety measure in enhancing northwestern Ontario's firefighting capabilities; it will also secure local jobs in the community.

Speaker, could the Minister of Natural Resources please explain for the members of the House how this major investment from this ministry to the forest firefighting base in northern Ontario will improve firefighting capabilities in our region?

Hon. David Oraziatti: I want to thank the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan for this important question. He's certainly correct: We've made a very significant capital investment in three fire bases across the province,

one of which is in the member's area. Armstrong is in dire need of being upgraded, as a number of their buildings are more than 50 years old. These buildings will be demolished and new ones will be built.

The upgrade in Armstrong is one of three important investments that the ministry is making. Specifically, we're investing \$47 million into enhancing firefighting capabilities in three communities. We're also investing in Sudbury, at the airport—the facility is in need of upgrade there as well—and in Haliburton, at the Haliburton/Stanhope Municipal Airport. At the centre of it, these investments are not only about bricks and mortar, but about investing in people and ensuring that these courageous men and women have the resources and tools they need to do this important and dangerous job.

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 95

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to quickly advise the House that the motion passed on June 5, 2013, with respect to the legislation establishing the Financial Accountability Officer, Bill 95, has an anomaly with respect to the timing of the Legislative Assembly committee to report the bill after it completes clause-by-clause consideration.

In the absence of any other instruction from the House to do otherwise, it will make sense for the committee simply to follow what would normally happen in any committee on any bill; that is, that the committee report the bill at the first available opportunity following completion of clause-by-clause.

Therefore, the committee will report the bill tomorrow afternoon during routine proceedings, if it has finished clause-by-clause consideration at that time. If not, the bill will instead be reported on Thursday afternoon during routine proceedings.

The timing is relevant because the reporting of the bill triggers an immediate two-hour debate on third reading of the bill. I hope that's clear.

DEFERRED VOTES

NON-PROFIT HOUSING CO-OPERATIVES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES COOPÉRATIVES DE LOGEMENT SANS BUT LUCRATIF

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

Bill 14, An Act to amend the Co-operative Corporations Act and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of non-profit housing co-operatives and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 14, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les sociétés coopératives et la

Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation en ce qui concerne les coopératives de logement sans but lucratif et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 14, An Act to amend the Co-operative Corporations Act and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of non-profit housing co-operatives and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1143 to 1148.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members take their seats, please.

On September 23, Mr. Naqvi moved third reading of—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're overpowering me, and you don't even have a mike.

On September 23, Mr. Naqvi moved third reading of Bill 14.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

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

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

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 98; the nays are 0.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Kitchener–Conestoga on a point of order.

Mr. Michael Harris: I just want to remind members of the BlackBerry Experience reception today at 5:30 p.m. in room 230. I encourage you to sign up online and attend later this afternoon. Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not a point of order, but I wish to see everybody there.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke on a point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Earlier today, during question period—and I want to make it very clear, Mr. Speaker, that I would never be challenging a ruling of the Speaker, but I do ask for your consideration of a clarification on this point.

During question period, I recognized the government, which we have had previously in this House as a standard practice, saying “the McGuinty government,” “the Harris government,” “the Mike Harris government,” “the Bill Davis government,” “the Dalton McGuinty government.”

In questioning, I only said, “under a Kathleen Wynne government,” and you ruled that I could not use the member's name. I was not referring to the member's name in any particular way other than to identify the government. It has been the practice of this House to allow that. Otherwise, we are going to have a very difficult time in debates, going forward, even being able to recognize governments of the past or to be able to designate them as being the ones responsible for any particular action.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do accept the member's premise that it is clarification and that it does not challenge the Speaker. I accept that. I am also going to endeavour to seek counsel from the table.

I am concerned, and I want to use this as a quick moment to explain to the member. I'm a little bit on a crusade to have us all refer to members' titles and to their ridings. I will take your point of order into consideration, and I believe we may be able to come to an agreement on how that's going to proceed. But I want to use this as a moment to reflect on what we have been doing, and maybe we can probably put some of that to rest.

I do accept what the member is saying as a clarification. I will seek counsel and report back to the member sharply. But I do caution him that I'm looking for changes in how we are doing things, and it might even include that, but I don't want to make that prejudgment until I seek counsel from the table.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I appreciate that, Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further votes.

This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

A reminder to the members of the female persuasion to meet us at the front door.

The House recessed from 1155 to 1500.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Kenora–Rainy River has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Natural Resources concerning Ontario’s fall-colours campaign guide. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

RESIGNATION OF MEMBER FOR NIAGARA FALLS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the membership of the House by reason of the resignation of Kim Craiton as the member for the electoral district of Niagara Falls, effective September 24, 2013.

Accordingly, I have issued my warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for a by-election.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I believe they should be here momentarily, but I would like to welcome members from Epilepsy Ontario who are here today, specifically Rozalyn Werner-Arcé, Gino Piazza, Dianne McKenzie, Jessica Scheffee and members from other local agencies around the province.

I would just like to remind all members that there is a reception to be held in the legislative dining room from 5 to 7 this evening. I urge all members to attend.

Mr. Michael Harris: I just quickly welcome folks from BlackBerry who are setting up in room 230 for their BlackBerry Experience reception tonight at 5:30. I encourage all members to join us in that. I’ll be speaking to that again shortly. Welcome to Queen’s Park. Thanks for coming today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The same reminder of the reminder I got this morning?

Mr. Michael Harris: It is.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay, so that’s a reminder of the reminder you gave.

Mr. Michael Harris: We’ll be reminded again.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We’ll be reminded again.

MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS

ONTARIO RANGER PROGRAM

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise in this House today to speak to an issue that has truly a passionate following. The decision in the fall of 2012 to end the Ontario Ranger Program that has been going strong for 70 years has been sorely felt. In the time since this decision, I have had several opportunities to meet with individuals who have experienced the Ontario Ranger Program first-hand. I

share their concerns that a true wilderness experience, sadly, will not be realized by the scaled-back Stewardship Youth program that has replaced it.

I attended pre-budget hearings in Thunder Bay last year, where former Junior Rangers spoke passionately about how profoundly the program affected their life. In many cases, their experience affected their choice of education and work.

We heard that shutting down this program would save \$1.6 million. Somehow this does not seem like a lot of money when you consider the benefits the program has brought and the huge amounts of money the government wastes in other ways. What is the saying? Penny-wise, pound foolish. I think it applies in this case.

I’m proud to say that at the end of August, my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka hosted an event where past rangers were able to come together to celebrate the program and emphasize the loss of the ending of the program. I can tell from my own personal experience that the work of the Ontario rangers in maintaining trails and portages in Ontario’s parks has been greatly appreciated.

I have been happy to table petitions in the Legislature in the past, and I would like to raise awareness about the changes felt at the ending of the Ontario Ranger Program.

PRECARIOUS EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Jonah Schein: This Thursday evening, I’m hosting a discussion at my community office on St. Clair Avenue with Dr. Susana Miranda to share her research about the struggles of Portuguese-Canadian workers in the 1970s and 1980s. Dr. Miranda is a member of the Portuguese Canadian History Project. It’s an organization committed to preserving, democratizing and disseminating the history of immigrants in Canada, particularly those of Portuguese descent. Dr. Miranda’s research sheds important light on the experience of Portuguese-Canadian cleaners in Toronto, but it’s a story all too common to other new immigrant groups working in precarious jobs.

Speaker, in fact, more and more people in Ontario are working in precarious situations, with over 50% of people in the GTA without stable full-time jobs or benefits. This new reality for urban workers is hurting people and their families in this province, and it’s something that we need to work together to address to make sure that work pays and that people can afford to live in our city.

I invite people to join me, Dr. Miranda and MP Andrew Cash for this important discussion at our community office on St. Clair Avenue this Thursday, September 26 at 6:30 p.m.

GLENGARRY PIPE BAND

Mr. Grant Crack: I’m pleased to rise today to celebrate and acknowledge a great accomplishment of an important cultural group in my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. The Glengarry Pipe Band placed an

incredible sixth at the World Pipe Band Championships in Glasgow, Scotland this past summer.

Based in Maxville, Ontario, home of the world-famous Glengarry Highland Games and the North American Pipe Band Championships, the Glengarry Pipe Band regularly competes in Canada, the US and overseas, and also performs at local charitable events, community functions and parades.

The World Pipe Band Championships is a yearly pipe band competition currently held in Glasgow, Scotland. The event has been operating regularly since 1930, when the Scottish pipe band association was formed. For competitive bands, the title of world champion is highly coveted. This event is seen as a culmination of a year's worth of preparation, rehearsal and practice.

On August 17 of this year, under the leadership of pipe major Ross Davison, the Glengarry Pipe Band finished sixth out of 28 bands registered in the 4A category. The Glengarry Pipe Band and an American band were the only North American entrants.

The road to Glasgow, Scotland was something that the pipe band had been working up to for the past two years. The band did a lot of fundraising, which included concerts, parades and spaghetti suppers.

The band has played for the Irish association of Ottawa and also at various Ontario competitions, including Toronto, Kingston, Kemptville, Georgetown, Cambridge and, of course, in Maxville, my home municipality, at the Glengarry Highland Games.

I'm proud of all of the members of the Glengarry Pipe Band, many of whom hail from my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, and I wish them all success in the future.

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

BLACKBERRY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members' statements? For a reminder of a reminder of a reminder, the member from Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: That's correct. I will hope to definitely see you there tonight, Speaker. I hope to welcome every other member of the Legislative Assembly and their staff to experience the new BlackBerry Q10 and Z10 models at their tips and tricks event in room 230 here at Queen's Park.

For more than a decade, MPPs have relied on this smart phone to send secure emails, search the Web for important news and issues of the day, send instant BlackBerry messages to staff and colleagues, or use the map feature to navigate through new towns and cities across this province. They've been a valued part of our daily business life.

Now, with their next generation of smart phones, BlackBerry has added many new features to serve our personal lives, too. With the ability to operate apps like Skype, Twitter, BBM Video and—my personal favourite—TuneIn radio, as well as several other entertainment features, we are able to keep in touch with our family and

friends while being on the go from Queen's Park to events in our ridings.

On top of the multiple services this phone has to offer, BlackBerry has done so much for our community and our province over the years, injecting billions of dollars into our economy, creating thousands of local jobs and establishing a culture of ingenuity and innovation throughout the Waterloo region.

Saying that, I look forward to joining you all tonight with the folks from BlackBerry for a great evening, to experience their new smart phone and take the opportunity to ask them any questions or give comments that you may have.

Thanks, Speaker. I look forward to seeing everyone, including yourself, here tonight.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. My tolerance is minimal when it comes to props, member from Durham.

LEGAL AID

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Today I rise to discuss the importance of legal aid. In a society based on the rule of law, access to justice is often linked to your access to legal representation. In a society without legal aid, people with wealth have greater access to legal representation and, consequently, greater access to justice.

The size of your bank account should not determine your access to justice. Marginalized, vulnerable people should have access to high-quality legal representation, and that is why legal aid is so important in our society. From the certificate system, which gives people facing financial barriers access to high-quality lawyers, ranging from family law or immigration and refugee law to criminal law and civil law as well, to the legal aid clinics which provide essential legal aid services to their local communities, to staff duty counsel lawyers, these are all fundamental aspects of a free and just society.

In fact, duty counsel lawyers represent the first line of defence for many people facing criminal charges. These duty counsel lawyers, employed directly by Legal Aid Ontario, deserve to be treated fairly and enjoy the same rights as other public sector lawyers, including the right to collectively bargain.

1510

I call on all members of this House to recognize the importance of legal aid and to uphold the principle that socio-economic status must remain irrelevant to an individual's ability to obtain high-quality and professional legal representation.

HATE CRIMES

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I stand with great sadness today to speak of an incident that is of great significance to the constituents of my riding of Brampton West.

This past weekend, a respected Columbia University professor, Dr. Prabhjot Singh, was attacked while

walking. The attackers shouted anti-Muslim sentiments and started punching him. This is a very disturbing incident. This type of hatred has no place in our society. Dr. Singh was attacked simply because he was a Sikh wearing a turban and had a beard.

I represent a diverse riding of people of different faiths, backgrounds and cultures. When something like this occurs anywhere in the world, we feel it in our community.

It was not too long ago that the Wisconsin tragedy took place in a gurdwara where several Sikhs were senselessly gunned down.

Here at home, the Khalsa school in Brampton was vandalized with hateful graffiti. It was very sad to see, to say the least.

Speaker, Ontarians want to be reassured of their safety in their communities. They want to feel free to express their faith and worship without fear.

That is why I was pleased to stand in the Legislature last week to support my colleague Monte Kwinter in his motion which affirmed our commitment to protecting religious freedoms.

From time to time, racism and hatred will raise their ugly heads, as they did for Dr. Singh, but we always need to stand together as we did last week.

No matter what symbols you wear or where you live, no matter what your gender, orientation or ability, whether you are Sikh, Muslim or Jewish, we all have the right to feel safe and secure. There is only one Ontario.

UNIVERSITY OF ONTARIO INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, on September 4, Durham region celebrated the 10th anniversary of Ontario's newest university, UOIT, the University of Ontario Institute of Technology.

Here are just a few of the highlights from the past decade:

- the launching of the master's program in 2005;
- the Ontario Power Generation engineering building opened in 2008;
- also in 2008, UOIT was named one of the top 50 research universities in Canada by Research Infosource Inc.;
- the first PhD graduates in 2011;
- the opening of the General Motors of Canada ACE centre, which is the Automotive Centre of Excellence, in 2011.

Today, UOIT has 8,400 undergraduate and graduate students.

UOIT has a unique focus on student-centred learning, along with a market-driven research mandate focused on areas of national and provincial significance.

I'd like to pay specific tribute to the founding president, Dr. Gary Polonsky, a constituent; the UOIT partners; the faculty, staff, students and alumni who have contributed to the success of the university on a day-to-day basis.

Congratulations to the UOIT president, Tim McTiernan, and Dr. Larry Seeley, chair of the board of governors.

It has been a real privilege to support UOIT as it grew from the dream of families and communities to the vibrant research and academic centre it is today.

I'm confident that UOIT will enjoy continued success and contribute to the economy of Ontario under a Tim Hudak government.

ERINOAKKIDS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I had the pleasure of announcing the future site of ErinoakKids in Oakville last Friday.

ErinoakKids has been providing services to children with a range of physical and/or developmental challenges, communication disorders and autism for the past 42 years and has grown to servicing now over 13,500 children and their families.

Bridget Fewtrell and the rest of the team at ErinoakKids have worked tirelessly at making a patchwork of leased commercial spaces work for the children in the past.

My constituents always provide positive feedback about the quality service they receive at ErinoakKids and the positive impact that that has on their lives.

On Friday, Bob McKay, a former client and ErinoakKids board member, delivered an inspirational speech about the support they provided that allowed him to become a PhD candidate in international relations.

Karissa Campbell and her mother, Andrea Schindhelm, spoke about what the new facility will mean for them.

The project is the largest redevelopment project in the history of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. The site will be in close proximity to Oakville's new state-of-the-art hospital. It will be green, modern and built to LEED silver standards to ensure that it is a sustainable building.

My sincere congratulations to everyone who has been working diligently on the ErinoakKids redevelopment project. It's going to be a welcome addition to the Oakville community.

AMAZING BED RACE

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Sundays are often the one day of the week when you look forward to staying in bed, but also a day when you feel the need to get things done. The people of my riding had no problem balancing the two on Sunday as the fourth annual Amazing Bed Race took to the streets of Burlington to do some good.

This energetic and fun-filled annual event is organized by the Joseph Brant Hospital Foundation and the Rotary Club of Burlington North. The purpose is simple: to raise money by racing beds on wheels along a 100-metre course. It's a great fundraiser event and a fantastic com-

munity builder as teams rally around a common cause, cheered on by their neighbours.

Going into its fourth year, the event raised over \$270,000. The total is now roughly \$360,000.

I was in London this weekend, but our Burlington PC riding association team—the “Blue Jane Group”—was there. The team—my daughter Courtney was piloting, powered by speedy runners Marc, Mike, Amr, Stewart and Curtis—beat our 2012 showing, finishing third. Whoo-hoo! We came fifth last year.

Congratulations to the 2013 champions, Acura on Brant, and to all who took part.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You’ve given Hansard a challenge; there’s no question about it.

Thank you to all of you for your statements.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Grant Crack: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

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 title of which is amended to read:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated September 24, 2013, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À SOUTENIR LES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Mr. Sousa moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act / Projet de loi 105, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l’impôt-santé des employeurs.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I’ll make my statement during ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

TAXATION

Hon. Charles Sousa: I am pleased to rise today to introduce the Supporting Small Businesses Act, 2013. This bill is an important part of our government’s plan to build a strong and prosperous economy, to create jobs and continue to reduce the deficit. The reforms we’re proposing today are part of our government’s ongoing work to make Ontario the most attractive place to do business in North America. It’s the latest in a series of steps we’ve taken to grow the economy.

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It would, if passed, deliver on key commitments from our 2013 budget to reduce taxes for small businesses, because we know that small businesses are a thriving and a driving force of growth in Ontario, and we know that tax cuts for these small businesses would mean more opportunities for hiring and less time and money spent on paperwork. In addition to helping small businesses, this change will also apply to charities and not-for-profit organizations.

We understand that our responsibility as government is to put in place the right conditions for our businesses to create jobs and invest right here in Ontario and the right environment for people to succeed, and that’s why this bill is so significant. It would, if passed, better target the employer health tax exemption to help small businesses, charities and not-for-profits cut costs, reduce paperwork and boost hiring. It would increase this tax exemption to \$450,000 for small, private sector employers. The cost of this tax break would be paid for by eliminating the same exemption altogether for large private sector employers with annual Ontario payrolls of over \$5 million. This change would mean that more than 60,000 employers would see a tax cut, and it would mean that more than

12,000 more employers would no longer pay this tax at all. Employers that are no longer required to pay this tax will also save the cost of filing an EHT return. That's why I urge all members of the House to support this important bill.

We have taken significant steps to make Ontario's business tax system more competitive and help grow the economy. We introduced a harmonized sales tax which will result in the removal of about \$4.6 billion a year in taxes paid by businesses. We've cut corporate taxes for large and small businesses alike, providing more than \$1.8 billion of tax relief per year, and we've eliminated the capital tax to provide for more than \$2.1 billion to support our businesses in creating jobs.

Those are just some of the ways that we're improving Ontario's competitive advantage. Of course, we remain focused on balancing the budget by 2017-18. In fact, this month, we released the province's public accounts, which show that Ontario's 2012-13 deficit is now down to \$9.2 billion. That's \$5.6 billion lower than projected in the 2012 budget.

The bill I'm introducing today is part of our job creation plan. It's a bill which would cut taxes for small businesses, charities and not-for-profits. It will reduce the cost of hiring for more than 60,000 job creators, and it would cut down the paperwork burden of small businesses.

Mr. Speaker, and all members of this House, this is in keeping with our plans to grow the economy through a competitive business climate by reducing the tax and paper burden to small businesses across the province. More importantly, it will help create and promote more jobs in Ontario.

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

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to address the government's employer health tax legislation introduced here this afternoon.

I'd like to first point out that it was our government, a PC government, that first introduced the employer health tax exemption as a way to assist small businesses in this province by reducing their overall tax burden, but what we've seen since that was done was the amount of tax the businesses are paying increase exponentially.

For me and my caucus, as we have received word about this bill that was introduced today, this legislation exemplifies exactly everything that's wrong with this government and their approach to governing here in Ontario over the last 10 years. They're unwilling to go far enough. What we have here from the Minister of Finance is nothing but an optical illusion. It's a shell game, where money is being moved around to try and make it appear as if they're actually creating jobs in the economy. They're unwilling to go far enough to take the decisive action that's needed to provide real tax relief for businesses in Ontario. It's more tinkering around the edges by this government, and it's not going to do anything to solve the jobs crisis in Ontario and get the nearly

600,000 men and women who woke up this morning in Ontario without a job back to work.

The Liberals have done this time and time again, though: their willingness to speak out of both sides of their mouth when it comes to providing real help for small business people in the province.

We need to put this legislation into context with the overall framework that this government has laid out, which is actually driving jobs and businesses and investment out of Ontario, fleeing for more friendly places to do business, and those are the simple facts. This legislation comes at a time when we're struggling with skyrocketing hydro costs, increases to WSIB premiums—that's the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board—a College of Trades tax that has been introduced, restrictions on the skilled trades through outdated apprenticeship ratios, and that forest of red tape that we talk about all the time, the over-regulation that's occurring in this province. There's no question we're the most over-regulated jurisdiction in all of North America.

But first let's look at the energy rates, because it's now the second anniversary of the cancellation of the Mississauga power plant. Ontario's industrial electricity rates are now the second highest in North America. The global adjustment charge, which is simply this government's catch-all for the misdeeds and mistakes that they've made on the energy file, including the power plant cancellations, hit a record high this past month. Last year, energy rates surpassed taxes as the number one concern for Ontario businesses for the first time ever. I'm not sure you heard that, but taxes are no longer the biggest concern; it's electricity rates, and your government is not doing anything about that.

This legislation alone also won't do anything to reverse the damage done through the increase in WSIB premiums forced upon small businesses, nor is it going to reverse the College of Trades tax, which is targeting independent contractors in Ontario. It's severely hampering their ability to hire and create jobs. For some, it's actually killing their opportunity to stay in business at all.

Back home in the Quinte area, we're fortunate to have small businesses of just about every variety. We've got retail and software development; we've got wineries and manufacturing and real estate and insurance companies. Names like Huff, Mackay, McDougall and Alexiou: They're all small businesses, and these are businesses that have been hit by this government with eco fees and the HST. They've seen their red tape burden balloon to more than 380,000 regulations.

What needs to be stressed is that the economic problems facing our small businesses are much bigger than the effect simply of the EHT, the employer health tax. The culture of hydro rate increases, fee increases and all of the other increases on our businesses, and the red tape as well that has been foisted on our small business people, has done considerable damage to small and medium-sized businesses across the province. We've lost some great family small businesses in my riding, and others are on the edge of closing their doors.

Only the PC caucus has a real plan to put people back to work in Ontario, to restore economic growth and bring us back to our rightful place as the economic engine of Confederation. Only we have a plan to free businesses from the tax and regulatory burden that this government has placed upon them so that they can invest and actually create jobs in Ontario.

This legislation is more proof that this government simply isn't capable of taking the decisive action needed to get our province turned around and headed in the right direction.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I start the clock for the next response, I do want to advise the member that I caught something and I didn't respond quickly to it, but he did use a phrase that has been ruled in the past as saying something on the side that you couldn't say in a forward way. So I'm going to ask him to review Hansard and take a look at that wording, and if he needs to talk to me, I'll do that. I would want to not necessarily consider this a total admonishment, but basically—we'll talk after. It's not to be used again.

It is now time for responses.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Love the tie.

Mr. Michael Prue: You love this tie. I wore this for RIM and for BlackBerry.

Hon. Charles Sousa: There you go.

Mr. Michael Prue: Okay.

Mr. Speaker, it's a delight for me to stand up and to give a response to the Supporting Small Businesses Act, which has just been introduced here today.

I'm always happy, and we in the NDP are always happy, when the government likes to adopt some of the recommendations that we have made. I think everybody needs to know—although the minister didn't talk about this—that this was part of the many demands that the NDP put forward during that period of time when we were prorogued and getting ready to come back for the budget preparation. It was one of the things the NDP suggested as a way of actually helping the treasury to get some money. We're a little disappointed that it has been spun a little and is not going to really make money for the coffers, because heaven knows we need that—we're running a \$9.2-billion deficit—but in fact, this is what has happened.

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It was part of our overall effort to try to show this government where monies might be available without having to tax ordinary people. We had a three-part plan, and the plan was very simple. The first one was to restrict the HST input tax credits, which would have saved this government some \$1.3 billion. We continue to talk about that in the Legislature every week—at least somebody raises this point and asks this question. If you ended those HST input tax credits, which allow people to write off the costs of entertainment, food, transportation, vehicles, gas and electricity payments—which ordinary people can't do—you would save the government some \$1.3 billion.

Secondly, we talked about the increase of the corporate tax compliance, which, if undertaken, would have saved the government between \$50 million this year and \$200 million going down the road two years. What that would have involved is that companies located in Ontario could not pay taxes in cheaper jurisdictions like other provinces or offshore from Canada. We think that that's something that should have been explored. It would have saved a lot of money.

The third one was, of course, the employer health tax credit, which, if instituted as the NDP said, would have actually saved the government some \$90 million. Instead, what is being introduced here today is almost revenue-neutral. That means that it is going to cost the government some money.

The bill does, in fact, part of what the NDP would like to do if we were sitting on that side, because we think that in order to balance a budget, you can't do entirely what the Conservatives are saying: slashing goods and services. You have to also look at where the revenues might be made available. Part of those revenues might have been available, had the government wholly bought what the NDP was trying to say in terms of the \$90 million, in making sure that large companies were no longer able to claim the \$400,000 but, in fact, that small companies continued to do so.

Now, in this bill, the government has seen fit to remove small employers from the tax, and we agree with that. I don't really have a great deal of difficulty upping that amount of money from \$400,000 to \$450,000. It's not a great deal, and it's not going to be the end of the world in doing so, and 12,000 employers are going to be helped. We hope that this helps small business, because we believe in small business, in the NDP. We believe that they are the backbone of the economy. Certainly, it is the area in which most of the growth has taken place in the past and will likely take place in the future.

The bill is designed to make sure that the money is paid on the backs of those who are most able to afford it; that is, the large corporations, the banks, the insurance companies, the people who don't need the \$400,000 exemption in the first place.

The government has said that in passing this bill, if it is passed, it will be almost revenue-neutral—not quite. It will end up costing us a little bit of money. But then the minister went on to talk today about all the other things the government is doing. I'd just like to remind him, in making these announcements again and again, of how much you are giving away to business. You can see in your own speech that \$4 billion is not in the treasury. If you ever wonder why there is a \$9.2-billion deficit, you have to start looking at your other actions.

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

PETITIONS

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Mr. Randy Hillier: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It says:

“Whereas new homeowners and home builders across Ontario have expressed significant dissatisfaction with the Tarion Warranty Corp.; and

“Whereas this government monopoly needs to be held accountable for the repeated failing reported by both new homebuyers and home builders...;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Minister of Consumer Services as follows:

“That the minister request the Auditor General do a value-for-money audit of Tarion.”

I agree with this petition and will affix my name to it and give it to page Megan.

TAXATION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition that reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

I fully support this, will affix my signature and give it to page Gabrielle to deliver to the table.

FAMILY CAREGIVER LEAVE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support the petition, Madam Speaker, and give my petition to Jasper.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Steve Clark: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I’m pleased to affix my signature, and I’ll send it to the table.

HYDRO RATES

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

“Whereas home heating and electricity are essential utilities for northern families;

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

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

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

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

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

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

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: A petition from my riding of Durham reads as follows:

"Whereas Hydro One Networks Inc. (Hydro One) is proposing construction of a new transformer station on a 100-acre site in Clarington, near the Oshawa-Clarington boundary;

"Whereas the site is on the Oak Ridges moraine/greenbelt;

"Whereas concerns have been raised about the environmental impacts of this development, including harm to wildlife as well as contamination of ponds, streams, and the underground water supply;

"Whereas sites zoned for industrial and/or commercial use are the best locations for large electricity transformer stations;

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"Whereas most, if not all, residents do not agree this project is needed and that, if proven to be necessary, it could be best accommodated at alternative locations such as Cherrywood or Wesleyville;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Ontario Legislature support the preservation of the Oak Ridges moraine, the greenbelt, and the natural environment at this site. We also ask that the Ontario Legislature require the Clarington transformer station to be built at an alternative location, zoned for an industrial facility and selected in accordance with the best planning principles."

I'm pleased to sign and support this on behalf of my constituents and present it to Megan, one of the pages here.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Sarah Campbell: "Whereas Ontario's mineral wealth belongs to the people of Ontario;

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

"Whereas Ontario's Mining Act presently calls for resources mined in Ontario to be processed in Canada, yet allows cabinet to grant exceptions to the clause;

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

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

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

I support this, will affix my signature and give it to page Bridget to deliver to the table.

FISHING AND HUNTING REGULATIONS

Mr. Todd Smith: "Whereas the McGuinty/Wynne government has drastically reduced the number of Ontario hunting and fishing regulation booklets available to the public; and

"Whereas regulations in printed booklets are the most portable and convenient format for outdoorspersons to consult in the field, while hunting or fishing; and

"Whereas in addition to the Internet being unavailable in remote locations, many Ontarians do not have Internet access, or prefer information in print rather than electronic format; and

"Whereas those who hunt and fish pay substantial amounts each year to purchase outdoor cards, hunting licences and fishing licences and it is reasonable to expect that a booklet explaining the regulations should be provided as a courtesy; and

"Whereas Ontario hunters and anglers need to access the most current regulations to ensure they enjoy hunting and fishing safely and lawfully;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Ministry of Natural Resources to respect the wishes of Ontario anglers and hunters by providing hunting and fishing regulations in a booklet format to everyone who needs one."

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

Ms. Sarah Campbell: "Whereas the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre is recognized as one of the leading primary care providers in northwestern Ontario, providing essential services to those living in not only Ignace, but across northwestern Ontario; and

"Whereas a 2010 rent increase by the government of Ontario has threatened the long-term viability of the health centre's operations; and

"Whereas the rent being charged to the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre is much higher than rent being charged to similar operations in other communities and far surpasses 'market rent' for a small community in northwestern Ontario;

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

"To immediately rectify the situation and ensure the long-term viability of the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre by either reducing rent, transferring ownership of the building to the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre, or through capital funds to build a new facility that better suits the community's needs."

I fully support this, will affix my signature and give it to page Pratah to deliver to the table.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

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

“Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has indicated it will be making improvements to Highway 21 between Port Elgin and Southampton in 2014; and

“Whereas the ministry has not acknowledged the repeated requests from the community and others to undertake safety enhancements to the portion of the highway where it intersects with the Saugeen Rail Trail crossing; and

“Whereas this trail is a vital part of an interconnected active transportation route providing significant recreational and economic benefit to the town of Saugeen Shores, the county of Bruce and beyond;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario to require the MTO to include, as part of the design for the improvements to Highway 21 between Port Elgin and Southampton, measures that will enhance the safety for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists and all others that use the Rail Trail crossing; and to consult and collaborate with the town of Saugeen Shores and other groups in determining cost-effective measures that will maintain the function of the highway while aligning with the active transportation needs of all interested parties who use the Saugeen Rail Trail.”

Madam Speaker, I’m receiving hundreds and hundreds of signatures on this petition. I totally agree with it and affix my signature.

TAXATION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: This petition is so important, I just want to re-emphasize it.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

I support this, will affix my signature and give it to page Taylor to deliver.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Ms. Laurie Scott: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Health is planning to delist OHIP physiotherapy clinics as of August 1st, 2013, which represents cuts in physiotherapy services to sen-

iors, children and people with disabilities who currently receive care at designated OHIP physiotherapy clinics; and

“Whereas people who are currently eligible for OHIP physiotherapy treatments can receive 100 treatments per year plus an additional 50 treatments annually if medically necessary. The proposed change will reduce the number of allowable treatments to 12 per year; while enhancing geographical access is positive, the actual physiotherapy that any individual receives will be greatly reduced; and

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

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

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

ANIMAL PROTECTION

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

“Whereas the process popularly known as ‘declawing’ is actually an amputation that is the equivalent of cutting off a human’s fingers from the knuckle up;

“Whereas the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association considers ‘declawing’ to be an unnecessary cosmetic procedure;

“Whereas research has shown that declawing a cat significantly reduces a cat’s quality of life and leads to behavioural and health problems;

“Whereas declawing eliminates a cat’s ability to defend itself when in danger; and

“Whereas the process is considered to be inhumane and is banned in more than 40 countries;

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

“To ban the unnecessary and inhumane procedure known as ‘declawing’ in the province of Ontario.”

I support this, will affix my signature and give it to page Gabrielle to deliver.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Laurie Scott: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Slots at Racetracks Program has, for over a decade, provided mutual benefit to the province of Ontario and the horse racing industry; and

“Whereas the government has announced the cancellation of the Slots at Racetracks Program, jeopardizing the future of the horse racing and breeding industry in Ontario at the cost of thousands of jobs and \$2 billion in economic activity;

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

“That the government of Ontario work with the horse racing industry to reinstate and improve the Slots at Racetracks Program with its revenue-sharing agreement to sustain and grow the horse racing industry to the benefit of our communities.”

It’s signed by hundreds of people in my riding, and I’ll hand it over to page Sean.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made in the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members’ public business such that Mr. Fraser assumes ballot item number 48 and Mr. Bartolucci assumes ballot item number 81.

1550

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 19, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I’m pleased to rise today to contribute to this debate. While the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families) is an interesting bill, we do have to talk about this a little bit more thoroughly, because we would be remiss if we

missed some cornerstones of the ability to facilitate this type of support for families.

Before I go into some of those cornerstones, I want to say that we support the bill for families who are helping family members and need to take leave in order to do so. There is nothing more important than family members, and we are actually glad that the Liberals listened to our concerns last session and have made significant changes and improvements to this bill. However, as I said, there are still a number of things we need to discuss.

Before I go there, I want to talk about some of the things we are seeing. It’s good to see that we are giving more respect, in terms of the changes that have been made since this was debated last session. It’s good to see that we are giving more respect for family members who unselfishly give their time to the care of a family member. Whether it’s taking someone to chemo treatments or being home to provide around-the-clock care, these people deserve our thanks, support and respect. We also need to respect the grieving process and support families who are undergoing tragic situations.

I am sure this will have a lot of support in rural regions, especially where people have to drive more than one hour one way to get to hospitals and care centres in order to ensure that their loved ones have the care they deserve and need. When we talk about aging at home and being at home for a critically ill person, it makes a lot of sense to have family around them at that time, because in many cases, the reality is that there is a lack of long-term-care beds around Ontario.

Another thing we like to see in this bill, for lack of a better phrase, is that the loss or disappearance of a child is finally recognized. There is probably nothing more heartbreaking than the loss of a child, and parents need time to deal with this. Providing them time is not only the compassionate thing to do, but the right thing to do.

I can think of cases, even here in Ontario, where family members were lost to horrific crimes—tragic, unexpected—and we need to have rules in place to enable these people to deal with the situation in the manner they have to, and respect the time needed in that particular instance. The worst thing would be to suffer through a catastrophic loss, only to turn around and lose your job. It doesn’t make sense, any way you look at it. So it’s very, very important that we do move this bill through.

With that said, there are some buts. We need to do a reality check when we talk about caregivers’ leave. In terms of a reality check, do we have the proper cornerstones in place to enable the proper type of leave that is needed and proves to be respectful of employees as they ask to be granted that leave? For instance, some of the cornerstones I thought of in reflecting upon Bill 21 are the whole concepts of aging at home, convalescing at home or passing at home, which is a wish of so many people now. Do we have the proper care in place to support family members?

My point in saying this is that more times than not around my area and riding of Huron–Bruce, I’m hearing

frustration time and again over the fact that front-line services to enable these people to care for their family at home are getting totally lost. As budgets become tighter, the front line seems to be the one area that is always affected over and above the bloated bureaucracy.

Once and for all, we need to have a government in Ontario that is committed to managing costs and recognizing where there are savings to be realized. The PC Party, under the leadership of Tim Hudak, recognizes that we do have a bloated bureaucracy in our health care system and we do need to look at how we can adapt our approach to front-line services. I just feel that that whole concept is void with the current government of the day, and it is disappointing.

We need to be mindful of this cornerstone if we are really going to support our caregivers when they are at home, helping their loved ones.

Another thing we need to think about is flexibility. Time can't be defined when someone falls ill. You can't regiment it to one week, to two weeks, to even three days. What I feel is missing in this particular bill is flexibility.

I think of someone close to home right now, suffering from pancreatic cancer. Her family came home this spring, and her family came home again in the summer, and they came home this past weekend. They needed flexible time to be with their mother, to help and care for her. Right now, Bill 21 is totally void of that whole concept. We need to do better by these people and recognize that illnesses do not follow exact timelines.

It's my hope that when it gets into second reading and gets debated a little bit further, the flexibility that is needed in Bill 21 is recognized as a void right now and gets built into Bill 21 to make it a much stronger bill, recognizing the realities of caring for somebody at home. I'm confident that all parties will certainly address this flexibility need when it moves into committee.

I need to recognize that this opportunity also creates more consistencies between our provincial and federal legislation.

You know, it's interesting: There are a couple of things I joke around about when we reflect back on prorogation, but one of the good things that came out of prorogation is that there was more time available to strengthen this bill. Again, there's still a little bit of room for improvement. We need to be recognizing that, again, cornerstones as a foundation to support this bill are so, so important.

As I said, people don't get sick in week increments, so why is the legislation set up that way? The eight weeks could be made cumulative, a change that could be made to ensure that if only eight days are needed, those eight days are used, and then they have more time.

As I mentioned in the specific example I just shared with you, they needed time in the spring, they needed time this past summer, and they needed time this past week. So we need to be mindful of the realities when we put the finishing touches on this bill as it moves through committee.

There are other cornerstones that could be addressed as well. Mental health: We need mental health supports for people caring for the ill at home, because the realities are that productivity at work gets stressed; your own immediate family needs and regular routines get stressed. So we need to think about the larger picture and how people get impacted.

Again, I just want to take a step back and revisit the fact that if we are going to take a look at enabling caregivers to help their loved ones at home, we need to make sure they have the proper resources. In terms of jobs and in terms of the economy, we have to make sure that those jobs, the jobs that are needed to enable people to care at home, are there.

What I'm hearing around the countryside is that when budgets get tight, the first things to be cut are front-line services. That is wrong. We need a government in Ontario that recognizes that the bloated bureaucracy in our health care system right now is actually handcuffing the ability of people to care for folks at home. That too needs to be addressed, hopefully, when it gets into committee.

Another thing that needs to be talked about—I just mentioned jobs and the economy. Another discussion that needs to be had in committee is the reality that not everybody has family close to home to care for them. What about a neighbour? Does this caregiver leave absolutely have to restrict the caregivers to family members, or can it be extended to people in the neighbourhood?

When jobs are getting tight, and as the economy in Ontario, Toronto, the greater Toronto area, rural Ontario—the list could go on and on—gets tighter and tighter, the reality is that people are leaving this province to look for jobs. If people truly did choose to be at home to convalesce or to age, caregivers may not be readily at hand. That's another point of flexibility that we need to be considering when we think of Bill 21 when it gets into committee.

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I would just like to revisit the fact that we do support this. Let's get on with it because we have bigger things to approach and discuss, like jobs and the economy.

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

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Very briefly, Madam Speaker. I was listening carefully to the member from Huron-Bruce, and she really touched me with her story, but I'm a little confused—that's not an abnormal state for me.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Don't open that door, Ted.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Wait; just let me explain. You're talking about front-line services being cut. I'm not going to go back in history; let's leave that alone. But the opposition is the same party—I won't even use the two minutes—that's talking about freezing everybody's wages and cutting staff. You want front-line services; those front-line services cost money, and we need to be investing in that. You can't have it both ways.

I hear your appeal. I agree with you. I think from a heart perspective, a value perspective, you're right on,

and I'm with you. But I just want you to bear in mind that you can't have it both ways.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to respond to the member from Huron–Bruce's comments. I think she raised some excellent issues. The reality is that illnesses don't happen in one-week chunks. What she was trying to raise, and raised very eloquently, was that in fact we need to be more flexible. If we're going to have this type of legislation—and I think there's consensus in the chamber that we need something—let's make it something that's actually going to work for everyone.

Day surgery—there are so many examples where people need one day or they want a break for two days, and the legislation, as it is written currently, is only available in one-week blocks. So we do need to make some substantive amendments to improve the legislation as it is written. We're going to let it go to committee imminently. I hope that that's something the minister will take to heart, and bring forward amendments that we can support.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I also want to be very brief as well. I just wanted to say that I appreciate the member sharing her personal story. It gives a touch of humanity to this place where otherwise sometimes it feels like we're so disconnected from the rest of the province. Those stories that touch home to the people here listening and also, hopefully, to the people listening at home, show that there are people here who really care about making this province a better place. I applaud you for bringing your personal story here to share with us.

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

Mr. Todd Smith: It's also a pleasure to stand up and commend the member from Huron–Bruce, who's an outstanding member of our PC caucus. Her comments were very compassionate.

I do have to question some of the comments that were made by the minister on the other side of the House, however. I agree with one comment that he made: that he's confused. Other than that, I can't understand where he was going with the comment about freezing wages, because really the only way that we can continue to provide the health care and home care services that we've come to expect is to freeze public sector wages. Otherwise, we won't have anyone in the public sector to pay because we won't be able to afford to pay our public sector workers anything.

Earlier this afternoon, the Minister of Finance stood up and patted himself on the back because the projected deficit for this year is \$9.2 billion. He was excited and happy about the ability to say that. Meanwhile, that same finance minister, when asked about the budget projections for next year, will say it's \$11.7 billion. So there has been nothing done on that side of the House to get our public sector spending under control. We need to

get our costs under control. You've heard time and time again from members on this side of the House, Madam Speaker, that we don't have a revenue problem in Ontario; we have a spending problem in Ontario. The government that has been in power for the last 10 years just doesn't seem to understand that we need to get our spending under control. Otherwise, this province will be headed over a cliff that we're not going to be able to recover from.

That's why we need to get this team off of that side of the House and get the PC team on the government side. We need to clear the decks and bring in some legislation that's going to turn this province around, because what we're seeing right now is fluff and it's taking us nowhere but deeper in debt.

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate everyone's comments. When we talk about health care and caregiving of our loved ones, it does touch home, and it does hit you right in your heart.

I have to first respond to the Minister of Community and Social Services to help his confusion a little bit. He was reflecting on front-line services, but I can tell you that we need to take a look at how front-line services are facilitated, because right now in my riding—and I'm sure everyone in this House has similar experiences—there's disparity. There are nurses who are receiving one wage and folks who work for agencies like One Care who are getting a different wage but doing exactly the same job, and more so, enabling people to be at home. That disparity has to be addressed, and how do we fix that? We need to take a look at our bloated bureaucracy so that we can ensure that there's an equitable delivery of front-line services, and that is a point that cannot be confused with anything else.

I certainly appreciate everyone else's comments.

In terms of flexibility, absolutely: It doesn't matter whether it's an incremental caregiver leave or the recognition of day surgery. In my riding, we need to drive over one hour one way, be it to Stratford or be it to Owen Sound, for day surgery, and if a person needs a ride, that means somebody has to take a day off work. So I commend the member from Dufferin–Caledon for recognizing that.

The members from Bramalea–Gore–Malton and Prince Edward–Hastings, thank you very much for recognizing the compassion that's needed when we talk about this type of legislation. It is truly my hope that we can pass this bill, get it into committee and fix the areas that need to be addressed in order to make it a bill that works for everyone throughout Ontario, so that, more importantly, we can get back to talking about jobs and the economy, where we need to be at.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to have the opportunity this afternoon to make a few comments on Bill 21, the

Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families), 2013.

As we've heard, this piece of legislation, which was introduced by the Minister of Labour, would amend the Employment Standards Act to create a number of scenarios where an employee could take an unpaid leave. These include caring for a critically ill loved one or, for parents, the horrific situation in which they would be faced with the disappearance or the death of a child due to a criminal act. As a parent, I can't imagine anything worse. We can all understand that it would simply be impossible, nor would we expect it of someone, to go through such a devastating experience and continue to show up for work every day, so I think it's important that we, as a society and as members of the Legislative Assembly, do all we can to support those individuals who face those tragic events.

Offering families this kind of leave helps create the kind of compassionate, caring society that we all strive to build. These provisions ensure that an employee who has experienced such a trauma in their family can at least know their job will be waiting for them once they've had an opportunity to put their life back together. At such an emotional time, no one should face the added burden of being worried about their employment.

I think it's important to take a few moments to explain to people exactly how the bill works and the situations in which an employee would qualify for one of those leaves. I'm not going to belabour the points in the bill, but through this legislation, the minister proposes to offer a family caregiver up to eight weeks per year in leave. To qualify, the employee must be caring for someone whom a doctor has confirmed has a critical illness or injury that leaves them unable to care for themselves. And it introduces a leave of up to 37 weeks for parents who must take time from work to care for a critically ill child.

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It also creates the crime-related child death or disappearance leave that would give up to 104 weeks of leave to an employee whose child dies as a result of a crime, and 52 weeks in the case of a child who disappears through a criminal act.

I want to say, in all of those circumstances it's again important to point out that this bill creates an unpaid leave. There's no cost associated—I think the minister has made this point—no cost incurred by the government as a result of the legislation. I have to say that employers that I know would, in those kinds of terrible situations that we're talking about, ensure that an employee's job was safe. I do think it's important to enshrine these rights in the Employment Standards Act. Definitely, this is a bill that I'm sure everyone knows by now our caucus is going to support.

I do want to take some time to explain why the issue of family leave is one that's very topical in my riding of Leeds–Grenville. It's been mentioned during the debate on Bill 21 that the federal government recently introduced changes to the Canada Labour Code. I'm proud to say those changes in federal legislation were the result of

reforms provided in a private member's bill introduced by my federal colleague the MP for Leeds–Grenville, Mr. Gord Brown. Gord and I are good friends. We've known each other for a long time, and he has been an invaluable resource. He has provided me great advice and guidance over the years. I have to tell you how proud he was to join Prime Minister Stephen Harper to announce the compassionate care leave for parents with critically ill children.

Under the federal leave provision, parents who must take time away from work to care for a child with a life-threatening illness can apply for a special employment insurance benefit for up to 37 weeks. This was a tremendous achievement for Mr. Gord Brown, my MP, and all of Leeds–Grenville as he introduced a private member's bill proposing this compassionate care leave for parents every year since 2004.

Members should know that his inspiration for that bill came from Sharon Ruth, a mom in Oxford Station who was determined to help other families after her own experience with her critically ill daughter, Colleen. In caring for Colleen, the family had to go all in, and it meant taking time off the job and losing income. Really, I think that's a choice that any parent would make when it comes to dealing with the health of a child. It wasn't easy on their family, and I know that the turmoil that Sharon and her family faced led them to MP Brown's office and ultimately inspired him to table his private member's bill.

I'm pleased to say the story has a happy ending on two counts. While there's no making up for the financial losses that the Ruth family faced, Sharon's passion and MP Brown's determination created an EI-supported leave that ensures some 6,000 Canadian families won't experience what she did. Of course, the happiest outcome is that Colleen's cancer is in remission. So having met Sharon, I'm sure that Bill 21, even though it only provides unpaid leaves, is one that she and her family are watching very closely. I know, frankly, that's one reason that I'm pleased to support this bill as proposed.

It's important to note that in speaking here about the federal legislation, one of the significant improvements made in Bill 21 is that it clarifies some inconsistencies between the Canada Labour Code and Ontario's Employment Standards Act. It aligns with the federal critically ill child care leave that I just outlined, as well as the 35-week EI-supported leave for families who lose a child as a result of a criminal act. From a practical point of view, aligning the provincial and the federal rules for employers is the right thing to do.

As we know, Bill 21 isn't this government's first attempt to amend the Employment Standards Act and create a parental and caregiver leave. I have to say the reason we're debating, I think, a better bill today is because of the position our PC caucus took with the legislation when it was first introduced as Bill 30. That bill, while certainly well intentioned, had several flaws that were pointed out during the important debate. To his credit, the minister did work to refine Bill 21 rather than

doing what a number of his Liberal colleagues did, and that's just reintroduce the same old same old bill after the House prorogued.

We have faced some criticism for continuing to debate this legislation. I personally can't understand that. The experience, to me, of what happened when Bill 30 died on the order paper, when former Premier McGuinty prorogued the Legislature and ran away at the height of the gas plant scandal—the reintroduction of Bill 21 shows why debates, like we're having today, are so important.

On the surface, some constituents might ask why I'd want to pursue debate on a bill to create a family leave. Isn't that something, they might ask, that I would like to support? Of course, by supporting this bill, or any other bill, I think our party, in opposition—obviously, we don't want the government just to write a blank cheque.

That's part of our Westminster system: Through debate, all 107 of us have the opportunity to bring our unique perspectives, our unique voices, from our ridings and the people we represent. It's the same reason that sends a bill—even one that receives unanimous consent on second reading—to committee for a final review and hearings before it comes back for third reading.

I believe that considering all points of view and giving stakeholders the opportunity to provide their input is something that we shouldn't be discouraging. In fact, we should be doing a lot more of it.

I know we've had lots of debate. I think, from our perspective in our caucus, our voices have been heard on Bill 21. We've made it quite clear this week. I'm glad that I can look down at our House leader, Mr. Wilson; he has been very clear. I know our leader, Tim Hudak, is very clear: We want to clear the decks. We'd like to deal with some legislation that's going to create jobs and improve our economy. We need to move some of these bills forward for discussion.

I'm not going to apologize for taking time today to speak or to support any other MPP's right to do so. It's the job that, Speaker, quite frankly, I was elected to do. I'm going to represent my constituents. I'm going to make sure their comments are on the record. But I know, from our perspective, we're quite prepared to end debate on this bill and have it go forward through committee.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity, and I hope that this will be the end of debate on Bill 21.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I rise to support, I think, the previous speaker and his comments, and that is that this is a great bill. I think it has had a lot of debate.

It impacts families at the time that they need it the most, sometimes when they're experiencing tragedies that we all hope we would never experience in our lives, but we do from time to time, and we need that extra help to deal with that. Bill 21 is a bill that does that.

I think it's time that we've moved on with it, so I rise in support of moving this on, and I think the previous speaker was saying that.

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

You have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm not going to use two minutes, Speaker. I want to thank the member for Oakville for his comments. I think my last paragraph, my last few lines of my speech, pretty well said it all. We're quite prepared to allow debate to collapse on Bill 21 and get it to move to committee.

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

Seeing none, Mr. Naqvi has moved second reading of 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.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

I've received a deferral note. This will be deferred until deferred votes on Wednesday, September 25.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The minister has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1620.

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Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Mike Colle, Joe Dickson
Michael Harris, Rob Leone
Amrit Mangat, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
Steven Del Duca, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Mitzie Hunter, Monte McNaughton
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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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
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Laura Albanese, Rick Bartolucci
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
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Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Teresa J. Armstrong, Steven Del Duca
Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qaadri
Jonah Schein
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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

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des comptes publics**

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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**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
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John Fraser, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Monte Kwinter
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
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Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Helena Jaczek, Jane McKenna
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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