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Wednesday 25 September 2013

Mercredi 25 septembre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 25 September 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 25 septembre 2013

The House met at 0900.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECTION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PROTECTION DU DROIT À LA PARTICIPATION AUX AFFAIRES PUBLIQUES

Mr. Gerretsen moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 83, An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expression on matters of public interest / Projet de loi 83, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires, la Loi sur la diffamation et la Loi sur l'exercice des compétences légales afin de protéger l'expression sur les affaires d'intérêt public.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'm very pleased to start the leadoff on this bill, which I think is extremely important for the people of Ontario. I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Scarborough Southwest.

This bill is a very important step to allow individuals to have a say in matters of public interest without fear of intimidation or repercussions. I and the government believe in its merits, believe in the principles of the bill, and I firmly believe that it will bring a greater degree of fairness to a system of justice that we have here in Ontario, of which we can all be very proud. It is about public participation, freedom of expression and justice. This bill, if passed, would defend public expression and encourage debate on matters of public interest.

I should say at this point in time that a number of private members' bills have been introduced along this concept, and I would like to pay particular tribute to my colleague the Minister of Labour, who as a private member introduced a similar bill to the one that we're introducing today as a government bill some two or three years ago. I thank him for his input.

Our government is very concerned about any abuse of process in our court system which unfairly targets our citizens and ties up precious public resources. That's

why, amid growing concerns about strategic lawsuits appearing in the Ontario courts, in May 2010 our government convened an expert panel to study the issue of strategic litigation and make recommendations as to what steps our government should take to address it.

The first thing that the general public may ask is, "What is a strategic lawsuit?" Well, it is primarily a lawsuit brought before the court by one party against another party or individual as a tactic for silencing or intimidating the other party.

Specifically, we asked the panel that my predecessor set up in May 2010 to determine, first of all, a test for courts to recognize what is and is not a strategic lawsuit. We wanted it to determine the appropriate remedies in cases where it is held that a court case is a strategic suit. We wanted to define appropriate limits to the protection of any proposed legislation. We also wanted the panel to determine appropriate parties to benefit from those protections and, finally, what methods can be used to prevent abuse of any future anti-SLAPP legislation.

The advisory panel itself was balanced between plaintiff and media lawyers, and included a trio of the foremost experts on the issues surrounding the balance of protecting public participation with the protection of reputation and economic interest. It is always a balancing act.

The panel was chaired by Dr. Mayo Moran, dean of the University of Toronto law school, who is also an expert in constitutional law and the private law on civil wrongs. It was also made up of Peter Downward, partner with Fasken Martineau, who has written authoritative legal texts on both libel and defamation, as well as Brian MacLeod Rogers, who is an adjunct professor at Ryerson University's School of Journalism.

The practising barristers also brought considerable expertise on the Rules of Civil Procedure and courtroom dynamics. This bill is a direct result of the expert advisory panel's recommendations. The bill provides a unique, made-in-Ontario solution to the issue of strategic lawsuits.

Strategic lawsuits are a relatively new phenomenon in Canadian courts. The Ontario proposal has benefited from the lessons learned from jurisdictions in the United States, as well as in Quebec and British Columbia. It also seeks to build upon and strengthen our province's existing laws and freedoms.

Importantly, our bill also upholds the value of reputation, one of the most important assets a person or business can possess. Given this key consideration in

developing our bill, we have worked hard to balance our citizens' freedom of expression with the protection of reputation and economic interests.

I would like to take just a moment and be given an opportunity to outline the legislation that we are proposing in some detail. The proposed Protection of Public Participation Act has several main components, requiring amendments to—as you've heard in the title—three existing laws: the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act.

Let me first of all deal with the amendments to the Courts of Justice Act. By amending the act, we are proposing a fast-track review process for lawsuits alleged to be brought for strategic reasons rather than to remedy legitimate complaints. Once again, strategic lawsuits, it should be remembered, are lawsuits brought to the court by one party against another as a tactic for silencing or intimidating the other individual. As we define them, strategic suits do not pertain to any dispute, but rather must be about matters of public interest.

For example, in a defamation claim a suit would be considered strategic if the act of suing an individual to ensure his or her silence has the effect of shutting down public debate on a matter that could reasonably be expected to be of concern to an entire community. In this situation, the proposed legislation gives the defendant who believes that they are being targeted unfairly an opportunity to ask the court to dismiss the case before a long and expensive court battle ensues.

0910

What happens, then, when a defendant feels that it is a strategic lawsuit launched against them? Well, at the defendant's request, the court could use a test to determine whether or not the suit should be allowed to proceed. In applying the test, the court would seek answers to the following three questions, and this is fundamental to the bill that we're bringing forward today:

The first question that has to be answered is, is the lawsuit about a matter of public interest? It will be up to the defence, the person who's being sued, to convince the court that its dispute is not simply a private matter but that the public good is at stake.

Second, if it is a matter of public interest, the question then becomes, does the plaintiff's case have substantial merit? This is what the plaintiff would have to demonstrate.

Third, can the plaintiff show that he or she has suffered, or is likely to suffer, harm serious enough to justify stopping the public expression or debate on the matter of public interest? If not, then under the proposed legislation, the case would be dismissed.

As we all know, speed is such an important aspect of these provisions because it provides clarity for all the parties quickly while carefully balancing their interests. Under the proposed fast-track process, the request to dismiss the lawsuit—in other words, where a defendant alleges that it is a strategic lawsuit—must be heard within 60 days of the defendant's motion to the court to have the test applied and before the case could proceed any further

in court. This expedited process is a key provision in nearly every American statute of its kind, so it is not a delaying tactic. Sixty days are set aside when this matter has to be determined.

Furthermore, the bill asks the court to determine the effect of the lawsuit against public participation based upon available evidence rather than its intent, which is a far more complex undertaking. By helping the court to quickly and efficiently identify these strategic suits, we hope that our proposed fast-track process—the 60-day process from the time that the application is made—would help level the playing field for the targets of strategic suits.

At the same time, removing frivolous claims from our court system frees up, of course, valuable public resources and allows our judges to focus their time and attention on more serious matters.

Our government, and I would hope everyone in this assembly and throughout the province of Ontario, takes access to justice extremely seriously. It is an issue that the members have likely heard a lot about in their own ridings from time to time. It was of high interest and has been for every meeting that I attended among judicial leaders at yesterday's Opening of the Courts here in Toronto, which I had the pleasure to attend. Many of our judges have spoken out about this—chief justices have spoken out—how important access to justice is.

Over the past several years, my ministry and our government have been working hard on a number of fronts to make our justice system more accessible and responsive to the needs of our citizens. Under this proposed bill, once a statement of claim is filed, the defendant could immediately file a motion asking the court to dismiss the action as a strategic lawsuit, and that motion would have to be heard within 60 days. If a motion like this is brought, it would immediately put a stop to the proceedings as no further steps would be allowed to occur until the motion was decided. So, therefore, within the 60 days, the judge would apply the three-part test that I spoke about before to determine whether or not the case was a strategic suit and whether or not it should be allowed to proceed.

Again, the judge would first ask the defendant to show that his or her statements against the other party amounted to a matter of public interest. If he or she were successful in showing that the statements they previously made were indeed concerns of public interest, the judge would move on to the next part of the test. In the second step, the judge would ask the plaintiff to show that its claim had merit and, if so, that the harm endured by them was serious enough to outweigh the value of the defendant's continued expression on that matter of public interest.

As the members are aware, our bill also proposes to give the successful defendant his or her costs against the plaintiff on a full indemnity scale. In other words, if the suit turns out to be a strategic lawsuit in the opinion of the judge, full costs can be recovered by the individual against whom the action is taken. Given that the motion

would be heard within about 60 days, I expect that these costs would not be as excessive as they of course would if the matter went on to trial on a full-scale basis.

By introducing the fast-track process, our government is hoping to strike a balance between recognizing the importance of protecting our rights and freedoms to speak out when public interest is at stake and also recognizing that sometimes those expressions can go too far, and that's not fair either. It's certainly a difficult balance to achieve. There are many, many factors to consider. As I indicated before, upon the introduction of this proposed legislation and earlier, we recognize that, while freedom of expression is extremely important, this proposed law does not mean that people can be carefree in expressing their views. The bill does not make it an open season on anyone or on any kind of business.

We know that reputation is important. It is vitally important to protect an individual's integrity. The bill is designed to protect the reputation of individuals. Therefore, I would like to discuss two other related changes we are proposing through this bill which would amend both the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act.

As some of the members here may be aware, conversations between two or more people on a matter of shared concern are considered privileged. In other words, because the parties share a direct interest in the matter, their conversations about that matter are protected by law. That means that none of them can be sued for either libel or slander so long as they are not untruthful about the particular matter about which they're talking.

Under the current laws, a group of citizens may meet to discuss their shared problem and be confident that those conversations will be protected. Under the Libel and Slander Act, so long as they are without malice, those conversations are privileged. If, however, a reporter from a local newspaper, radio station or television station shows up, that privilege is lost.

It may come as a surprise to some that, under our current laws, that same group of citizens is no longer protected as soon as their conversations are reported by a third party, such as the press, or are circulated on social media, which of course is very common nowadays. Like the chilling effect of a strategic lawsuit, this nuance in libel law can deter frank conversations about matters of public concern—and it's always matters of public concern that we're interested in. Doing so can potentially prevent important matters from receiving the free and open hearing that they deserve. We don't think that is right or fair, so our proposal extends privilege to cases where these communications were reported, in the media or otherwise.

It has been said that healthy public discussions are a cornerstone of a healthy, well-functioning democracy. That's why it's important that discussions should not be hindered by the arrival of a reporter with a microphone or a local blogger with his or her smartphone in hand. Rather, these people should—most times—be welcomed in those kinds of discussions. I'm very glad that, with this

bill, we can support our province's strongly held democratic values, even in a seemingly very small way.

0920

The Statutory Powers Procedure Act is going to be amended as well, if this bill is adopted. Our proposed bill provides for a change to the law governing regulatory boards and administrative tribunals. Under the current law, administrative tribunals, of which we have many in this province, may hold hearings to determine if one party should pay the other party's legal costs after a case has been decided. Now, these hearings could be conducted in person, which can sometimes be very lengthy and costly for all involved, especially for vulnerable parties. It is not unknown for these kinds of discussions to take longer than the court cases or the administrative tribunals themselves. Our proposed change would allow parties to make their arguments about how costs should be awarded in written submission to the tribunal. This would help result in faster decisions. All parties would be allowed to make written submissions with respect to the issue of costs. Like the proposed fast-track review process, it is our hope that this provision would encourage cases to be dealt with more quickly, contributing to a more efficient justice system that makes the best possible use of our public resources.

This has been just a high-level overview of some of the complex legal issues and considerations the panel addressed as it formed its recommendations. However, I think it's quite fitting that a report about how to protect freedom of expression would itself be subject to a healthy debate, and it has been. It's our view, Speaker, from reviewing the report from the advisory panel, we firmly believe that they've got it right for the people of Ontario. The resulting bill proposes to change the law in order to ensure this balance, and in doing so would help to resolve what we see is a serious imbalance.

Today, I would like this opportunity to once again thank the panel members for their hard work and commitment to their task. But I would also like to thank the dozens of individuals and groups who provided their input to the panel, as well as those who have provided further feedback on the report to the ministry since the report was submitted. All of those contributions have given shape to the bill that we see before us today. I would further like to thank the many individuals and organizations who have come forward to endorse the panel's recommendations for our bill. So far, there have been 142 organizations in this country already, from the Council of Canadians to the David Suzuki Foundation, to name but a few—and I could go on and list the entire list here, Speaker, of 142 different organizations.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Go ahead. I think you should list them.

Hon. John Gerretsen: You think I should list them. Well, we want to get this bill through to House as quickly as possible, because we've also been very encouraged by the positive comments that have been made by the critic for the Conservative Party and the critic for the New

Democratic Party, as well as other members in this House.

Throughout the process of developing and proposing the bill, we've also received support from numerous groups and individuals with a keen interest in the preservation of human rights and democratic freedoms. I will just quote a few more, for the Minister of the Environment and others in the House. PEN Canada, in a news release issued immediately upon hearing the bill's introduction, stated that the proposed measures would "provide a useful economical way to reduce the incidence of lawsuits which have an undue adverse impact on public participation." We value public participation in our democratic institutions.

Let me make it clear that support for the panel's recommendations and our bill is not just limited to academics and advocates of those who are traditionally the subject of strategic lawsuits. We've also heard from a number of municipal leaders, as well as many people in the legal community, such as the Ontario Bar Association and the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association, as well as leaders among the judiciary who recognize our proposal as sound—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Don Valley East, I can hear you over the speaker, almost.

Hon. John Gerretsen: This is very, very important for all the members of the House. This is all about making sure that our democratic institutions, of which we all can be proud, are valued by the people of Ontario and by the people in this Legislature. I recognize your intervention there, Speaker, in making sure that the members listen attentively to what is being said today, and as we will listen to others as well on this issue.

But there have been leaders from the judiciary as well. Recently, I received a letter, and I just want to quote from it. A letter from the Honourable Roy McMurtry—amongst others—a long-time Chief Justice of the province of Ontario, a long-serving Attorney General of this province. I believe, as a matter of fact, he's the second-longest serving Attorney General in this province, the longest-serving being Sir Oliver Mowat, who served in this capacity for 23 years, which is a tough record to—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. McMurtry has a new book out.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Yes.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I purchased it last night.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Mr. McMurtry has just penned a book which is called, I believe, *Memoirs and Reflections*. I'm in the process of reading it as well, but I digress.

I received a letter near the end of November of last year signed by the Honourable Ian Binnie and the Honourable Frank Iacobucci, both members of the Supreme Court of Canada; the Honourable Coulter Osborne, who served in the capacity as our Integrity Commissioner, amongst other things; and the Honourable Roy

McMurtry. Let me just tell you what they told me in a very, very simple letter:

"We are writing to you concerning the issue of strategic lawsuits against public participation...."

"Each of us"—each of these four eminent judges—"has served in a senior capacity in the Canadian judiciary and has considerable experience in the operation of the civil justice system in Ontario.

"We are concerned regarding the continuing presence of meritless lawsuits that have a chilling effect on citizen engagement in matters of public interest. These SLAPP suits"—as they're commonly called—"impede the right of citizens to participate in public decision-making processes, frustrate the proper operation of our court system and expose SLAPP defendants to unnecessary financial and emotional costs.

"There needs to be effective anti-SLAPP legislation in Ontario. Having reviewed the report of the expert advisory panel convened by your predecessor, Chris Bentley, we support its recommendations. The report provides the basis for an effective anti-SLAPP law, which would provide necessary safeguards against SLAPPs and reduce their adverse impact on public participation in Ontario.

"We support the adoption of the expert panel's recommendations and urge the Ontario government to act on this issue."

It's signed by the Honourable Ian Binnie, the Honourable Frank Iacobucci, the Honourable Roy McMurtry and the Honourable Coulter Osborne. Very plain. These are individuals who have served this country, this province, extremely well in various capacities, including judiciary capacities. They've seen it happen in their courts. They are saying we should be taking this action.

Also, the Ontario Bar Association has stated that, "Public confidence depends on the ability of our justice system to operate efficiently and to enhance democratic principles. Both of these goals are threatened by the bad-faith litigation that this new legislation is designed to curb. We commend the government for introducing the Protection of Public Participation Act." That was when it was introduced, in June of this year.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed Protection of Public Participation Act contains many important provisions that support our goal of building a fair society. We are creating faster, more efficient civil processes that provide greater clarity for the parties involved. It's a time-limited decision that's going to be made in these cases. We're addressing abusive lawsuits that can waste everyone's time and tie up valuable court resources. We're protecting freedom of expression and public participation, and that is the essence of this bill. But we're also safeguarding reputations, we're protecting economic interests, we're promoting greater access to justice and, as a result, we are building a stronger justice system.

0930

Our bill supports some of our most cherished values of people living in a free and democratic society—our most cherished values as Ontarians and Canadians. So today,

I'm very encouraged with the comments that I've heard so far from the members of the opposition of both parties—positive comments. I urge all members to stand together to support these freedoms and values by supporting our proposed bill, to pass it through this Legislature after having a thorough debate on it, send it to committee—there are always possibilities of making amendments to make the bill better still—and let's put it into practice as soon as possible so the people of Ontario will be the better for it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to continue debate on the proposed Protection of Public Participation Act.

As you heard just a moment ago, this bill, if passed, would defend public expression and encourage debate on matters of public interest while protecting reputation and economic interests. As the Attorney General explained, this bill has three major components, which would require amendments to three laws: the Libel and Slander Act, the Statutory Powers Procedure Act and, most significantly, the Courts of Justice Act.

First, the Libel and Slander Act provisions address a gap in libel law that can deter, or at least greatly curtail, frank conversations about matters of public interest. Next, a change to the law governing regulatory boards and administrative tribunals would allow parties to make their arguments about how legal costs should be awarded in written submissions and should help result in faster decisions. Finally, the introduction of a three-part test would help our courts quickly identify and deal with strategic lawsuits. Together, these amendments provide a made-in-Ontario solution to protecting free and open debate on matters of public importance while at the same time improving court processes and addressing abusive lawsuits.

Mr. Speaker, the Attorney General has described this bill as a made-in-Ontario approach to addressing the problem of strategic lawsuits. Certainly, in developing the bill we looked at the experiences of other jurisdictions to see if their laws might provide an appropriate model for Ontario, and our expert advisory panel reviewed the prior and current Canadian legislation in the area, as well as relevant law from jurisdictions around the world, particularly Quebec, Australia and several US states. It was the panel's opinion that its proposals would fit best with existing Ontario practices and laws. In other words, only a unique approach crafted by and for Ontarians would do. That's precisely what the panel has done.

After extensive research compiled by the ministry of the Attorney General and hearing nearly 40 written and oral submissions from representatives of the legal community and advocacy groups, the panel submitted a number of recommendations which are comprehensively reflected in our bill.

These recommendations were not arrived at easily, and I commend the panelists for the excellent job they

did in tackling the many complex issues we tasked them with addressing. For example, many have argued that the bill should include a new legal right of public participation. This new right would be at the heart of the motion to dismiss alleged abusive action. On the good advice of our panel, our bill relies on the concept of matters of public interest—"matters of public interest" is the key—a subject which our courts are frequently called upon to consider. For example, recently the Supreme Court of Canada used the concept of public interest in deciding cases about the extent of freedom of expression, which, as the members know, is precisely the kind of question this bill poses.

We agree that a fast-track review process for determining whether lawsuits are strategic or legitimate complaints will work far better and faster if it relies on known principles of law.

Some also argued that the bill should create a separate right to damages for starting such actions, rather than just giving the court discretion to award them. The government wants to reduce the number of lawsuits, not increase them. The question of damages can be properly dealt with as part of the motion to dismiss the lawsuit if the lawsuit record clearly shows an abusive intention. The court hearing the motion can call for further evidence of damages if that is appropriate, as well, without requiring a separate lawsuit on the point.

Interestingly, while proponents of the new right to participation often say that Ontario's law doesn't go far enough, on the opposite end of the spectrum, we have also heard that our approach goes too far. It has been suggested, for example, that the bill upsets the balance of carefully well-crafted laws by which our legal system has weighted competing interests over the years. With respect, the government does not agree with the argument that the current law properly balances the relevant interests. That is why our proposed legislation sets out to deliberately change that balance.

As the Attorney General has pointed out, the bill intends to improve the balance of freedom of expression in matters of public interest with the rights of plaintiffs who, at present, can far too easily rely on the technicalities of libel law and the cost of litigation to suppress public debate. For example, the current law simply presumes that a plaintiff who is defamed suffers harm. What this means is that the plaintiff doesn't need to demonstrate any actual or expected damage as a result of public expression. When it comes to discussion in matters of public interest, this is hardly appropriate. Our Courts of Justice Act amendments would change that rule.

Importantly, the bill would not prevent people or businesses who have been seriously harmed by defamation from getting a remedy through the courts. As the Attorney General remarked earlier, we recognize the value of reputation and want to see it protected. We don't want to see anyone unfairly criticized in a public forum. The panel was equally clear on that point. In proposing these amendments, our government is simply trying to ensure

that there is a speedy and economical method of deciding if the case is actually about such harm. This is about levelling the playing field for defendants, who are all too often at a distinct disadvantage.

The same critics have also said that the bill's rule that a court must balance the harm done against the value of freedom of expression about the public interest is too difficult or too abstract. However, Ontario courts on their own have developed exactly that test in deciding when plaintiffs in defamation cases can compel disclosure of the names of people who have published statements anonymously online. In other words, the courts have the experience to make such decisions. The bill gives them another opportunity to do so.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to highlight another argument that has been raised regarding the proposed change to the law of qualified privilege and how the bill would change it. Some critics have thought that this amendment makes it open season on public figures, in the way that American law does. There is nothing in this bill that would have that effect. What the bill aims to do is reverse a particularly narrow court ruling that has set the law for over 50 years and reduce the risk associated with communications among people who have a direct interest in a public issue.

0940

Mr. Speaker, two years ago our government commissioned a panel of experts to study a new phenomenon in our court system. The panel studied the issue at length, consulting with a wide range of experts, both within Ontario and abroad. In the end, the panel concluded that strategic lawsuits are indeed a problem in Ontario, deterring people from speaking out on matters of public interest. Their report called for the government to take action, and it showed us the best approach in doing so.

Over the past two years, the Ministry of the Attorney General has carefully studied the panel's recommendations, along with the submissions of individuals and organizations that have engaged with us directly on this matter.

The bill you have before you today is a reflection of that collaboration and of years of hard work. It is a bill that balances the interests of both plaintiffs and defendants. It's a practical approach that builds upon the strength of our existing laws and knowledge as well as the lessons learned by other jurisdictions.

It is a proposed course of action that we hope will bring about positive, meaningful change for those who find themselves on the receiving end of unfair lawsuits. In the words of Dr. Mayo Moran, chair of the advisory panel, it's a bill that will support democracy by creating "conditions for a robust debate on issues of public importance."

Finally, by allowing our government to tackle the problem of abuse of process in our courts, it's a way to make our courts more efficient and our justice system work better for all.

I also take heart with the statements of my opposition colleagues in this House. As the member for Dufferin-

Caledon stated on June 4, "So I'm pleased that the Attorney General has taken some action on this. Public participation is the foundation of a healthy democracy, and the reality is that people should not have to fear the threat of lawsuits to voice their concerns." And as the member for Bramalea—Gore—Malton stated the same day, when the bill was first introduced, "Mr. Speaker, this is a vital, important piece of legislation."

In conclusion, I urge all members of this House to support this very important bill. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me an opportunity to speak on this.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: A pleasure to speak to the bill. We do support it, as our critic from Dufferin—Caledon has said.

I want to talk about something a little different this morning; I hope the members will indulge me. Today—September 25, 2013—is the 50th anniversary of the day that my father was elected to this chamber in 1963, as the first person of Polish descent to be elected to the Legislature. I can say the obvious: that I wouldn't be here without my father—on the face of this Earth—but I certainly wouldn't be here in this chamber without the work that he did before me, and I never would have been elected, for certain.

During my first campaign, it was clear to me that the affection that people had for my father in the 24 years that he served here—and he did serve until the date of his death, July 31, 1987, the day that David Peterson called the election at that time. In my first campaign, I heard first-hand stories about how people had worked with my father and respected him and the things that he had done. I still hear that, 10 years later—almost 10 years as an elected member. I hear stories every day about how he worked for the ordinary people and the compassion he showed for the problems that they had in their lives.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I am extremely fortunate, and I hope that he's watching, and I hope that in some ways he is approving a little bit of the small way that I'm trying to measure up to the work that he did. You know, I have my heroes in life. I have my sports heroes, people I've followed all my life, but my real hero is my father. So today, I'm proud to speak on his 50th anniversary of being elected. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from Parkdale—High Park—and can I ask the member from Timmins—James Bay to keep it down a bit, please.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I just want to commend the Attorney General and his parliamentary assistant for bringing in this bill. Certainly we are in support of it. I think it's something that has been desperately needed by this province for a very long time. I would say that with one small caveat, and that is that credit should have been given to our leader, Andrea Horwath, who first intro-

duced the bill a couple of years ago. Just to set the record straight on that. Always give women credit where women deserve it, so thank you—and all people, for that matter.

I also want to mention something else, and that is that I hope that this bill, even before it's passed—because we know that takes a while—has an effect on what's going on right now. The one instance I'm thinking of is Marineland, where some young trainers are being sued in what can only be described as a classic SLAPP suit, because they spoke out about conditions at Marineland. I know they're watching, and I know they're heralding this day that anti-SLAPP legislation is being introduced. I know, and I hope, it will help them in their endeavours for justice, because truly, we should be protecting those who speak the truth, who speak out and who pay the price for it. They've been fired. That's already too much. But to then be sued is really to add injustice to injustice, and that's what this bill hopes to address.

I couldn't be more supportive. I'm very glad to see this day finally come in the province of Ontario. I think there are many defendants out there who are equally glad to see it come, and I absolutely hope that it has the effect that it intends, not only on future cases but even on those that are before the courts at the moment. Thank goodness we have the freedom to say such things in this House, so I'm going to take this freedom and say such things. I thank, again, the Attorney General for doing what he's done, and his parliamentary assistant.

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I also want to start by thanking the Attorney General for putting forward the Protection of Public Participation Act. I am very happy to see this. This is a piece of legislation that I worked on, along with my community of Ottawa Centre, for about a year, and last October 15 I tabled Bill 132—same name, Protection of Public Participation Act—putting in place the expert panel report recommendations. I had a great opportunity to work with the Attorney General and his office in the meantime, after the bill was tabled, and I'm grateful to him and to the government for bringing forward the bill, which is very similar to what I had tabled in the Legislature.

Of course, the work that I did was not on my own. There were a lot of good people who helped me develop that bill, especially coming from my community: people like Albert Gelpin, who lives in my riding and who actually was a victim of a SLAPP suit and fought it off successfully. Albert was the first person who brought this to my attention. The Hintonburg Community Association and Jeff Leiper, the president, in particular, were very instrumental, along with Don Stewart from the federation of community associations, who helped me and backed me in that endeavour. I also want to thank Hugh Wilkins and Will Amos of Ecojustice for their hard work, and Ramani Nadarajah of the Canadian Environmental Law Association for their advocacy and assistance as we did the research, we developed the bill and got it drafted with

the stakeholder conversations and consultations that resulted in Bill 132, that I tabled last year.

I'm very excited that this debate is taking place in terms of making sure that our citizens and community associations can openly speak on issues of public interest, and I look forward to, when I get an opportunity, speaking for at least 20 minutes on this very important bill and why it's important for the province of Ontario.

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

0950

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Of course, the PC Party supports the idea of public participation and public expression in the public interest. That is the basis of our democracy and the basis of everything we stand for in this country: that individuals can stand up and speak to issues that they feel are a problem for our society.

To have them struck with SLAPP suits, as they're called, is an abuse of the justice process, abuse of the court system, abuse of the law. It's plugging up our courts, and, of course, we would be totally opposed to that. People are waiting far too long to get through the courts with very legitimate cases, and to have frivolous things like this, which are just meant to hurt people, stall people for no legitimate reason, we are totally opposed to.

So it would seem this has been studied very thoroughly, it has been a problem for a long time and it's a worthy piece of legislation that, in principle, we support.

Having said that, I would be very concerned if this was used to hurt people, still, and prevent true slanders from happening. One of these three examples here in our notes is the Big Bay Point development. It would appear there is a legitimate reason to feel that the company may have been slandered by a private environmental group, and yet some people are referring to that as a SLAPP.

So if there's legitimate slander, we want the court system to work and to be able to be used to sue the people who are committing a legitimate slander. That is justice. That's what the courts are meant for, and we would not want anything to interfere with justice happening.

Other than that, Mr. Speaker, I would say that we just have to be cautious and make sure that justice is still what we want to pursue, and we don't want to abuse people's rights to not be able to sue if they are slandered.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Attorney General has two minutes.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'd like to thank all the members for their very positive comments. Normally, of course, we like to stick to the subject at all times in comments, and in questions as well, but I would just like to pay tribute to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke area and the tribute that he gave to his father for being elected 50 years ago. We are all shaped by our parents in one way or another, and it's quite obvious that the effect that his father had on him from having served here for 24 years has served the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke very, very well.

The essence of this legislation is this: If there isn't feeling by a defendant that it's what's commonly referred to as a SLAPP lawsuit, that within 60 days that individual can make an application to the court and a determination will be made within that 60 days. If the tests that we talked about and that we've outlined—and that the parliamentary assistant has outlined—are not met, well then the lawsuit proceeds, and that's just in comment to the member from Lanark–Carleton's comments.

There may still be situations where this goes on, where the lawsuit will go on if the test is not met—the three-part test—and that is really the prime consideration of the bill.

The underlying principle is that people should have the right to express their views on matters that are of a public interest. That is the foundation of our democratic principles, the foundation of the values that we hold in this province. That's really what we're trying to protect in this particular case, Speaker.

I'm very pleased that this bill seems to have the support of all members of the House, so I would just urge everyone to get on with it. Let's give it second reading, send it to committee, have it come back here for third reading and implement it.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: While we have shown interest in supporting Bill 83—not so fast. I think we still do need to debate it a little bit.

You know, in this chamber, we have a rather unique ability to say whatever we want about whomever we want—parliamentary privilege. As soon as we walk out these doors, we don't have that same ability. We are open to slander. But in here, we can say—and some people often do—whatever we want about individuals.

The general public does not have that same privilege, and I think what's coming forward with Bill 83, the Protection of Public Participation Act, is going to give some comfort to the public, who want to make sure their voices are heard, who want to participate in things that are happening within their community, and we need to allow that. That's, I believe, the essence of why we're bringing forward Bill 83 and why we want to talk about it today.

It is my honour, as the Progressive Conservative Attorney General, to join in this debate of government Bill 83, the Protection of Public Participation Act, 2013. I will give credit where credit is due. This actually first came forward as a private member's bill idea from the Minister of Labour—at that point, the member from Ottawa Centre. It was based on some good research, good facts, and it's nice to see that it has transferred from a private member's bill into a government bill.

Miss Monique Taylor: It was Andrea Horwath, a private member's bill in 2008.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Okay. You can talk about that as well. Thank you for the correction. I understand that it has also come forward from the NDP caucus.

Let me start by saying that the Attorney General has made some good points in his presentation. For my part, I'd like to take some of my time going over past cases that are commonly pointed out as examples of SLAPPs—SLAPP, of course, being a short form that you'll hear a lot during this debate: strategic litigation against public participation. Going over specific examples of SLAPPs, or at least what are commonly accepted as examples of SLAPPs, is extremely beneficial because it allows us and our constituents to understand just what it is we are really discussing here with this bill. I know that when I've spoken about this issue with people before, it's often one that gets a little convoluted. To be honest, it all seems rather legal and may be trivial to the average person. But that's why it is important to reflect on some specific SLAPP examples because it puts into context the issue and allows us to see the human side of what happens during a SLAPP. When we debate these things in the legal lexicon, it can often become muddled and abstract, and I'm saying that as a non-lawyer. But when we focus on specific examples and specific people, that's when we can truly start to see what a difference this legislation can make.

I also think it's important for our constituents and the people watching at home to know how SLAPPs typically come about so that they are aware of what a SLAPP is and when or how to recognize them. That's why I will be using some of my time to reflect on past SLAPP cases and their various effects and ultimately their motivation. I also intend to cover the bill itself and then analyze how the measures contained within Bill 83 match or don't match with the problems demonstrated by the examples I intend to go over. Some of these cases, as you will see, are quite daunting, and the fact of the matter is that we need to make sure this legislation is capable of doing what it is meant to accomplish, because no Ontario resident should have to choose between having a say about something that is happening within their community or risk being sued into financial ruin. Finally, I will conclude by summarizing why SLAPPs should absolutely be stopped from occurring, and that's why this legislation should be supported by all members in this chamber.

This government bill was introduced just before the summer recess and has been somewhat of a long time coming. You see, Bill 83 actually stems from the Anti-SLAPP Advisory Panel, which submitted its final report to the Attorney General in October 2010. No one can ever argue that we rush things through here in the parliamentary process. Of course, that's what we are really talking about here today. A SLAPP is a lawsuit that's brought against an individual for the primary purpose of silencing that individual's opinion. SLAPPs are almost always some form of libel or slander allegation and almost always are for unrealistic and unreasonable amounts of damages. You see, though, that's the point of the SLAPP: not to win the lawsuit—because many of them actually never get to appear in the courts—but rather to scare the defendant so that they dare not speak out against the claimant again.

The reason this is particularly problematic, however, aside from a gross misuse and waste of taxpayers' dollars by needlessly clogging down our justice system, is because it's not only an injustice to the defendant but also to the community. And if there is one thing I think we can all agree on, it is that there are way too many backlog happening—

Interjection.

1000

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): If the member from James Bay wants to hold court, he might want to go outside in the lobby, because I'm having trouble hearing the member speaking. It's that loud. Your voice is carrying.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): And, I might add, it's the last warning.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thanks, Speaker.

The reason we have to deal with this is that there are a lot of reasons why our court system is clogged right now. If we can remove this and expedite SLAPPs, that's going to help us in other ways to free up some court time.

It's because the community's planning procedures are manipulated, because community members who could have had valuable contributions to make are instead intimidated out of commenting on proposals. The end result is a community planning process without the community involvement. This is an entirely undesirable situation, Speaker.

That being said, we typically think SLAPPs involve developers and residents, yet there are a number of examples where this is not the case. But I will get into that in a bit further detail later on.

For now, going into a discussion on past SLAPPs, please bear in mind that the key factor here is whether the lawsuit's prime function is either to prevent someone from participating in a public process or to punish them for doing so. That is a certain principle that's important when discussing SLAPPs: that an individual has had their right to express their opinion severely limited due to coercion.

I would now like to move on and discuss three different SLAPPs and how each of them are both unique from, and identical to, one another. They are unique from each other because each of them involves a different type of claimant pursuing the SLAPP. They are identical with one another, however, in that in each case the claimant has clearly pursued litigation for the purpose of silencing or punishing the defendant. It is this second point that primarily qualifies each of them as a SLAPP. In all the cases I'm about to discuss, however, I'm not going to refer to either of the litigants by their names, and I don't believe it's relevant for the purposes of our debate here on Bill 83. These cases are simply to illustrate SLAPPs, not to consider the particular individuals involved. As such, I will try to refer to the party bringing forward the SLAPP as the claimant and the party the SLAPP is being used against as the defendant, for the non-lawyers in the room.

The first SLAPP I would like to discuss actually occurred in British Columbia. This SLAPP arose from the following context. The claimant wanted to convert his land, which was forested, into farmland. To do this, however, he had to find and add approximately 750,000 cubic metres of soil to his property to properly level it out so it would be suitable for farming. In order to do this, he of course needed a permit from the local municipality, so in October 2009, he submitted a permit application to his local township.

Now, the defendant in this case owns land very near the claimant's property. When the defendant became aware of the claimant's permit application, she became quite concerned about a possible negative impact on the streams that flowed through his land. The defendant also happened to be a member of a local organization whose mission is to protect and enhance the integrity of the watersheds in the area. So the defendant decided to take action against the claimant's permit application.

Consequently, the defendant and the local water preservation organization she was part of both began speaking out against the claimant's desired permit. The organization came out with written material opposing the permit, and the defendant produced a report outlining the potential damage that the claimant's permit may cause to the local watershed. There was also a meeting held where the defendant spoke about her objections to the claimant's permit application and her concern for the wider region.

In light of all of these developments, the local township decided to put the claimant's permit application on hold. The township argued that it needed more time to study and measure the environmental impact of the application.

On September 1, 2010, two weeks before the township placed the permit on hold, however, the claimant sued the defendant, the organization with which she was involved, and one other individual, claiming \$13 million in damage against all three. The claim against the individual herself was for \$5.5 million. The defendant's lawyer soon advised the claimant via letter that his lawsuit was bound to fail because it disclosed no viable cause of action. In essence, the claimant had no case, as there were no facts to support his lawsuit.

On February 19, 2011, the defendant even offered to pay the claimant \$2,000 in full settlement for his claim, but to no avail.

The claimant made serious allegations against the defendant, including that she had made unfounded and false statements to local residents about his permit application. The claimant argued that this was done for the purpose of gathering signatures on a petition opposing his application, and for the purpose of intentionally harming him.

Speaker, we are all in this chamber very familiar with the use of petitions opposing and supporting activities that happen within the provincial government. The same thing occurs at our municipal level, and to somehow suggest that we would like to freeze the ability of com-

munity members to seek out and get petitions in support or opposition of a particular change is, I hope, pretty offensive to all of us.

He also alleged that the defendant organized public meetings only to spread false information about his permit application and that the defendant made false statements about the permit to the local member of the provincial Legislature. Again, we're all pretty used to and comfortable with attending public meetings on specific issues. We have to ensure that that public involvement can continue.

The claimant also argued that the defendant endangered the public by using a low-flying aircraft to photograph him and acted maliciously by making false statements to make him lose his farming career. All in all, the claimant basically argued that the defendant defamed him and conspired to injure him and his property. The claimant also made similar allegations about the local water preservation organization.

So, to recount: An individual, the claimant, sought to obtain a permit to alter their property, and their neighbour, the defendant, objected to this alteration on the basis that it would have a negative effect on the larger area and the community. Clearly, this is an example of an individual staying involved in their community and trying to participate in its growth and development. In other words, this is clearly an individual participating in a public matter; namely, whether or not the claimant's proposed alterations would have had an effect on the larger area the public inhabits. Ultimately, that's why we ask for permits and that's why we have that involvement, because we want people to participate and comment.

Thus, by undertaking such vigorous and overwhelming legal action in response to this, the claimant has already partially demonstrated this case to be a SLAPP, as one could conceivably argue that the claimant is attempting to punish the defendant via the lawsuit.

What further demonstrates this to be a SLAPP, however, is the claimant's clear lack of interest in actually pursuing the case as a legitimate legal matter. For example, when the defendant brought an application to dismiss the claimant's lawsuit and provided notice to the claimant, he did not attend the hearing. I guess at that point it wasn't important enough to him. That being said, all the material the claimant filed with the court was still considered, even though he did not show up.

What the judge determined was that the claimant had provided no evidence of his allegations against the defendant. The judge eventually concluded that the claimant had merely asserted what he believed had occurred, with no evidence to support his claims. The judge determined that not only had the defendant not acted maliciously or intended to harm the claimant, but was instead merely exercising her right of free speech to disagree with the claimant's permit application. As a result, the defendant was naturally voicing her opposition to the permit application and had done nothing unlawful whatsoever. Clearly, there can be no mistaking this for anything short of a prototype SLAPP.

1010

To demonstrate the negative effect that SLAPPs can have, however, consider the fallout from this one example that I have highlighted here today. As a result of the SLAPP brought against her and the ordeal she went through fighting it, the defendant ended her community involvement out of fear that she may again be a target for another SLAPP. She stopped attending the water preservation organization meetings and stopped participating in other environmental causes. Furthermore, she no longer gave advice to her neighbours on similar issues, and discontinued her volunteer work.

Just think of the negative impact this SLAPP caused the defendant, Speaker, to say nothing of what the community lost in having that volunteer participate. You know, here we have an extremely engaged citizen, who is concerned about her neighbours and her community's well-being, and thanks to a SLAPP she is totally shell-shocked into forgoing all future efforts to improve her community. I think it says a lot about the kind of damage SLAPPs can ultimately cause. The defendant ended up paying over \$20,000 in legal fees and over \$4,000 in disbursements due to this SLAPP, all because she wanted to be involved in a community's development. And that is just the individual defendant in this case.

When it comes to the organization she was involved with, the damage is, respectively, just as bad. The SLAPP had a severe negative impact on the work of the organization, as all of its time had been spent on defending the lawsuit. There was little time and resources left to devote to organizing other activities or initiatives. The SLAPP basically silenced the organization, as it did not speak out against the claimant's permit application from the moment the SLAPP was filed. That's why we sometimes hear of SLAPPs or the lawyer's letter as litigation chill: It essentially puts the fear of the litigation to stop you from participating.

Unfortunately, as a result of this litigation, the organization was forced to consider ceasing operations altogether once the SLAPP had been settled. Directors at the organization were forced to buy public liability insurance, at a significant cost, out of fear that they may again be the victim of lawsuits in response to their public participation in government decision-making processes. Eventually, on May 25, 2011, the claimant's claim was dismissed, with costs awarded to the defendants.

Speaker, this is the epitome of a SLAPP: long—remember, I said this was over two years in process—fruitless, expensive and highly damaging. This legal action was clearly brought forward to limit the defendant's ability and desire to participate in public matters. This is an example of a private individual pursuing a SLAPP against another private individual. Again, it is for the same reason as the next two examples: limiting or stopping public participation. But it differs in that here we had one private individual bringing a SLAPP against another private individual, whereas next I will discuss a SLAPP where an elected official with the power of a municipality and the money connected to it brought a

SLAPP against people for the sole purpose of silencing their criticism of her.

This next example, Speaker, is quite concerning, as an elected official, and I think we all have to be aware of the implications. It offers perhaps the most startling but also clear case of a SLAPP example that I will discuss here today. In this case, the claimant was the mayor of an Ontario town, and the defendants were members of the town's news media. One of them was also a former councillor with the town. In essence, one of the defendants, also known for commenting on the town's municipal issues, frequently wrote articles dealing with municipal issues as a recurring column that was published on the Internet or a local website focused on current events in town. I'm sure all of us have examples of individuals who do this. In my own community, the Orangeville Banner has two different individuals who write semi-weekly columns commenting on municipal, federal and provincial affairs. I happen to quite enjoy Doug Harkness's columns. He is a good friend and tends to see the world through my view. The second is Rob Strang, also a very knowledgeable—

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A point of order, the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, first I apologize to the member. I'm just getting up because it's almost 10:15.

I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding today's routine proceedings.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, during routine proceedings today, reports by committees be taken following petitions, and that the House be authorized to meet beyond its normal hours of adjournment until completion of third reading debate on Bill 95, at which time the Speaker shall adjourn the House to the next sessional day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Milloy has moved a motion regarding routine proceedings this afternoon. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It is now 10:15. This House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Steve Clark: On behalf of our exceptional page from Leeds-Grenville, Peyton Horning, I would like to introduce, in the west members' gallery, her mother,

Alexandra Prefasi-Horning, and her dad, Paul Horning, who is celebrating his birthday watching question period. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Community Safety and francophone affairs, on a point of order.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I believe that we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear the lapel pin, the Franco-Ontarian flag pin, in recognition of Franco-Ontarian Day today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister responsible for francophone affairs has asked for unanimous consent to wear the pins today. Do we agree? Agreed.

The member from Elgin-Middlesex-London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Today I'd like to introduce a guest from the Aylmer area: Eric Loewen. Eric ran for the Green Party in the last election. I'm pretty sure he's going to run against me again, but welcome to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That was nice.

The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to acknowledge two of my constituents, rather interesting people: Professor John Traill and his daughter, Corinna Traill, who is actually a member of council in the community of Clarington.

Mr. Rob Leone: I know they're a little late getting into the Legislature today, but I want to welcome folks from Career Colleges Ontario who are here at Queen's Park meeting members today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: I'm pleased to introduce Abbas Homayed. Abbas is with the Ontario Community Newspapers Association. Abbas and his wife, Patricia Mills, define excellence in community papers. The name of the paper is the Northern Life. I suggest that we all read it. I want to thank and welcome Abbas to the House.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'd like to welcome to the House today a constituent of mine, Sal Gelsomino, from Napanee, as well as Karen Somerville from the association for Canadians for Properly Built Homes.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd also like to acknowledge a friend of mine and a friend of my son's—his name is Tim Patriquin—who has served Canada well in the armed forces of Canada.

Hon. David Zimmer: I would like to introduce the parents of page Katherine Tom, the page from Willowdale: her father, Christopher Tom, and mother, Julie Tom.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'd like to welcome the representatives from the Ontario Community Newspapers Association who are here at Queen's Park today. There's a reception this evening, and I would invite all the members of the Legislature to attend that reception.

Hon. Brad Duguid: On their way into the Legislature are a number of representatives from Career Colleges Ontario who are here to visit with us today. Executive Director Paul Kitchin is leading them, and of course, a good friend of all of us, John Nunziata, is their representative here as well. They'll be here any minute.

M. Tim Hudak: Je veux introduire aujourd’hui le président de l’Assemblée de la francophonie de l’Ontario, M. Denis Vaillancourt; le directeur général, M. Peter Hominuk; et M. Benjamin Vachet, conseiller en communications et relations publiques. S’il vous plaît, souhaitez-leur la bienvenue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Today in the Speaker’s gallery we have the former member for Elgin–Middlesex–London in the 37th, 38th and 39th Parliament and Speaker in the 39th Parliament, Mr. Steve Peters.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I just want the former Speaker to know that there’s a cry for the other Joe, my other brother.

Accompanying Mr. Peters is Isabel Dopta, from Guelph. Welcome.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yesterday, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke asked for some clarification of a directive from me to withdraw certain language and to comment on another issue. The member indicated that his use of the full name of the Premier should have been allowed in the context of referring to the government.

First, let me be clear on one point as it relates to the other. The withdrawal I sought—and this is clarification—from the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke did not relate to the use of the proper name so much as to the language that followed, which is considered in most cases to be unparliamentary. We discussed that. The use of the proper name in the lead-up to the use of this language left the impression that the subsequent accusation was directed at the individual member. In short, in my mind the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke said something indirectly that he was prohibited from saying directly. Therein is the danger of using proper names.

Members should not refer to one another by name, but rather by title, position or constituency name. As stated in O’Brien and Bosc, the reason for this is “to guard against the tendency to personalize debate.”

When a member is referring to a particular administration as a collective, we have a practice of permitting the Premier’s surname to be attached, as in “the Davis government” or “the McGuinty government.” This exception stops short, though, of including given names. The proper reference to this current government, therefore, should be “the Wynne government,” if it’s going to be used.

In the interest of civil discourse and to guard against personal attacks, I seek the co-operation of all members in this regard. Thank you for your co-operation.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TEACHERS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, when the Teacher of the Year can’t get a job because he finds himself 800th on the seniority list as a result of the new Liberal hiring policy, regulation 274, doesn’t that tell you that something has gone badly off the rails when it comes to teacher hiring in our province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Education will want to comment in the supplementary, but I just want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for raising the issue. I know that it is of concern, and we have heard those concerns, absolutely. I know that the Minister of Education has a working group in place to look at what changes we might be able to make. We’re open to that, Mr. Speaker. We’ve said all along that as we’ve heard these concerns, we’re taking them seriously and we want to do what we can to make it right.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, it’s not time for another committee; it’s time for some action. This is pretty basic. It’s very straightforward. We all care, as parents—I know you do. You want to make sure that your kids, and now your grandchildren, will have the best possible teacher in the classroom. My daughter Miller has been blessed to have that. My dad is a retired principal, and I spoke to my dad about this. He would always look for the teacher who was going to bring the most to the job—the right qualifications; they were going to coach the hockey team; do drama; they brought life experience to the table.

1040

I, as a parent, have a lot of confidence in principals. They make the right decisions for the school. That’s the way it’s always worked. Under regulation 274—under this Liberal government under your leadership—that’s been tossed out the window and now they’re hired strictly on the basis of seniority. Clearly, as a parent and grandparent, you would agree that this is not in the best interests of our kids.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You know, I haven’t seen the proposed bill, so I don’t know exactly what it will say. But it’s really important to me and to us that Ontario’s teachers have a fair and consistent hiring practice and process across school boards. That kind of consistency and that kind of predictability is very, very important. Last year, we heard from teachers that that wasn’t the case.

The reality is, you know, that the regulation ensures that teaching candidates are chosen by a number of criteria, not just seniority. They can go beyond seniority.

But to go back to my original comment, I recognize that there are concerns, Mr. Speaker. I recognize that there may have been an overcorrection in terms of some of the issues that had been brought forward. That’s why there is a working group in place. The Minister of Education and we are open to making changes. We acknow-

ledge that there are concerns, and we will do everything in our power to make sure we get it right.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: To the Premier again: This is not a time for waffling; it's not a time to study the issue. It's a time for action. I have yet to find a person, aside from maybe a teacher union head, who thinks this is appropriate for our kids.

Let me tell you a bit about Jason Trinh. Jason Trinh is the kind of teacher my dad would have hired at Lakeshore Catholic—I do want to say that that school, Lakeshore Catholic in Port Colborne, the school my dad began, celebrated its 25th anniversary this past weekend. I'm proud of that, and I'm proud of what he did. He hired teachers who then rose up the ranks. Some became principals themselves, vice-principals, leaders of the community.

Interjections.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Jason Trinh is an impressive young man. He has his master's in molecular biology. He was actually given the Premier's New Teacher of the Year Award for what he did to inspire in his students a love for science, and brought in a new camp as well to get kids to improve their grades in grade 9 testing.

Why is Jason Trinh 800th on the list? Shouldn't he be number one on the list? Don't we want that quality in our classroom?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: We absolutely agree that it is important to have excellent teachers in our classrooms, and that's exactly what we will do. But I think it's also important to understand that we have thousands of young teachers out there who want jobs, and it's not fair to those young teachers who are out there and want jobs, and perhaps to older teachers who have recently qualified, if we don't even post the job. We need to have some sort of process where, when there is a position available, the job is posted and there's opportunity for interviews so we can select good teachers.

Now, are there some problems with the regulation? Yes. We've heard the problems too. That's why there's a working group, that's why there's a study and that's why I've committed to the sector that if they can find a solution—

Interjections.

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

I dare say that in a classroom, somebody giving an answer would not be allowed to be shouted down.

TEACHERS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier, if I could, on the same topic. Premier, the Minister of Education says we need a good process. Clearly, the process should be that the best person gets the job. It makes sense. We've

all been inspired. We wouldn't be here in leadership positions as MPPs, as one of the lucky 107 in this place, if we weren't inspired by a teacher.

One of mine was Mr. Komar, at Notre Dame College School in Welland.

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Now, don't go after Mr. Komar. He inspired in me a love for economics, and maybe some of the questions I ask today. But if it wasn't for that kind of inspiration, I probably wouldn't be where I am today. You want to have these types of teachers in our schools: experience, of course, but also passion. How are they going to help out the kids in the schools? Are they going to contribute to extracurricular activities?

Howard Goodman, a trustee with the Toronto board, raised another issue on regulation 274, saying it unwittingly puts those diverse new rookies at a disadvantage. He references a Vietnamese school, where a teacher who speaks Vietnamese and could help a lot of these kids is sidelined because of the seniority hiring process.

Will you do the right thing? No studies, no delays—just end this odious practice.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the Minister of Education has said, I think that the Leader of the Opposition would agree that not even having a job posted is not a fair practice, so there were obviously changes that needed to be made. The fact is that we are open to making changes. We recognize that there are concerns. We will work with the sector and, as the Minister of Education said, come to some consensus and implement those changes. That is what we've committed to doing.

I have to say that I'm really glad that the Leader of the Opposition is asking a question about education. In his white paper on education, 10,000 education workers would be fired. I would like to suggest that if 10,000 workers in the education system were fired, fewer kids would get extracurricular activities, fewer kids with special needs would get support and the system would not work as well in the best interests of students. So I'd ask him how he sees that as in the best interest of the system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Obviously, the Premier hasn't taken the time to read the white paper, because it's all about what's best for our kids and raising standards in the classroom. Clearly, if you want to raise the standards of the classroom, you want to make sure the best possible teachers are there with our kids each and every day. Let's call it straight here: You caved in to the teacher unions, and as part of that process you handed over the keys to hiring to the teacher union bosses. I think that's wrong.

When I asked my dad how he did this, he said that basically they posted a job. They would probably get hundreds of applications. They would shortlist. A committee—usually the principal, the vice-principal, the department head—would interview the best candidates and whittle them down to the best list and they'd hire the best teacher. The schools recognized this and celebrated

and grew as a result of that. Other principals say the exact same thing.

Premier, if you admit that your system has problems, why continue for a minute more? Why keep Jason Trinh and excellent teachers on the sidelines? Why not just end regulation 274 now and stop this mess so our kids can get ahead with the best-skilled educators?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As soon as I'm ready to sit down, I don't want you to continue. The member from Stormont is not helping things when I'm trying to explain. As soon as I sit down, don't start up.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to just draw attention again to one of the premises underneath the question of the Leader of the Opposition, and that is that somehow working with the education sector, working with the organized teachers in the sector, is not a good thing. I think we need to pay close attention to that, because that underpins the philosophy of the Leader of the Opposition. To work in a collaborative way, to find common ground, to work with the people who are in the classroom and who are part of organizations is not the way that he would work. Getting rid of 10,000 teachers, cancelling full-day kindergarten: That is the track that the Leader of the Opposition would put us on. That's not what we're going to do.

We are seeing advances in our schools. We want a fair and consistent hiring practice, and we're open to changing that regulation.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I think that this is instructive. When the time came to choose between the wishes of the teacher union bosses and what's best for our students, the Premier sided with our union bosses. I don't think that's helpful to our kids. I've talked to a lot of people about this. People are very concerned. We care about how our kids are going to do. We want the best of the best in our classrooms with the kids. It should be based on their skills and determination and their contribution to the school, not that they're pets of the union bosses or highest on the seniority list.

Premier, if you won't act, we will. My colleague from Nepean–Carleton, Lisa MacLeod, is bringing forward a private member's bill today to get rid of regulation 274 and restore what has made our schools strong in the past and rewards decisions by principals and rewards the best possible teachers. If you won't do it, we will. I'll ask you this: Enough consultations, enough committees; do the right thing and support Lisa MacLeod's bill later on this afternoon.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just be clear: On this side of the House, what we support is publicly funded education. We increased funding in the education system. It has gone up 44% since 2003. There are 13,300 new teachers in the system. Kids' test scores are up. Graduation rates, when we came into office, were 68% out of high school; now they're 82%.

Kids are doing better. We have one of the finest education systems in the world.

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There is always room for improvement. Regulation 274 was put in place because there were concerns about the consistency of the hiring practices. It may be that it was an overcorrection and it may be that there need to be changes to it. That's why the Minister of Education is prepared to make those changes.

But make no mistake: Public education is advocated for by this government. We have strengthened the education system, working with the sector. The party opposite would undermine that success and would fire people—

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

Stop the clock for a moment.

Interjections.

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

When my memory is working, I will make this comment. I'm going to ask the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to come to order and I'm going to ask the Minister of Rural Affairs to come to order, and that's the second time.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Yesterday in the House, the Minister of Finance echoed claims by the insurance companies that they've enjoyed very minimal profits. The minister said it was a "fact" that insurance companies are receiving "about 3%" in their ROE profit margins.

Does the Premier stand by this claim?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite from that bench talked about the ROE. We are trying to express and make note of the fact that the ROE—if we were to take the return on premium which is calculated in Alberta, for example, the return on premium in Ontario would actually be about 5% to 6%, which is the lowest in any province in this country.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: An independent report written by a long-time insurance industry actuary prepared for today's auto insurance hearings actually shows the industry had, in fact, over \$1 billion of profits last year and that the ROE calculated would be something in the range of 14%. That's four times higher than what the minister claimed yesterday.

Is the Premier ready to admit that they may be wrong about the actual profits that the insurance industry is making?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I've just explained that there's a great difference between this ROE calculation, which

we've already advanced and told FSCO that, on a rolling scale, we want to reduce—it is a formula-based system, and we expect the rate to fall further. But let's be clear: It's the difference between an ROE and the return on premium. I appreciate that there's misunderstanding over there, because it is a complicated initiative and it's a complex issue. We understand that. But we will continue to say that we're overhauling the formula further to make it more transparent for all drivers.

As I've stated, when you compare Ontario to the rest of Canada, the return on premium versus, for example, Alberta—in Ontario, it's 5% to 6%, which is the lowest anywhere in the country.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: What we know is that we're paying the highest rates in the country. That's something we need to fix. It seems like this government is ready to break speed records when it comes to helping the insurance industry but they slam on the brakes when it comes to helping out drivers in this province.

Over the past five years, the industry has enjoyed billions of dollars in savings due to auto insurance reforms. The government has already taken out billions in costs from the system. But for drivers, the rates continue to climb. Salil from Mississauga watched this summer as his rates increased by \$500 to over \$3,000 a year. That's with no new claims, no new car and no accidents.

The minister simply got his facts wrong, and now the government has a choice. Will they stand up for drivers who deserve a break or will they keep helping the insurance industry maintain their record profits?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The third party has started talking about this, and they've been talking quite a bit in the last number of months, but we on this side of the House have been taking action on this for the last two years. As a result of these actions, we're able to now pass on savings to consumers, and we will continue to do so.

It's not something where you flip a switch and it gets done. It takes a lot of work and it's taken a lot of years to make it happen. We are seeing some results of that, and we'll continue doing what's in the best interests of the public. Yes, we all need champions. We need champions on all sides of the House to work together to make this happen. We will do our part. We will continue to lead.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, people who have elected us have told me they want us to work hard for them, and they want us to deliver results that make their lives better—for example, reducing auto insurance rates.

Can the Premier tell us how many people she's met with who are concerned about the plight of EllisDon Corp.?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much. I appreciate the member opposite asking a question. Having stable

labour relations is always the cornerstone of our government. We have worked extremely hard over the years since coming into office, since 2003, to make sure that we have balanced and stable labour relations. That's why I'm really proud to say that we have a situation in Ontario where 97% of labour agreements are achieved through collective bargaining, which is a tremendous success in terms of the effectiveness of labour relations agreements, and we'll continue to work with all political parties and our labour partners to ensure that that trend continues to progress.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, the question was to the Premier, and it was a pretty simple one—"Can you tell us who has been lobbying you to get this piece of legislation passed?"—and all we get is what you're trying to do.

I'm going to ask you the question again. It's a very simple question. Can the Premier tell us who's been lobbying you to fast-track this legislation that's going to benefit just one company in this province: EllisDon?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think the member opposite knows that the bill he is referring to is a private member's bill that was brought up in this House, and it has been debated and was passed through this House. It's obviously up to committee hearings, which is up to the House leaders to decide whether that process will take place or not.

I think it wouldn't be fair for me to comment on a private member's bill, but of course we listen to all interested parties on issues that are important to all Ontarians. The focus of our job here as a government—and the Premier has spoken about this often—is to grow our economy, to create jobs, to make sure that hard-working Ontarians have opportunities across the province to go to meaningful, good-paying jobs.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The only thing that appears to be growing is the coffers of the Liberal and Tory parties. Your government is about to embark on a programming motion with the Conservative Party to fast-track a piece of legislation that's going to benefit one company in the sector.

I'm going to ask you the question again. Can the Premier explain to us how you end up putting this piece of legislation as a priority and how and who has lobbied you?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, as you know, this is a private member's bill that was brought forward by the official opposition. It has been debated through this House and passed. Of course, this is a minority Legislature, so we have worked with all political parties to make sure that the bills that are important to Ontarians are passed through this Legislature.

I thank the NDP for being big supporters of a lot of the very important legislation that we have passed through this House, including the budget bill that is making life affordable for everyday Ontarians every single day. We look forward to working with all political parties to make

sure that we are growing our economy in this province and creating good-paying jobs for all Ontarians.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question this morning is for the Minister of Energy. Good morning, Minister. Your ministry has been given the draft Oakville gas plant cancellation findings from the Auditor General. The previous auditor told us that Mississauga was turned over six to eight weeks in advance. Your people have it; somebody's got it, Minister. Will you tell this House what it cost to cancel the Oakville gas plant, or will you continue the long line of Liberal operatives who have dodged, deleted and distorted the facts?

You told us Mississauga was \$190 million to cancel, but the auditor told us the truth: it was \$275 million. You've stood in this Legislature and told us it was \$40 million to cancel Oakville. Would you care to confess this number this morning, Minister, before the Auditor General spansk you down again?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Before the Auditor General's report on the Mississauga gas plant issue, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke stood in the House and he made the same accusation to me at the time, that we had the report. My answer at that time was, "No, I'm not aware that the ministry has a copy of the report. I have not seen a copy of the report. I will await the Auditor General to present the report." That's a fact, Mr. Speaker.

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So I'm going to ask the opposition party to stop making accusations that are speculative, that are unfounded, that demean the credibility of people on this side of the House. It's a disgrace.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, let me tell you what is disgraceful: Minister, you, your deputy, the OPA and the IESO have all missed the September 12 deadline to turn over thousands of documents to us. If one of you was late, that's one thing, but the fact that you're all holding back tells us someone has invoked the cone of silence.

Do we need to bring another contempt motion to find out what you're hiding this time? Didn't you learn anything over the last year? Why won't you tell us the real cost of cancelling Oakville? I know why; those missing documents will tell us why.

Will you turn over the files today or are you going to let this Premier repeat history: throw you under the bus, with you found in contempt of this House?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: This is a matter that should be dealt with by the committee, but if the honourable member wants to bring it to the floor of the Legislature,

then I will answer it. The simple fact is that the committee asked—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Not good enough. Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: The committee asked the ministry and the Ontario Power Authority to undertake very, very extensive searches for the documents that both organizations have been forthcoming in the past. My understanding is they have spent over \$1 million in the searches they have already done for the committee, and they are still in the process of following up on the most current request.

They have been in communication with the committee. They have outlined the steps they are taking and they are working around the clock in order to produce the documents that the committee has asked for. There have been tens of thousands of documents provided by this government, and I think this is a matter for continual discussion—

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

CONDOMINIUM LEGISLATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Premier. The government's condo act review panel released its second report yesterday. There's some progress, but for condo owners looking for a quick and cheap way to settle a dispute, their recommendations come up short.

The report sets up a condo office to hear disputes. If it's a small matter, the case goes to a quick decision-maker and it gets settled—so far, so good—but if it's a big matter, then it goes to a dispute resolution office, lawyers are welcome, and all you get is an assessment; no settlement. And if your dispute is with a developer, the report says, "The present model works reasonably well." In other words, you're on your own, and good luck in court.

This process continues to work well for consultants, lawyers and developers but not for condo owners. Will the government put condo owners first?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Consumer Services is going to want to comment in the supplementary, but I just want to make a comment because I want to first of all thank the member opposite for raising this issue. It's something that many of us—I would say all of us—in government hear about: the concerns of condominium owners and, in that sector, the need for changes to the Condominium Act. So I'm very pleased that the member opposite raised the issue.

I'm very pleased that we have had the opportunity to put in place a very innovative, I would suggest, and comprehensive consultation process, because it's complex. It's a complex issue how the act should change and what's in the best interest of the people who live in condominiums in all of our constituencies. I'm very pleased that that process is under way, and I look forward to

working with the member opposite to get some resolution for condominium owners.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, the report says condo owners should pay a levy of up to \$36 a year to support the condo office, plus user fees. With 600,000 condo units, this office would cost condo owners over \$21 million a year. This is about the same net cost as the Landlord and Tenant Board, but when you go to that board, your disputes get settled quickly and cheaply. This condo office settles the same, the small stuff, but for everything else, it just adds a new process. And when it's over, you're still looking at mediation and arbitration, and then the courts.

If condo owners must pay the same cost as the Landlord and Tenant Board, shouldn't they get a condo tribunal that can settle all their disputes like the Landlord and Tenant Board?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Consumer Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I too want to thank the member opposite for the question. I know he's a strong advocate for this file.

I'm very pleased to inform the member in the House that stage two of the condo report review was released yesterday by the Public Policy Forum. I was absolutely thrilled to attend the residents' panel final meeting this past weekend, where they endorsed, in large measure, this concept of a condo office.

I know the member opposite is talking about some sort of tribunal. The notion of a condo office, as recommended in the report, is to address dispute resolution and many other aspects of condominium living, such as the education and training—potentially, licensing—of property managers.

I think it's important that we all have a look at the report. It's up for a 45-day review by the public. I'm very pleased that so many stakeholders—condo owners, residents and lawyers—have been involved.

IMMIGRATION FRANCOPHONE FRANCOPHONE IMMIGRATION

M. John Fraser: Ma question s'adresse au ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration. Nous savons tous que l'Ontario représente la plus grande communauté francophone au Canada hors Québec. Ma circonscription d'Ottawa-Sud est le foyer de l'une des communautés francophones les plus fortes et dynamiques.

This past June, the 38th annual Franco-Ontarian festival was held to celebrate Franco-Ontarian culture. This week-long festival is one of the largest of its kind. Through live music, street art and dance, this festival celebrates the more than 600,000 francophone community members living across this province.

I was pleased to recently learn about our new website, funded through your ministry, providing French-speaking

people around the globe information about the benefits of working and living in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could you please tell us more about this great new initiative from our government?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I want to thank the honourable member for his question and once again congratulate him on his recent election to this House.

At the Association of Francophone Municipalities of Ontario conference in West Nipissing, I announced that our government is making it easier for municipalities to meet demographic challenges and attract skilled francophone newcomers to help grow their communities. The new francophone Municipal Immigration Information Online portal provides detailed information and tools to help attract francophone immigrants and help them settle here in the province of Ontario.

This new web portal was built in partnership with 18 municipalities across this great province. Through the portal, we're also helping francophones in Ontario make online connections to find jobs in their communities. This initiative will help us meet our 5% target for francophone immigration laid out by the Ontario immigration strategy.

The development of this portal is part of Ontario's \$1.3-million investment in the Municipal Immigration Information Online Program, referred to as MIIO.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you, Minister. This is a great initiative that will help our francophone communities flourish. I know this will make a difference in helping municipalities attract skilled francophones to meet the needs of their community.

As we know, Ontario has a rich francophone history, which helps make Ontario the vibrant cultural mosaic that it is today. Les francophones en Ontario représentent 4,8 % de la population totale de la province. Comme dans la population générale de l'Ontario, la communauté franco-ontarienne est diverse et dynamique. Depuis plusieurs années, nous avons accueilli des immigrants venus d'Afrique, d'Asie, du Moyen-Orient et de l'Europe.

Monsieur le Président, par votre entremise, je demande au ministre : quoi d'autre est-ce que le ministère des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration de l'Ontario fait pour soutenir nos communautés francophones?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, once again I'd like to thank the member for his question and his championing of francophone culture here in this province.

Our government is committed to achieving the goals of the immigration strategy, one of them being to position newcomers here in the province so that they can be successful. Specifically, we're investing in French-language services for newcomers because we know they need these skills to succeed in their new work environments and better integrate into their communities.

In addition to tuition-free language services in 2013-14, our ministry has doubled its support to francophone settlement service providers. Some key services that we

help fund here in the province are settlement counselling; guidance and assistance with immigration and transition issues; translation; and workshops on a broad range of settlement-related issues. We want Ontario's francophone newcomers, current and future, to succeed, and we know that they will strengthen Ontario's vibrant communities and help contribute to our province's economic prosperity.

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AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Health: Just after midnight on August 29, Thunder Airlines, under contract to Ornge to provide air ambulance service, was dispatched to Pikangikum First Nation. That was a Code 4.

When that crew landed, an Air Bravo aircraft, also under contract to Ornge, was already there with two Ornge paramedics. Air Bravo could not transfer that patient because the satellite telephone was not functioning. The patient, along with the Ornge medics, was flown to Thunder Bay, where the patient was eventually admitted. The delay was extensive.

Is the minister aware of this incident, and can she tell us what the outcome was for that patient?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I can tell you that Ornge is committed to providing the highest possible quality of care in Pikangikum and elsewhere across this whole province. I can tell you that the new leadership in Ornge is really focusing on measuring and improving the care they provide, and I can assure you that every effort is made to provide the highest quality care in every case.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Apparently the minister knows nothing about it.

I can tell the minister that that patient died. I can also tell the minister that it is alleged that the reason the Air Bravo satellite telephone was not working was because Air Bravo had not paid its bills. I can also tell the minister that the CEO of Air Bravo admitted under testimony last week that the company was having serious financial difficulties.

I can also tell the minister that Ornge failed, when issuing a contract to Air Bravo, to conduct any financial inspection of that company to determine whether it had the capacity to deliver.

I'd like to ask the minister this question: After everything we have heard about the lack of oversight on the part of the ministry and on the part of Ornge over the work that has to be done to deliver safe, secure, reliable air ambulance, why, over this number of months, do we still have to hear about incidents like this?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know the member opposite would be interested in hearing some of the quality metrics and results at Ornge. From January to March this year, Ornge pilots were available to respond to calls 97% of the time. Ornge aircraft were in service 99% of the time. Ornge paramedics were available to respond to

calls 95% of the time. Ninety-six per cent of patient transports between health facilities are confirmed within 20 minutes, and 90% of Ornge's patient transports from emergencies are confirmed within 10 minutes.

Ornge is focusing on measuring the quality of care. The nature of the work in emergency medicine and emergency services is that there will always be cases. What is important to me is that Ornge, under the new leadership of Dr. McCallum, is measuring and reporting on quality metrics. That's a big—

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

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Leading up to the Pan Am Games, this government made a regulation under the Private Security and Investigative Services Act that effectively allows security guards to act as police officers until March 31, 2016. This regulation didn't come to the House for debate, but was instead quietly filed in the Gazette, much like the laws enacted during the G20 fiasco in Toronto in 2010.

Has this government learned nothing from the G20 about the consequences of enacting secret regulations? Minister, will you explain to Ontarians why this regulation to give security guards the same duties as police officers was passed in secret and without appropriate public input and debate?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to thank the member for her question. As you know, the health and safety of those athletes and those who will come to the Pan Am Games in 2015—we wanted to ensure that they will be safe, that the athletes will have a wonderful experience. We are, as we speak, and we have been for some time—we have a committee that has been put together, headed by the OPP, to make sure that the athletes and the people who will attend the games will be safe.

I have full confidence that this group is working well together and will make sure that every safety measure will be put in place for the safety of all of those who will come to the Pan Am Games.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: After what happened during the G20, Ontarians are rightly concerned about the potential for serious civil liberty abuses when those responsible for security are not fully briefed on the limits of their powers. The changes proposed to prevent the abuses that happened during the G20 in Toronto are still being debated in this House. In the absence of new legislative protections, how will the minister ensure that the appropriate training and safeguards are in place to prevent security guards from misinterpreting their new-found powers during the Pan Am Games, so we can prevent the kind of civil liberty violations we saw during the G20?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: This is an excellent question. Yes, we will be hiring security guards, and they will be under the direction of the police. I'm pleased that we

have added in the contract that they will have to hire new security guards from our colleges, so this is part of our youth strategy, to find jobs for our youths. The number one priority will be that these security guards will be well trained and they will know exactly what will be their responsibility.

You know, there's nothing that has been passed in secret. Regulations don't come to the House. This has been posted on the website for 30 days. So we have been very clear and very open. We have a lot of police forces that—

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

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Across the province, people are very excited about the government's local food strategy. In my great riding of Oak Ridges-Markham, we are fortunate to have so many opportunities to shop for local foods. The Holland Marsh is right next door, and the Stouffville market, and many other farm markets offer the chance to purchase local produce and support local producers.

I know that the budget included a commitment to develop a Local Food Fund. Could the Premier and Minister of Agriculture and Food please update the House on this commitment?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you to the member for Oak Ridges-Markham for this question. I think that the issues around local food are of concern to everyone in this Legislature. They are issues that are very important to the agri-food sector, but they're important economic issues, because the reality is that a local food initiative can spur the agri-food economy and can help expand the agri-food economy.

I was very pleased to join folks at FoodShare last week to announce the Local Food Fund. It's a \$30-million fund that, over three years, will allow for investment in the kinds of initiatives that will raise awareness about local food and will actually help farmers and food processors to be able to find markets and to expand their businesses. We know that if we support Ontario farmers and if we support Ontario food processors, it's good for people's nutrition and it's good for the food that we eat—good for us and what we eat—but it's also good for local and regional economies.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you to the Premier and Minister of Agriculture and Food for the update. My constituents will be excited to hear that our Local Food Fund is now up and running and that your ministry is now accepting applications. In my community, the local food movement is strong, and consumers flock to our farm markets. I am fortunate enough to represent a riding that has both urban and rural roots, and I know that my constituents will have questions about the fund.

Can the Premier and Minister of Agriculture and Food provide more details on the fund and the type of projects it aims to support?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member from Oak Ridges-Markham comments on the rural and urban nature of her riding, and I think that one of the things about this discussion is that we are so interconnected. The notion that somehow rural Ontario and urban Ontario are separate entities is just not the case.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Exactly: one Ontario.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: My colleague the Minister of Rural Affairs talks about one Ontario, and that is exactly the case; we are one Ontario.

The Local Food Fund is designed to help producers, people who run restaurants and other interested parties support regional and local food networks to enhance technologies and capacities in order to grow and provide minor capital in order for businesses to grow; to foster research and best practices and share those best practices; and to invest in education and outreach so that everyone in the province understands how local food can be accessed and why it's so important to do so.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. More than five months ago, we learned that the A.O. Smith plant in Fergus would cease manufacturing, putting 350 people out of work. I called upon the government to help our community with training and economic development support. In response, the government promised an action centre to support the displaced workers and help them find jobs. That action centre is having an open house today.

Will the minister explain to this House why it took him more than five months to open an action centre to help these A.O. Smith workers?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm happy to. We respond within a matter of hours when these layoff notices are given. We respond by contacting the municipality, and we did in that case; we've been working very closely with the mayor and the municipality. We respond by contacting the employer. We respond by contacting the workers and their representatives. We don't take unilateral action and step on the toes of all of the other people in those local communities; we work with them.

There are times when our intentions or our offers to set up things like an action centre are taken into consideration by those on the ground locally and implemented at the time that meets their needs. That's the case here. We're always there. We're always available. We're always ready to respond. We'll work with that community as best we can to respond to this challenge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Minister, don't you dare blame my constituents for your own delays. That is totally unacceptable.

In 2005, eight years ago and before the recession hit, I called upon the Liberal government to have an all-party committee of this Legislature investigate our industrial competitiveness with a view to developing an action plan to protect manufacturing jobs in the province. The Liberals' inaction and indifference have directly contributed to the loss of 300,000 manufacturing jobs in this province. Even when a plant like A.O. Smith closes, displaced workers wait more than five months for the support that they need.

The Premier now says that she will focus on job creation and the economy. In light of their disastrous record on jobs, how can the people of Ontario see any light at the end of the tunnel as long as these Liberals remain in power?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I, in fact, take offence to what the member opposite just—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think we've started shouting people down again.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He was shouting at us, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will talk to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke in a calm manner and tell him that this is not enough.

Minister.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I think I have to repeat that I take offence at what the member opposite has just said, because he knows well the number of conversations that the two of us have had, not just specifically about A.O. Smith, but also the efforts that I've been making in terms of meeting repeatedly with the local leadership, with the businesses in the area. I've been working hard with the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund. In fact, we've made a number of announcements that directly and positively impact the people in the area and the people who are affected by the closure of the Fergus plant. I met with AMO; I met with the local leadership as well.

I think he should talk to the mayor, because she is quite satisfied with the efforts that this government is making to address the issues with A.O. Smith as well as the job opportunities and job challenges that are faced by the local leadership there.

He knows well the efforts that I've been making and the announcements that we're hoping will come forward in the foreseeable future that will benefit the people of that important part of the province.

Interjections.

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

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Premier. This Liberal government is so focused on sticking Ontarians with the bill for more transit promises in the GTA that it seems to have forgotten that commuters depend on buses and trains to get them to work in regions like Niagara, where I live. It's bad enough that the Conservatives in Ottawa have slashed our Via Rail service in our community, but it's even harder for the people who live in Niagara to understand why this government keeps wavering on the GO train service.

Why won't the government publicly commit to a date for year-round, all-day GO to St. Catharines and Niagara Falls and stick to it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I am absolutely committed, and we have expanded GO service across the GTHA. The member opposite knows perfectly well that we have done that and that we have expanded GO service into Niagara.

The reality is that the member opposite raises a very important issue, and that is that we need to have an integrated transportation plan that includes the federal government, the provincial government and municipal governments, because the service that the member opposite references was a federal-level responsibility.

The fact is that at the Council of the Federation I have made it clear with my colleague Premiers that in order for us to have a coherent transportation network across this country we need the federal government to work with us. In the meantime, we will continue to expand GO service, as we've been doing for the last 10 years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Niagara is filled with bedroom communities. People make a conscious choice not to move away from Niagara. They want to live where they live, and they need transit available to them. Crowded buses and intermittent train service is taking a toll on the quality of life for people who live in the Niagara region. The government keeps saying that it's going to put in this GO service all day, but it never mentions when.

Will the minister tell Niagara residents today when they will finally get the promise of daily GO train services they so badly need?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the member opposite advocating for her community. My experience when I was Minister of Transportation—and I know there are other Ministers of Transportation who can attest to this—was that whenever we made an announcement about increased GO service, there was a brief moment of “That's great,” and then the next expression was, “When can we have more?” because it is in such demand, it is such a good service and it provides such convenient and efficient transportation options for people.

GO is committed to two-way, all-day service on all corridors. The implementation is under way. We know there is increased demand for GO service, and that is, from my perspective, indicative of the culture shift that's happening in this province. People are looking at our

finite resources and saying, “You know what? We need to find ways to get out of our cars and get into transit.” That’s why we’re committed to building this infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, and expanding service across the GTHA.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. I receive calls and inquiries from constituents on a daily basis on a variety of issues, including on accessing services provided by the provincial government. My constituents are hard-working men and women who lead busy lives. Commuting to and from work and taking care of young children or elderly family members are their priorities. Spending time to try to locate government services that they need should not be time-consuming. Providing efficient and easy access to government information and services has been a priority of this government.

Last year, the Commission on the Reform of Ontario’s Public Services provided recommendations on delivering more efficient methods of delivering services that Ontarians need and want.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can he please tell us about the ongoing work to fulfill this government’s commitment to delivering services more effectively to all Ontarians?

1130

Hon. John Milloy: The member is quite right that people, with their busy lives, are looking for convenient ways to deal with the government, particularly to access a variety of services. ServiceOntario has as its mandate to try to make it as convenient as possible for people to deal with those services.

In fact, this morning I announced a new measure that’s being brought forward by ServiceOntario: the fact that people can now renew their driver’s licence online—a simple matter of going to our website, serviceontario.ca, and they’ll be eligible to renew their driver’s licence. Now, it’s once every five years; with this, you can renew it once and will only have to go every 10 years in order to get an up-to-date photo.

This new service has been added to more than 40 services already available online, including birth certificates, marriage certificates, licence plate stickers and driver abstracts. Again, Mr. Speaker, it’s a way of making people’s lives easier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Thank you to the minister for his response. It is good to know that, through ServiceOntario and initiatives such as the online driver’s licence renewal service, we are delivering on our commitment to make it easier for Ontarians to access the services they need, where and when they need them.

The people of Ontario expect their government to deliver quality services, including a range of service access options. In my riding of Scarborough-Rouge River, it is important that there is a driver in every house-

hold. At times, driving to and from a location is the only option. Spending time to renew a driver’s licence can be time-consuming. We should be taking steps to help people get that done faster and more efficiently. My constituents will be glad to know that they can now renew their driver’s licence online.

Speaker, through you to the minister, could he please inform this House on how the online driver’s licence renewal service expedites the process?

Hon. John Milloy: Each year in Ontario, some 1.6 million Ontario drivers renew their driver’s licence. Through this service, most of them will be eligible to do it from an Internet site, in their home or elsewhere. Eligible drivers will be able to go online, and the slogan we have is “Just click, renew and drive.” After that, a new driver’s licence will be mailed to the applicant, and will be valid for five years.

Ontario drivers who renew online will only need to go to a ServiceOntario centre every 10 years, as I mentioned previously, to have a new photo taken. Drivers will be notified if they need to go renew their licence in person because they have reached this time frame.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. The MNR recently made changes to the Endangered Species Act which streamlined a number of provisions in the permitting process. That is why I was surprised to read the EBR posting for woodland caribou, yet another job-killing posting for northern Ontario.

It’s very clear from the proposals in this posting that the socio-economic analysis was never done to determine the impact which they would have on a northern municipality’s forestry and a wide range of stakeholders. Would the minister explain why these critical factors had not been taken into account before your ministry decided to kill more jobs?

Hon. David Orazietti: The member opposite knows full well that the government’s position on this has been one of finding a balance to ensure that jobs in northern Ontario, and throughout the province, would be able to continue to thrive. I categorically reject the assertion that this is somehow outside of the regular process.

The member introduced a private member’s bill some time ago to, in fact, gut the legislation, which is not something that we’re prepared to do on this side of the House. We wanted to find the balance; we’ve struck the appropriate balance. We formed a committee and we had ample input from countless stakeholders.

What I can tell you, Speaker, is that the various groups and organizations were very supportive of the changes we made. Tom Laughren said, “This proposed regulation provides some much-needed balance to the implementation of the ESA” in the forestry industry. Russ Powers of the association of municipalities said, “The streamlined approach balances protecting endangered species with other priorities”—

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: Well, I categorically reject that you care about jobs. Your ministry has failed to perform a socio-economic analysis, which my party would make mandatory. Some of those municipalities who will be impacted are doing their own analysis. In an August 13 letter to the Premier and to you, the town of Cochrane provides a detailed analysis of the impact that these proposals would have on the Abitibi River forest.

MNR proposals would require sacrificing half of the entire forest volume, which would be catastrophic. The impact on communities from North Bay to Hearst would be a loss of another 8,000 jobs, \$433 million in lost wages and a loss of \$273 million in lost taxes for the municipalities.

Minister, will you show that you care about the north and its people and withdraw those proposals?

Hon. David Orazietti: The member opposite—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated. We need quiet. I mean it.

Interjection.

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

Hon. Mario Sergio: That's it; in your chair.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And you're not supposed to be talking, minister responsible for seniors.

Answer, please.

Hon. David Orazietti: Thank you, Speaker. The member opposite knows, and she's referencing a plan from Cochrane—Mayor Politis, who is the Conservative candidate, so I take that with a grain of salt. But what I will say is that Jamie Lim, the president of the OFIA—here's what the forestry sector says: "A key component of this proposed legislation is the recognition by the government that forestry activities already provide for the protection of species at risk...." with regard to the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, "while also ensuring that economic development activities, such as forestry, will be allowed to proceed without unnecessary impacts."

It's quite clear that the forestry industry supports the changes we've made—it's very clear about that—and the plan that we have proposed and have implemented clearly recognizes that balance. I am somewhat concerned about the position of the NDP, because the opposition seems to be—

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

ÉDUCATION POSTSECONDAIRE DE LANGUE FRANÇAISE

FRENCH-LANGUAGE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci, monsieur le Président, et j'aimerais vous souhaiter une bonne journée franco-

ontarienne. C'est une journée pour honorer le passé et célébrer l'avenir.

Ma question est pour la première ministre. Aujourd'hui, les jeunes Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes du Sud-Ouest se demandent combien de temps ils devront attendre pour poursuivre leurs études en français. Ils et elles ont autant le droit d'accéder à une éducation postsecondaire en français que les gens du Nord, de l'Est ou du grand Toronto. Dans son rapport de 2012, le commissaire aux services en français a dit que le taux d'accès à l'éducation postsecondaire dans le Sud-Ouest est minime : de 0 % à 3 %. Moi, j'appelle ça quasi non existant.

Quand est-ce que le gouvernement va offrir de la formation collégiale et universitaire à la clientèle franco-ontarienne du sud-ouest de l'Ontario?

L'hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Merci pour la question. J'ai parlé avec les étudiants qui ont besoin d'une éducation postsecondaire au sud de l'Ontario et je suis concernée que nous n'avons pas assez de programmes pour les étudiants. Pour moi, c'est très important que nous avons des programmes. S'il est important ou nécessaire d'avoir un autre édifice, je ne sais pas. C'est une discussion que nous devons avoir, mais pour moi, c'est très important que nous avons des programmes justes pour les étudiants au nord et au sud de l'Ontario.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci. Question?

M^{me} France Gélinas: C'est facile pour un gouvernement en cette journée franco-ontarienne d'offrir des belles paroles, de parler de sites Web, de culture, de chansons en français et de programmes d'éducation. Mais les actions parlent plus fort que les mots. Jusqu'à ce jour, le gouvernement en a fait si peu pour offrir des possibilités d'apprentissage postsecondaire dans le sud-ouest de l'Ontario.

Le commissaire aux services en français a présenté des pistes de solution. Les néo-démocrates en ont présentées plusieurs dans les communautés et à l'Assemblée législative, mais on dirait que le gouvernement libéral n'est pas à l'écoute, ou peut-être, monsieur le Président, c'est qu'ils ne nous comprennent pas.

Ma question est simple : quand est-ce que le gouvernement va offrir une gamme adéquate de programmes de formation postsecondaire et universitaire aux résidants du sud-ouest de l'Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We've been working extremely close with RÉFO, who are the francophone students' representatives across this province. They've had an opportunity to meet with myself. I know the Premier has talked to some of those students across the province on many occasions. The minister of francophone affairs has been an incredible champion of this. We're not just talking, Mr. Speaker; we've taken action.

One of the things they asked for was an announcement of our travel grant to ensure that francophone students could take advantage of that grant even if there were services available within some of their communities.

That group of students was extremely pleased with the measures we've taken. But I can assure the member, as I've said to RÉFO for the great work that they've done, that we're working very closely with them and we are looking to move very quickly.

It is in our throne speech. We're going to take action to help ensure that francophone students get greater access to francophone courses in southwestern and central Ontario.

DEFERRED VOTES

**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)**

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

The division bells rang from 1142 to 1147.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On March 18, 2013, Mr. Naqvi moved second reading of Bill 21.

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

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Gravelle, Michael
Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Michael
Balkissoon, Bas	Hillier, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Holiday, Douglas C.
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoskins, Eric
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hudak, Tim
Bisson, Gilles	Hunter, Mitzie
Bradley, James J.	Jackson, Rod
Campbell, Sarah	Jaczek, Helena
Chan, Michael	Jeffrey, Linda
Chiarelli, Bob	Jones, Sylvia
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank
Clark, Steve	Kwinter, Monte
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff
Coteau, Michael	Leone, Rob
Crack, Grant	MacCharles, Tracy
Damerla, Dipika	MacLaren, Jack
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit
Dhillon, Vic	Mantha, Michael
Dickson, Joe	Marchese, Rosario
DiNovo, Cheri	Matthews, Deborah
Duguid, Brad	Mauro, Bill
Dunlop, Garfield	McDonell, Jim

Elliott, Christine	McKenna, Jane	Wilson, Jim
Fedeli, Victor	McMeekin, Ted	Wong, Soo
Fife, Catherine	McNaughton, Monte	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McNeely, Phil	Yakabuski, John
Forster, Cindy	Meilleur, Madeleine	Yurek, Jeff
Fraser, John	Miller, Norm	Zimmer, David
Gerretsen, John	Miller, Paul	
Gélinas, France	Milligan, Rob E.	

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 94; the nays are 0.

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

Second reading agreed to.

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

Minister of Labour?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

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

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

The House recessed from 1151 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to introduce Angela Kennedy, the Toronto Catholic District School Board trustee who covers my area. Welcome to the Legislature, Angela.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: It's a real pleasure for me today to introduce to the House two leaders in our francophone community in the town of Penetanguishene. They're leading a number of projects in the Franco-Ontarian celebration, and also in the 400th anniversary of the Samuel de Champlain project that we've got in our community: Anne and Yvon Gagné, from Penetanguishene. Thank you very much for being here, Anne and Yvon.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Today I want to pay tribute to everyone who worked so hard to put the 2013 International Plowing Match and Rural Expo together. Perth county was privileged to host this year, the 100th anniversary year of the very first plowing match.

"Come Celebrate with Us" was the theme. People from across Ontario and beyond came out to celebrate, and with good reason. The IPM is a window into the very best of our history and the best of our future. It showcases the very best in agriculture, rural Ontario and its people.

This year was no exception. Here are just a few of the highlights: the opening day parade; the plowing competition, including teams from Quebec and the United States, made this truly an International Plowing Match; the annual Queen of the Furrow competition, in which 29 accomplished women vied for the title; a performance by the royal Canadian Snowbirds; and—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: And Team Farmall.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: —and Team Farmall's dancing tractors.

The organizers of the IPM did a tremendous job. Bert Vorstenbosch and the entire executive committee, including Ron McKay, Larry Cook, Dianne Josling, Coralee Foster and Laverne Gordner deserve enormous credit for their leadership.

I also want to thank the Van Nuland family for hosting the tented city, and all of the landowners for the use of their land. Also, thank you to Mayor McKenzie, the council at West Perth and municipal staff for their leadership and support.

The IPM was a community effort. It could not have been possible without the more than 1,500 people who volunteered for the IPM. Those volunteers are the strength of the community we see day in and day out in Perth–Wellington. Mr. Speaker, that is truly something worth celebrating today, tomorrow and for the next 100 years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Man, can those tractors dance.

INJURED WORKERS' CONSULTANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I stand here today in support of the Injured Workers' Consultants, a community legal clinic in my riding. The clinic was established in 1969 by representatives of the injured worker community to provide legal advice, representation, education, research and advocacy on law and policy reform issues.

In 2004, a value-for-money audit done by the Attorney General recommended amalgamation and centralization of the clinic offices and the elimination of independent community boards of directors. This government has never disassociated itself from those recommendations.

What makes this legal clinic work so well is its community board. The clinic's independence is a critical strength and requirement. It appears that the Liberal government is moving to centralize the functions of this clinic and others like it, which would remove community control.

This is an attack on the fundamental principles of the community clinic system. Ontarians deserve fair access to justice, and community-based clinics are a fundamental part of that fair access. I am asking this government to guarantee that this denial of access to justice will not happen.

JOUR DES FRANCO-ONTARIENS ET DES FRANCO-ONTARIENNES

M. Phil McNeely: Je me joins aujourd'hui à ma collègue et ministre responsable de la francophonie, Madeleine Meilleur, et à tous les francophones et francophiles de l'Ontario pour souligner le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes.

Nous nous souvenons tous du 26 avril 2010. C'est en cette journée mémorable que cette Assemblée législative a voté à l'unanimité l'adoption de la Loi sur le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes, loi qui a proclamé le 25 septembre de chaque année le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes en Ontario.

Je suis fier de représenter la circonscription d'Ottawa–Orléans depuis 10 ans, laquelle constitue la plus grande communauté francophone hors Québec.

Merci à tous ceux et celles qui ont levé et lèveront fièrement le drapeau franco-ontarien aujourd'hui. Il fut d'ailleurs hissé pour la première fois à Sudbury le 25 septembre 1975. Je tiens donc à remercier l'équipe créatrice de ce symbole de la francophonie ontarienne : M. Gaétan Gervais; Jacqueline England, qui a cousu le drapeau; Michel Dupuis, Don Obonsawin et Yves Tassé.

CAREER COLLEGES

Mr. Rob Leone: I rise to acknowledge career colleges day at Queen's Park and to lend my support to an industry that's providing the training today for the jobs of tomorrow.

What many people don't know is that career colleges have a long history in Ontario. In fact, the first private career college was set up in the 19th century.

These educational institutions often offer what the traditional college and university systems cannot. Career colleges are well equipped to provide workers with the kind of intensive training and retraining that people may need if their current employment terminates. As our economy adapts over time, skill requirements change, plants close and jobs are often lost. Career colleges are perfectly positioned to help Ontarians adapt to these changes as quickly as possible.

From fashion and beauty to the culinary arts, from truck driving to pre-apprenticeship training, career colleges offer a number of different career paths for students. They often cater to a student body that is older on average than students who attend university or college. The reason career colleges are able to provide training so efficiently is because they're often successful and nimble small businesses that fill a crucial market need for timely training.

I encourage all members of this House to take the time today to learn about what career colleges can offer to their communities, our province and its workforce.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Miss Monique Taylor: Speaker, as you're well aware, we have raised several questions to the government with regard to our budget demand for car insurance reductions of 15%. The Premier has continued to avoid the question, but instead has tried to justify the reasoning for increases that people have seen.

New Democrats made it quite clear that the people of this province are paying the highest rates of insurance in the entire country, and they deserve a break. That was the message I heard loud and clear from the people of Hamilton Mountain. I heard from many people that auto insurance costs were unmanageable. One 15% reduction would not change their lives, but it would definitely help. When the budget passed, they were looking forward to it. Instead, many people have been calling my office to tell me that their premiums continue to rise, in one case as much as 40%, and that's with a clean record.

One family contacted me to state that they had just moved into my riding, and that move alone cost them \$150 extra per month on their auto insurance. Others report substantial increases when they haven't moved or bought a new car; they just renewed their insurance.

It's time for the government to listen to the people of Ontario and act now to fulfill their promise to cut auto insurance in Ontario by 15%.

TRANSIT ACCIDENT IN OTTAWA

Mr. John Fraser: Last week's tragedy has deeply affected everyone in my hometown of Ottawa. I would like to extend our deepest condolences to the six families that lost loved ones. To those injured and affected, we hope for a speedy recovery. You all remain in our thoughts and prayers.

I would also like to take a moment on behalf of the community of Ottawa South to say thank you to all those who came to the aid of the injured and affected.

1510

To Ottawa's first responders—police, firefighters and paramedics—thank you for your professionalism and courage on the scene. To the doctors, nurses, social workers, technicians and all the staff at the Ottawa, Montfort and Queensway Carleton hospitals, thank you for being ready to tend to people's injuries and needs within minutes of the news and for the compassionate care that you provided. Thank you to everyone in our community who comforted individuals and families affected by this tragedy, and I know the member from Nepean–Carleton was doing that this week.

I know that all of my colleagues in this Legislature from Ottawa are proud of our community's response and thankful to all those on the ground who were there for their friends and neighbours.

YUREK PHARMACY

Mr. Jeff Yurek: In 1963, using money that he saved and borrowed from his family, my father took a chance and opened a small-town independent pharmacy. Over the years, he poured his heart and soul into Yurek Pharmacy and successfully grew the business through a deep and abiding commitment to customer service. As the pharmacy grew, it became a St. Thomas landmark rooted in the community through its contributions to local sports teams, charities and, of course, its dedication to customer service.

I want to commend my father as tomorrow marks the 50th anniversary of Yurek Pharmacy. His dedication to the profession has rubbed off on me, my brother Peter and my sister Diane, as we all became pharmacists.

Yurek Pharmacy stands as an example of what's possible through hard work, dedication and vision. Today our family pharmacy is not only in St. Thomas but has expanded to include two locations in London, and we employ over 110 people. Our continued success is attributable to the pharmacy's commitment to our father's original philosophy of customer service.

We have enjoyed the past 50 years, and I look forward to the next 50.

GLOBAL CITIES INSTITUTE

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Earlier this month, I had the privilege of being invited to the Global Cities Institute launch at the University of Toronto, my alma mater. The Global Cities Institute was created at the University of Toronto to build on the strengths of a rapidly expanding global network of scholars, city leaders, design and planning professionals, key international organizations, foundations and industry innovators dedicated to securing a better future for cities.

I know from the experience I've had working in my community of Scarborough-Guildwood that organizations that acknowledge and take advantage of the growing impact of the international community are so important to the growth of our city and our province. I have lived, learned and worked in Scarborough, and what makes it such an amazing and unique place is its diversity.

The Global Cities Institute seeks to prepare the future of our workforce for the influx of international influence here in Toronto. It is something my constituents, as well as the people of Ontario, can benefit from. At the Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference, Premier Wynne stated that decisions based on evidence are the best decisions.

Copies of the Global Cities Institute's most recent report on aging demographics in cities can be obtained by contacting my office, and we will also leave copies in each caucus office later this week.

ALGONQUIN LAND CLAIM

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, the governments of Canada and Ontario are currently in negotiations with the Algonquins of Ontario to resolve a land claim which affects my riding of Nipissing. People in my riding, including landowners and the Algonquin First Nations, remain upset over the lack of consultation and answers they have received when the agreement in principle was released last December. There are a number of key areas where concerns have arisen in my riding: Camp Island, the Mattawa River Provincial Park and a parcel called 302B, just to name a few.

The township of East Ferris passed a resolution on August 13 of this year expressing their concerns over how the agreement in principle could affect potential development along the shoreline of Trout Lake, the source of the city of North Bay's drinking water. There were resolution requests, "That all crown lands within 300 metres of Trout Lake, including the lands along designated inflowing water courses, be excluded from the crown land transfer to the Algonquins of Ontario."

Speaker, I met with the chief negotiator here in my office recently, and some minor changes have been made affecting the parcels in Nipissing. Residents will be notified by letter in the next couple of weeks.

I will continue to work to ensure the concerns of all sides are addressed and resolved in a satisfactory manner.

TRANSIT ACCIDENT IN OTTAWA

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member from Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Speaker. A week ago today, I took leave from this place as a result of a bus-and-train crash on Fallowfield which was right behind my constituency office. At the time, I had notified the chamber that five of my constituents had passed away. Unfortunately, the next day we learned that one more person would lose their life in that bus tragedy.

I would just like to say thank you to all of my colleagues. We were very touched in Nepean–Carleton that you lowered the flag to half-staff and, while I was on the road, on my way home to my constituents, that you had taken a moment of silence on their behalf.

I can tell you that the first responders in Nepean–Carleton and in all the city of Ottawa were so quick that they were at the accident within six minutes. The trauma units at the Ottawa Hospital, which is both the civic and the general campuses, as well as the Montfort Hospital and the Queensway Carleton Hospital, were so outstanding, Speaker, that while we were dealing with the tragedy, we had confidence and comfort in knowing that our emergency services were there for us when we needed them.

This past week and next week will be very tough as we say goodbye to those who lost their lives. I was fortunate that the city of Ottawa has been including me in all of their delegations and official bodies to these funerals.

I just want to say, on behalf of the people I represent and the people who we've lost, thank you to my colleagues for their comfort and understanding in this past week, and particularly to my colleagues who have taken on extra duties in my absence. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Wonderfully expressed, and I thank the member from Nepean–Carleton for that.

In accordance with unanimous consent that was agreed upon this morning, we will move reports by committees after petitions.

It is now time for introduction of bills.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES

AMENDMENT ACT

(FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES COMMISSIONER), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT

LA LOI SUR LES SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS (COMMISSAIRE AUX SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS)

Madame Meilleur moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 106, An Act to amend the French Language Services Act with respect to the French Language Services Commissioner / Projet de loi 106, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services en français en ce qui concerne le commissaire aux services en français.

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

First reading agreed to.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Point of order, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm in the middle of this process, and I will see to that after.

The member for a short statement.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'll make my statement during ministers' statements.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Nickel Belt on a point of order.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Je crois que nous avons le consentement unanime pour la deuxième lecture du projet de loi modifiant la Loi sur les services en français, pour le commissaire aux services en français, et de mettre immédiatement la question sur ce projet de loi afin que nous puissions le renvoyer au comité.

To help out, I believe we have unanimous consent to call second reading of the French Language Services Amendment Act (French Language Services Commissioner), 2013, and immediately put the question on the bill so that it can be referred to committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You might not believe this, but I was actually following, and I was ready to respond to that—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —but not en français.

The member from Nickel Belt has asked for unanimous consent to put the question. Do we have agreement on unanimous consent? Agreed.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je voudrais souligner la présence du commissaire aux services en français, M. François Boileau, qui est ici.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Madame Meilleur moves second reading of Bill 106. Madame Meilleur.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Merci. Je m'excuse si j'étais trop inspirée.

Puis aussi M. Guy Matte, qui est le président du comité aviseur aux services en français, et M. Denis Vaillancourt, le président de l'AFO. Tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes célèbrent aujourd'hui—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You've got to move second reading.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Okay, I have to move second reading. Agreed?

FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES
AMENDMENT ACT
(FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES
COMMISSIONER), 2013
LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS
(COMMISSAIRE AUX SERVICES
EN FRANÇAIS)

Madame Meilleur moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 106, An Act to amend the French Language Services Act with respect to the French Language Services Commissioner / Projet de loi 106, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services en français en ce qui concerne le commissaire aux services en français.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to know to which committee the minister would like the bill referred.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to refer it to the committee on the Legislative Assembly.

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

FAIR HIRING TO SUPPORT TEACHERS,
PARENTS AND STUDENTS ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES PRATIQUES
D'ENGAGEMENT ÉQUITABLES
À L'APPUI DES ENSEIGNANTS,
DES PARENTS ET DES ÉLÈVES

Ms. MacLeod moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 107, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to hiring practices for teachers / Projet de loi 107, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui concerne les pratiques d'engagement des enseignants.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say “aye.”

Opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1522 to 1527.

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

Ms. MacLeod has moved An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to hiring practices for teachers.

Please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Fedeli, Victor	McNeely, Phil
Arnott, Ted	Fraser, John	Meilleur, Madeleine
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm
Balkissoon, Bas	Harris, Michael	Milligan, Rob E.
Barrett, Toby	Holyday, Douglas C.	Milloy, John
Bartolucci, Rick	Hunter, Mitzie	Moridi, Reza
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	Munro, Julia
Chan, Michael	Jeffrey, Linda	Nicholls, Rick
Chiarelli, Bob	Jones, Sylvia	O'Toole, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	Pettapiece, Randy
Clark, Steve	Leone, Rob	Piruzza, Teresa
Colle, Mike	MacCharles, Tracy	Scott, Laurie
Crack, Grant	MacLaren, Jack	Sergio, Mario
Damerla, Dipika	MacLeod, Lisa	Thompson, Lisa M.
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Walker, Bill
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Wilson, Jim
Duguid, Brad	McDonell, Jim	Wong, Soo
Dunlop, Garfield	McKenna, Jane	Yakabuski, John
Elliott, Christine	McMeekin, Ted	Yurek, Jeff

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

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Forster, Cindy
DiNovo, Cheri	Gélinas, France

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 57; the nays are 4.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This is the Fair Hiring to Support Teachers, Parents and Students Act, 2013.

I'd like to first acknowledge two people here from the Toronto school boards: Angela Kennedy as well as Howard Goodman, and Doretta Wilson, who's here from education quality of Ontario.

This bill revokes Ontario regulation 24/12 on hiring practices made under the Education Act, and amends the act to provide that no regulation can be made under the

act if it uses a person's seniority as an occasional teacher as a factor to rank the person for assignment or appointment to a position as a teacher, and if the factor is accorded greater weight than any other factor, such as the person's teaching qualifications.

The bill also amends the act to require every school board to establish a policy for assigning or appointing persons to a position as a teacher. The policy prohibits a board from deciding to assign or appoint a person to a position as a teacher if the board, in making the decision, accords greater weight to nepotism than to any other factor, such as a person's teaching qualifications. Regulations made under the act can define the meaning of the term "nepotism."

Speaker, given what I have just seen, I'm wondering if I could appeal for unanimous consent for second reading of the bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean–Carleton is seeking unanimous consent for second reading. Is it the pleasure of the House? Agreed?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Listen: It doesn't matter how much goes back and forth; I have to finish my script too.

Do we agree? Thank you. I heard a no.

TRANSPARENCY IN MEMBERS' EXPENSES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE EN MATIÈRE DES DÉPENSES DES DÉPUTÉS

Mr. Fraser moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 108, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act / Projet de loi 108, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. John Fraser: The Transparency in Members' Expenses Act is an act to increase transparency and open government with respect to members' expenses.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Aujourd'hui, je suis très heureuse d'être ici accompagnée de beaucoup de francophones qui ont joué un rôle et qui continuent à jouer un rôle important dans la communauté francophone et je veux les remercier pour tout l'appui qu'ils m'ont donné depuis les derniers 10 ans.

Tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes célèbrent aujourd'hui le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes.

Mes collègues à l'Assemblée se souviendront que la date du 25 septembre avait été adoptée par l'Assemblée législative en 2010 pour souligner les contributions présentes et passées de la communauté franco-ontarienne.

At a time when so many governments and states in the world are facing issues related to social harmony and inclusion, I feel tremendously proud to be a member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario today.

Ici en Ontario, nous avons fait le pari que le respect de la langue, de la religion et de la diversité favorise toujours la progression et le développement de notre société. Et en ce jour symbolique, notre province forme une seule et grande famille qui célèbre l'un de ses peuples fondateurs, le peuple franco-ontarien.

Je suis particulièrement heureuse de me lever aujourd'hui parce que nous avons choisi cette journée festive pour présenter un nouveau projet de loi modifiant la Loi sur les services en français de manière à renforcer davantage la prestation des services en français en Ontario. Ce projet d'amendement législatif aura une incidence systémique sur l'efficacité de l'application de la loi, aujourd'hui et à l'avenir.

This bill, Mr. Speaker, is designed to make the French Language Services Commissioner fully independent by making the commissioner an officer reporting directly to the Legislative Assembly.

Bien sûr, notre gouvernement a accordé beaucoup d'indépendance d'action au commissaire actuel, au niveau de l'élaboration de ses rapports annuels et de ses enquêtes spéciales que j'ai déposés en son nom à l'Assemblée législative, au niveau de ses nombreuses interventions publiques, ses relations de travail avec les élus et les représentants du gouvernement, et dans l'ensemble de ses relations et contacts avec la communauté franco-ontarienne.

Je salue le commissaire, qui est parmi nous aujourd'hui, ainsi que tous les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes présents à l'Assemblée cet après-midi pour assister à cette journée historique. Je vous salue tous et toutes personnellement et je tiens aussi à mentionner la présence, parce que quand je l'ai mentionnée tantôt il n'était pas là, de M. Denis Vaillancourt, le président de l'Assemblée de la francophonie en Ontario.

Le commissaire actuel, qui a été hautement efficace, n'a jamais hésité à critiquer le gouvernement quand il percevait des manquements à la Loi sur les services en français.

Mais aujourd'hui, le gouvernement Wynne va plus loin.

En modifiant la Loi sur les services en français pour en faire un officier de l'Assemblée législative, nous allons reconnaître officiellement, ensemble, mesdames et messieurs les députés, notre responsabilité collective dans l'application et le respect de l'intégrité de la Loi sur les services en français.

Every member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario will assume this important responsibility on behalf of Ontario francophones and everyone who appreciates Franco-Ontarian culture. If this bill passes, we, as MPPs, will receive the commissioner's recommendations directly.

Car celui-ci relèvera alors de l'Assemblée législative dans son ensemble, et non plus du ou de la ministre délégué(e) aux Affaires francophones. De plus, il aura ainsi le même statut que d'autres officiers de l'Assemblée comme, par exemple, le commissaire à l'environnement ou l'intervenant provincial en faveur des enfants et des jeunes.

Ensemble, nous pourrons débattre, ici même à l'Assemblée législative, des meilleurs objectifs et méthodes pour protéger et promouvoir la qualité des services publics en français en Ontario. Et ce sera inscrit dans la loi.

Mr. Speaker, the recommendation to make the commissioner an officer reporting to the Legislative Assembly is a logical, reasoned proposal from a government that is serious about francophone heritage and about the vitality of this province's community of 611,500 Franco-Ontarians.

Le gouvernement libéral, depuis 2003, relève déjà le défi constant du renforcement des services en français par l'entremise de nombreuses mesures adoptées depuis 10 ans. Il valorise la francophonie ontarienne pour en faire un outil de développement au service de la prospérité des Ontariennes et des Ontariens. Et ceci donne des résultats probants dont nous pouvons être très fiers.

Le commissariat aux services en français que le gouvernement a créé en 2007 avec l'appui de l'Assemblée législative est un acteur principal dans cette dynamique favorisant le développement de la communauté franco-ontarienne. Je suis particulièrement heureuse de vous dire que la très grande majorité des recommandations formulées par le commissaire depuis le début ont été adoptées ou ont donné suite à des actions porteuses et durables par notre gouvernement.

Depuis la création du commissariat, l'Ontario a grandement amélioré l'accès et la prestation des soins de santé en français, et je sais, pour l'entendre fréquemment de la voix de mes concitoyens, combien c'est apprécié de se faire soigner dans sa langue quand on est gravement malade ou affaibli.

1540

Les services de justice en français ont également été augmentés et d'autres initiatives sont à venir dans ce secteur.

L'éducation en langue française, une des priorités du gouvernement et du commissaire, s'améliore à tous les paliers, et l'on trouve en Ontario les meilleures pratiques en éducation en langue française qui font de l'Ontario un chef de file mondial en éducation.

These are just a few examples of how we continue to strengthen French-language services in Ontario, and we

are committed to working hard to continue supporting Franco-Ontarians in every corner of our province.

Aux dires mêmes du commissaire, et je le cite : « L'important est que le gouvernement ait participé au dialogue constructif initié par le citoyen et le commissariat, et que la population ait été tenue au courant. »

Je félicite chaleureusement le commissaire en titre, François Boileau, qui a été hautement efficace, et toute son équipe pour le travail remarquable qu'ils accomplissent.

Pour conclure, en 2015 l'Ontario va commémorer officiellement le 400^e anniversaire de la présence française en Ontario. En cette occasion, nous allons démontrer au monde entier que nous sommes une province accueillante et ouverte sur le monde, une province qui est fière de sa communauté francophone qui ne cesse d'enrichir notre patrimoine collectif depuis quatre siècles. Et nous allons le dire en anglais et en français, avec tout le sens d'accomplissement qui nous revient.

So I invite my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly to show vision and leadership, as this Legislature did when it unanimously passed the French Language Services Act and when it adopted the Franco-Ontarian Day Act, and to say, with one voice, yes to the independence of the French Language Services Commissioner. As the French expression goes, “jamais deux sans trois,” or good things come in threes. In doing so, we will once again be demonstrating to Ontario francophones that they fully and equally belong here in Ontario.

Je souhaite à tous et à toutes un excellent Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes. Que cette belle et grande célébration soit fêtée avec enthousiasme par tous nos concitoyens aux quatre coins de la province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Merci.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

BIOTECHNOLOGY

Hon. Reza Moridi: I am proud to recognize National Biotechnology Week. For Ontario, this week is particularly worthy of celebration. Our biotech industry is strong, and our province is positioning itself to be a global leader in the emerging bio-economy. We see biotechnology as an important part of Ontario's future. We want our province of Ontario to be the go-to place for innovative multinational partners, investors and customers.

There are so many fields where biology and technology intersect, different areas where we apply our knowledge and craftsmanship to make new biological processes or products. It is this broad nature of biotech that makes it so exciting. Biotech discoveries can transform a wide range of sectors, from health care and clean technology to farming and the auto industry. And while curing cancer and building cars seem to be very different, they have two very important features in common: (1) they are of tremendous global value, and (2) these are sectors where Ontario is particularly strong.

With our world-leading research institutions, collaborative R&D environment and well-educated workforce, we are positioned to grow even stronger, which means, as the new global bio-economy emerges, Ontario can step up as a leader.

This government recognizes this opportunity as part of building an agile and innovative economy. That's why the Ministry of Research and Innovation has several initiatives supporting research and the commercialization of new discoveries.

In addition to funding research, we support organizations like the Ontario Institute for Cancer Research, Ontario Brain Institute, the Health Technology Exchange, and Clinical Trials Ontario. Ontario provided funding to 39 life sciences companies from 2010 to 2012. This supported the creation and retention of more than 1,700 jobs and leveraged a total investment of about \$400 million.

Mr. Speaker, more than half of all life sciences R&D spending in Canada happens here in Ontario, and we are home to a remarkable cluster of top-ranked biomedical researchers, developers and manufacturers generating around \$5 billion in exports to all countries around the world. This cluster is effective because we accomplish so much more when we work together. Gone are the days when innovations came from scientists working alone in their labs. Today, competitive advantages come from collaborations among scientists between the private and the public sectors, and among various jurisdictions. Economic success in the 21st century is built on strategic partnerships, so a key goal for us is to facilitate interactions among researchers, government, industry and innovators to bring innovation and innovative products, technologies and services to market.

Biotechnology Week is a chance to recognize the great prospects for Ontarians in this exciting sector, opportunities that include good jobs and life-changing discoveries.

Our government is committed to helping move more Ontario technologies to domestic and international markets. We will continue to work with the biotech sector to create new opportunities and to establish Ontario as a preferred location for business, innovation and investments.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} Lisa MacLeod: Je suis fière d'avoir le privilège d'adresser l'Assemblée au nom de Tim Hudak et du caucus Ontario PC au sujet de la loi modifiant la Loi sur les services en français. J'aimerais féliciter Madeleine Meilleur et France Gélinas pour le travail qu'elles ont accompli concernant cette loi jusqu'à présent.

Il est important que le commissaire de la francophonie soit justiciable auprès de l'Assemblée et que les membres aient accès à ses rapports et ses conseils.

Il est probable que l'Assemblée a appris dernièrement que j'ai endossé la tâche additionnelle du portefeuille en matière d'affaires francophones au sein du caucus Ontario PC.

Quoique je dois admettre que je commence à peine mes efforts à apprendre le français et que je ne le parle pas couramment, j'ai offert d'endosser cette responsabilité car la langue et la culture françaises sont des sujets importants dans ma circonscription de Nepean–Carleton, au sein de ma ville d'Ottawa, et à l'échelle de la région de l'est de l'Ontario. C'est ainsi la raison pour laquelle je me suis inscrite à un cours de français.

Plusieurs membres de cette Chambre savent que mon mari et moi avons opté d'enregistrer notre fille dans un programme d'immersion précoce en français dès son entrée à la maternelle. Nous avons pris cette décision de l'enregistrer dans ce programme parce que nous sommes réalistes et que nous comprenons que le fait d'être en mesure de parler les deux langues officielles du Canada lui donnera tous les avantages dans ses perspectives d'avenir.

1550

Et de plus, nous avons choisi d'éduquer notre fille en français parce que mon mari, Joe Varner, arbore fièrement son héritage acadien et provient d'une longue lignée de Comeaux, en provenance de Digby, en Nouvelle-Écosse. Malheureusement, sa famille a perdu son héritage acadien peu à peu au fil des ans.

Maintenant en troisième année, Victoria s'exprime couramment dans sa langue seconde et à chaque année elle célèbre la fête de Sainte-Catherine. L'an dernier, sa classe m'a permis de célébrer la fête avec eux et j'ai pu les aider à préparer de la tire. It was very good.

L'enthousiasme démontré par notre fille concernant son héritage mixte Acadien-Écossais est un régal certain pour nous, ses parents. Nous sommes vraiment fiers de voir sa facilité à converser dans nos deux langues.

Lorsque j'ai annoncé à Victoria que j'avais offert de prendre la responsabilité à titre de porte-parole en matière d'affaires francophones, la petite, avec son sens d'humour habituel, roula les yeux et me dit : « Maman, je pourrais accomplir la tâche mieux que toi ».

Laughter.

M^{me} Lisa MacLeod: Le journal Le Droit a approuvé. Ah, les petits délices de la vie d'une porte-parole de l'opposition.

Donc, je suis heureuse d'avoir été nommée à ce nouveau rôle par le chef PC. Ainsi, j'ai créé un nouveau poste au sein de mon équipe afin de prendre ce dossier en main.

Notre adjointe de direction et conseillère en matière d'affaires francophones sera nulle autre que la fille de notre ancien ministre des Affaires francophones, Noble Villeneuve.

Roxane Villeneuve sera la responsable des relations avec les intervenants, les communications et les relations communautaires. Elle travaillera en équipe avec Martin Forget, lequel a accepté d'agir dans un rôle consultatif auprès de mon bureau.

La fin de semaine passée, les délégués représentant l'est de l'Ontario au congrès du Parti PC ont adopté à l'unanimité une résolution notoire qui réitère notre

respect de la culture francophone, l'Hôpital Montfort et la Loi 8.

C'est alors que j'ai pris l'engagement personnel envers l'éducation de langue française en Ontario à titre de porte-parole en matière d'éducation du Parti PC, ayant prêté main forte aux commissions scolaires francophones de ma propre circonscription, et ayant pu discuter avec l'AEFO, la seule union d'enseignants et enseignantes de l'Ontario à m'avoir permis de me joindre à eux lors de leur assemblée générale annuelle. Un esprit de générosité pareil ne s'oublie pas.

Donc, c'est un privilège énorme que d'assumer cette responsabilité et je suis tout à fait prête à travailler avec mes collègues en tant que porte-parole de l'opposition officielle pour les affaires francophones. Merci.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let's say that once you become very good at French, you will not go over time.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Je commence en félicitant la députée de Nepean–Carleton. Elle a fait de gros efforts et ça vaut la peine d'être mentionné.

J'aimerais également joindre ma voix pour remercier M. François Boileau, notre commissaire aux services en français, qui est là en ce moment en poste et qui continuera d'être en poste lorsque la nouvelle loi sera mise en oeuvre. J'aimerais souligner M. Denis Vaillancourt, le président de l'AFO, Peter Hominuk, leur directeur général, et Benjamin Vachet, qui sont ici avec nous pour le passage historique de ce petit projet de loi. C'est un projet de loi que j'ai présenté trois fois—en 2008, en 2011 et en 2013—and qui, j'ai l'impression, se rapproche de plus en plus de la ligne d'arrivée de changer la relation du commissaire aux services en français.

En ce moment, il relève de la ministre déléguée aux services en français et je dois dire qu'on n'a jamais eu aucun problème. La ministre en place a toujours accepté de partager dans son ensemble les recommandations et les rapports du commissaire. Ce n'est pas parce qu'on a un problème que ce projet de loi-là devait être mis en place. C'est vraiment pour assurer la pérennité du poste et pour également donner une coudée franche au commissaire.

Plusieurs de ses recommandations, franchement, n'avaient rien à faire avec les services en français. C'était des recommandations qui allaient à la ministre de la Santé, à la ministre de l'Éducation, à la ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, et cetera. Aussitôt que ce projet de loi-là aura fait le comité et sera devenu loi, il pourra faire ses recommandations directement à ces ministres-là, à travers de vous, bien entendu, monsieur le Président, en déposant ses rapports à tous les députés.

Dans mon poste de critique pour la francophonie, je vous assure que je vais jouer mon rôle pour m'assurer que les ministres qui reçoivent des recommandations de notre commissaire les mettent en oeuvre dans des délais de temps raisonnables. Le temps était venu pour ça.

Il nous a bien servi, notre commissaire. Je suis heureuse des recommandations qu'il a faites et je suis d'accord avec la ministre que des gros changements ont été faits grâce à ses efforts. Mais je crois également que le projet de loi qui a été déposé aujourd'hui, pour lequel nous avons reçu le consentement unanime pour aller en deuxième lecture, deviendra loi sous peu en Ontario et il va continuer de bien nous servir.

Ça m'a fait plaisir d'ajouter ces quelques mots. Bien entendu, je souhaite à tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes une bonne Journée des Franco-Ontariens et un gros, gros merci à M. Gaétan Gervais. Gaétan Gervais est le créateur du drapeau franco-Ontarien. Je sais qu'il m'écoute en ce moment. C'est un résidant de mon comté. Merci, Gaétan, pour tout ce que tu as fait pour nous. On est fier de notre drapeau. Il va flotter partout aujourd'hui et, j'espère, pour toujours. Merci beaucoup.

BIOTECHNOLOGY

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to rise today and speak about the 10th annual National Biotechnology Week, celebrating excellence in biotechnology across the country.

Like many unsung sectors of our economy, biotechnology is more important to Canada's economic and social prosperity than is perhaps known. Since 2007, the biotech industry has grown nationwide by more than 12%. Canada's bioeconomy is worth over \$87 billion.

Biotechnology as a sector of our economy is large and it is growing. And it involves more than many sectors of our economy. Pharmaceutical manufacturing, health care and medicine are all well known, but biotechnology plays an important role in agriculture and food processing as well.

In my riding of Kitchener–Waterloo, biotechnology is not only part of our local economy; it is an increasing part of our world-class universities, the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier.

Less than two years ago, the University of Waterloo opened its Centre for Bioengineering and Biotechnology and boasts more than 80 members from multiple faculties. Its goal is to incorporate partnerships with hospitals, organizations, companies and members of the university's student body as well.

Wilfrid Laurier University, too, has a biochemistry and biotechnology program that attracts talented academics and aspiring students.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to highlight the Ontario Bioscience Innovation Organization. There is an MPP life science caucus initiative, so we are very much part of furthering the research and biotechnology. MPPs need to get involved. It's an important part of the economy, and I'd encourage MPPs to pay attention to this important, growing sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements. I would like to editorialize for a short moment to bring to our attention and a very large thank you on behalf of us all to the interpreters who

provide us with instant French interpretation. I'd like to thank them.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me congratulate Madame Lisa Macleod as my critic. We've known each other for quite a long time.

I want to invite all the members of the assembly to a reception at 4:30 in room 247 and to join us outside at five to 6 p.m. for the raising of the flag.

1600

PETITIONS

GENETICALLY-MODIFIED ALFALFA

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for petitions. The member from Oxford looks enthusiastic, so I'm going to go to him.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have here a petition that was sent to me by Ann Slater of RR 1 Lakeside. She gathered a number of signatures from not only my riding, but a large area around us. It is a petition to stop GM alfalfa.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas genetically modified (GM) alfalfa will contaminate farmers' fields and our food system; and some farmers in Ontario are requesting an environmental assessment in Ontario before the seeds are sold;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take action to prevent the commercial introduction of genetically modified alfalfa in Ontario."

I thank you for the opportunity to present this petition on behalf of Ann Slater.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O'Toole: I have a petition from my riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas industrial wind turbine developments have raised concerns among citizens over health, safety and property values; and

"Whereas the Green Energy Act allows wind turbine developments to bypass meaningful public input and municipal approvals;

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

"That the Minister of the Environment revise the Green Energy Act to allow full public input and municipal approvals on all industrial wind farm developments and that a moratorium on wind development be declared until an independent, epidemiological study is completed into the health and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines."

I'm pleased to sign it, support it and present it to Taylor.

ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES

Mr. Michael Mantha: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas these vehicles are as safe as any motorcycle carrying a passenger since all of the manufacturers of the '2-up machines' have redesigned their original models by extending the wheel bases, beefing up the suspension to allow the carriage of passengers on the machine safely and providing a rear seat, many with handholds;

"Whereas the privilege to ride on secondary highways and trails with two people on a recreational vehicle is denied to off-road vehicle (ORV) operators but is granted to snowmobiles;

"Whereas the definition of an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) in regulation 316/03 no longer reflects the majority of ATVs being marketed and sold in Ontario;

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

"Amend the definition of an ATV to include those that are: (a) designed to carry a passenger; (b) with more than four tires and designed to carry passengers; (c) without a straddle seat, carries passengers and has a steering wheel."

I support this petition, and I will present it to page—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Perth—Wellington.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PROROGATION

Ms. Catherine Fife: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas MPPs are elected to represent their constituents in the Ontario Legislature;

“Whereas prorogation has an important role in Westminster parliamentary systems democracies that should not be abused by the government of the day;

“Whereas the use of prorogation to avoid accountability in sitting Legislatures has become a worrying trend;

“Whereas Ontarians deserve to know when their representatives will be back at Queen’s Park when the Legislature is prorogued;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should take action to ensure that the Premier cannot prorogue without first seeking a resolution from the Legislative Assembly.”

I support this petition and will affix my signature.

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.”

I have been receiving hundreds of signatures. I agree with this petition, and I will send it to the table with Sean.

ONTARIO MUNICIPAL BOARD

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: “Whereas the Ontario Municipal Board is a provincial agency composed of unelected members unaccountable to Ontarians; and

“Whereas the Ontario Municipal Board has the power to unilaterally alter local development decisions made by municipalities and their communities; and

“Whereas the city of Toronto is the largest city in Ontario; and

“Whereas the city of Toronto has a planning department composed of professional planners, an extensive legal department and 44 full-time city councillors directly elected by its citizens; and

“Whereas Toronto’s city council voted overwhelmingly in February 2012 to request an exemption from the Ontario Municipal Board’s jurisdiction;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the ability of the city of Toronto to handle its own urban planning and development; and

“Further, that the Ontario Municipal Board no longer have jurisdiction over the city of Toronto.”

I couldn’t agree more. I’m affixing my signature, and I’m giving it to James to be delivered to the desk.

FAMILY CAREGIVER LEAVE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support the petitions, and I give them to page Daniel.

ALGONQUIN LAND CLAIM

Mr. Victor Fedeli: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are serious concerns with the process leading to the current agreement in principle (AIP) between the AOO, the government of Ontario and the government of Canada, as well as with the selection of certain lands to be transferred to the AOO”—the Algonquins of Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to do the following:

“(1) Amend the AIP”—the agreement in principle—to include protection of the public interest as it is apparent from the AIP that the province did ensure that

its own corporate interests were protected, however, there is no indication that any effort was made to protect the public interest or that it was considered in any balanced fashion;

“(2) Retain Camp Island (as identified by parcel 83-F3) as crown land for public use and that it not be transferred to the AOO as the island has a long history of private ownership and was sold to the crown in 1970 for \$5 only after assurances were given that it would remain in its natural state and be for public use, and the crown would be breaking those assurances and breaching the public trust if the island was transferred to the AOO as the island would then become private land for the enjoyment of few; and

“(3) Ensure Mattawa River Provincial Park (MRPP) remain as crown land for public use and not be transferred to the AOO as the park was created in 1970 and expanded in 1999 in recognition of its historical, cultural, recreational and ecological significance under Ontario’s Living Legacy Lands for Life initiative, and any development in the park would create a severe ecological and environmental disturbance to the area and exclude a very large community of local, national and international visitors from experiencing the uniqueness of this area.”

I will give this to page Ian, whose grandmother is from Sudbury.

1610

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas northern Ontario will suffer a huge loss of service as a result of government cuts to ServiceOntario counters;

“Whereas these cuts will have a negative impact on local businesses and local economies;

“Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

“Whereas northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of decisions to slash operating budgets;

“Whereas regardless of address, all Ontarians should be treated equally by their government;

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

“Review the decision to cut access to ServiceOntario for northerners, and provide northern Ontarians equal access to these services.”

I agree with this petition and present it to you, Massoma.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. John O’Toole: Again, a petition from my riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

“Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario’s automotive heritage while contributing to

the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

“Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

“Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment; and

“Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis, during four to five months of the year;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, request that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks.”

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

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Ms. Catherine Fife: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the proposed changes to physiotherapy services in the province of Ontario effective August 1, 2013, will severely restrict the access to physiotherapy treatments for seniors who live in retirement homes; and

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

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

“That the provincial government guarantees there will be no reduction in services currently available for seniors and people with disabilities who are currently eligible for OHIP-funded physiotherapy.”

I support this petition and will affix my signature.

HOSPITAL PARKING FEES

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m the only one paying attention, it appears. From my riding of Durham, this petition reads as follows:

“Whereas the United Senior Citizens of Ontario has expressed its concerns over the high costs of parking at hospitals in Ontario on behalf of its more than 300,000 members; and

“Whereas thousands of Ontario seniors find it difficult to live on their fixed income and cannot afford these extra hospital parking fees added to their daily living costs; and

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

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

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

I'm pleased to present this to Daniel, one of the pages.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

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

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to sign it and give it to Katherine to be delivered to the desk.

BIKE AND PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY

Mr. Michael Mantha: "Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the undersigned, request the installation of a permanent walkway and bike access on the Batchawana River bridge.

"We, the undersigned, are petitioning to have a walkway and bike access on Batchawana Bridge to ensure the safety of the large number of pedestrians and bikers who cross the bridge daily in Batchawana provincial park and nearby hiking and biking trails. It is only a matter of time before someone is hit due to the complete lack of room on the bridge for pedestrians. The bridge is presently being rebuilt and there is time right now to add the walkway if immediate action is taken."

I agree with this petition and will present it to page Erica.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly and move its adoption.

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

An Act to establish a Financial Accountability Officer / Loi créant le poste de directeur de la responsabilité financière.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 5, 2013, the bill is ordered for third reading.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE DIRECTEUR DE LA RESPONSABILITÉ FINANCIÈRE

Mr. Del Duca, on behalf of Mr. Sousa, moved third reading of the following bill:

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Debate?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's a pleasure for me to rise today and to speak once again, here at third reading, with respect to Bill 95, the Financial Accountability Officer Act, 2013.

We had the opportunity, several of us in this Legislature, to be at committee earlier today to go over, clause by clause, with respect to this particular bill. I thought we had a fascinating discussion, as we often do at committee. I want to commend the members opposite from both parties with respect to the contribution they made to the discussions that we had at committee earlier today.

I think it actually speaks to the broad support that this concept enjoys, not just amongst members of this Legislature but also amongst people from across Ontario. Certainly, I've heard from residents living in my community of Vaughan about the importance of ensuring that tax dollars are spent in the most transparent, accountable way possible here in the Legislature.

I believe I said this when we were debating it at second reading: I believe that this particular move, this particular bill proposing to create this new position, actually is, very much so, a natural evolution of a lot of what has taken place in this chamber over the last nine years, soon to be 10 years, since the Ontario Liberal government came back to power.

I remember speaking about this at second reading and talking about how we introduced legislation way back in

2003 that made it virtually—actually, not virtually—it made it impossible for any outgoing government to effectively lie to the people of Ontario about hidden deficits. We brought the Auditor General in to provide that greater level of transparency and accountability with respect to our government books before a general election campaign can ever take place in the province going forward. Many here and many watching at home will remember that back in 2003, the outgoing Conservative government effectively told the people of Ontario the books were balanced when, in fact, they weren't, Speaker. There was close to a \$6-billion hidden deficit. With us passing that legislation back about 10 years ago, that can't happen any further. I said this at second reading. I'll say it again today.

There was a time in Ontario—a lot of younger people don't remember this time; they actually don't believe that this took place. But it is in fact the case, Speaker, that there was a time in Ontario when governments could spend tens if not hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars to advertise, to publicize government initiatives. Speaker, again, we took action as a party, as a government under the leadership of Dalton McGuinty, at the time—and this has followed through under the leadership of Premier Kathleen Wynne to this day—to make sure that people's tax dollars were being respected and that those monies were no longer being spent on what was effectively thinly veiled partisan advertising.

There's a series of other steps that we've taken over the last 10 years. That's why, when I stood at second reading—in fact, Speaker, back in the spring when we were having discussions about the budget, and this idea, this concept, first came forward and was first discussed, many on this side and many I spoke to do believe—and I certainly do, Speaker—that this is very much the natural extension, the natural evolution, of many of the steps that the Ontario Liberal government has taken over the last 10 years to make sure that that very important level of transparency and accountability is brought to bear on behalf of the people who send us here, the people who work so hard to balance their own chequebooks, their own bank accounts at home to make sure they're investing properly. They send us here on the understanding that we will act in their best interests and in the best interests of what is important to them.

1620

So when we as a government came forward in a budget, as we did this previous spring, and proposed to create this new position, the Financial Accountability Officer, I think that speaks very much to the importance and the emphasis this government is determined to place with respect to making sure that people out there—people watching this and understanding what we're doing here on their behalf—understand and accept and support that we are bringing that level of transparency and accountability.

I do want to commend the third party for their participation at committee earlier today. The member from Kitchener-Waterloo and her colleague spoke today, I

thought, very eloquently and in a very articulate way with respect to some of the valid and constructive concerns they had around some of the proposed amendments, which actually, as I recall, in many cases were successfully adopted at clause-by-clause earlier today.

I don't want to wade too far into anything that might even sort of remotely appear to be partisan, but unfortunately, in keeping with a pattern we've seen here in this Legislature for the last couple of years—I've certainly seen it in the 12 months I've been here—members from the official opposition who were serving on the committee saw fit not to be quite as constructive and spent their time speaking at committee by editorializing and providing sort of prefacing statements that spoke more to their own narrow, sort of crass, partisan interests instead of taking the larger view.

I certainly hope that in the course of the debate here at third reading, we will not hear that kind of unfortunate messaging from members of the official opposition, and that they will take their opportunity on the floor of this chamber today to speak constructively, to talk about why this is moving the province of Ontario forward in the right way.

A couple of things we saw throughout the process: We had a chance, a number of days ago at committee, to hear from the very well-known former Parliamentary Budget Officer from Ottawa, Mr. Kevin Page, an individual whose reputation, when it comes to performing these kinds of duties, when it comes to providing that transparency and accountability—frankly, Speaker, an individual whose reputation, when it comes, as the saying goes, to speaking truth to power, I believe, is unparalleled in our country.

He was good enough to give of his time to allow committee members to ask him questions about his own experiences, having served in Ottawa; having faced those challenges, unfortunately, that Canadians from coast to coast to coast saw him face as he attempted to bring, again, that level of transparency and accountability to what was taking place in Ottawa with the federal Conservative government. Notwithstanding its desire to create a Parliamentary Budget Office in the nation's capital, we saw at every turn, unfortunately, a federal Conservative government that saw fit to try to thwart the work of Mr. Page and his office.

That's why it was very interesting to hear from him directly about his own experiences. It was also very interesting to read his report, to see that he gave us some very sage counsel about how we might improve upon what's actually in the bill. Some of those recommendations, some of those ideas, found their way into the amendments that were put forward today, which we discussed at committee.

Speaker, I think it's important to recognize that this government took into account some of the challenges in the architecture that kind of underpins or was behind or at the very foundation of what was created in Ottawa, when we started out to create this position, this office, this idea or this concept here in Ontario.

I think Mr. Page was actually quite happy to see that we had taken steps in this legislation in Bill 95 to at least do our very best to prevent the same kinds of unfortunate attempts at thwarting this work that we've seen the federal Conservative government of Mr. Harper and his colleagues undertake to do over the last number of years.

I think that when you look at the fact that, working with the other parties here and certainly talking to a number of stakeholders through the budget process, we have created a position that is unprecedented in terms of other provinces in Canada—Ontario being the first to move forward with this kind of proposal, this kind of legislation. When you see what has taken place in other jurisdictions—be it Australia, be it elsewhere—with the success this kind of position has had, I think we are now at a stage, after going through the process, after having the clause-by-clause today, after hearing very directly from Mr. Page—a number of members in this House I'm sure have heard directly from people in their own constituencies, as I have, about the importance of this issue. I think that over the course of the 40 or so minutes that we have for debate here at third reading this afternoon, I look forward to hearing a lot of other articulate, eloquent, but most importantly constructive ideas coming forward, supportive ideas coming forward, supportive messages coming forward from members of the opposition.

I'll tell you why it's extremely important to make sure that we bring that level of transparency and accountability, that we provide that for the people who send us here, the people on whose behalf we are working. It's important because they deserve it. There's no doubt about that. But, Speaker, it's also important because, in the long run, making sure that we are providing that level of transparency and that level of fiscal responsibility is what helps to ensure that this province and our economy continues to grow, continues to move forward—that we continue both in terms of our budgeting process and in terms of appearances at estimates and providing public accounts, and all the work that goes into making sure we are providing the relevant fiscal and economic information to the people who send us here, the people of Ontario.

When we take steps like this and like all of those other steps that I talked about earlier in my remarks today, that evolutionary process that started way back in 2003 and continues to this day with this particular legislation, we see the results. We see the evidence that our plan, this plan of ensuring that we have the requisite amount, the appropriate amount, of transparency and accountability at every stage in the process and the deliberations that we have here—we see evidence clearly that this plan is working. We see evidence that Ontario is moving forward in a very strong way, that our economy has come out of the 2008 global recession. While our recovery continues to require tending and continues to require work, by introducing a position like this, by introducing legislation like this, by including legislation like this in the 2013 budget, this government helps to underscore exactly how important this issue is for us.

Just the other day when the Minister of Finance, someone with whom I'm very proud to serve—Minister Sousa, the member from Mississauga South—went to public accounts, he talked about the fact that we are ahead of schedule—not once; not twice; several times ahead of schedule—with respect to balancing our books, that we remain committed to getting there by 2017-18. We see, for the very first time in a number of years, that the year-over-year difference in government spending has actually dropped because of the hard work and the diligence and that absolute determination on the part of this minister, this Premier and this government to make sure that the people of Ontario get that kind of accountability and transparency that they see.

The number of jobs that have been created since the depths of the recession in 2008—more than 400,000 jobs have been created. Again, this is additional evidence, additional proof that the balanced and responsible approach of the Wynne government is working for the people of Ontario. And I hear it; I hear it in Vaughan. It doesn't matter if I'm at Vaughan Mills, hanging out at Legoland with my daughters, or at Wonderland over the course of the summer, or I might have been at the McMichael gallery, or the Binder Twine Festival in Kleinburg—just the other day, the first Saturday after Labour Day, a time-honoured annual tradition in my community of Vaughan, in the village of Kleinburg. I heard it loud and clear from people who understand that the steps we are taking here in this Legislature on this side of the House are the kinds of measures, the kinds of mechanisms, that will produce results for a very strong economic recovery continuing, for a very strong prosperous future for the people of Ontario.

Most of all, when our economy is firing on all cylinders, when we get to that point where we are moving in that right direction because of the decisions we're making, because of the level of transparency and accountability that we're bringing to bear, that's the best way for this chamber, for this Legislature, to help people in their everyday lives. That's something that I know that our government has created, too.

I talked about this earlier: The deficit-reduction timetable is far ahead of schedule. We are perhaps the only jurisdiction in Canada—certainly, as you compare us to what has taken place in Ottawa with the federal Conservative government, our record in terms of balancing the books, or getting back to balance, is remarkable, especially when you consider the fiscal mess that was left here in the province of Ontario back in 2003. It was not just a fiscal mess but an ethical mess, a very important ethical mess, because the party opposite chose to hide the fact that there was nearly \$6 billion in deficit from the people of Ontario.

When you look at this kind of position, when you consider what a Financial Accountability Officer will be able to do in terms of lending analysis and research and opportunities for members of all three parties—not just the governing side, but all three parties—to come forward with important questions about the financial and econom-

ic components of any particular proposal or bill, when you consider that that's a new opportunity—a new tactic, let's call it—to help every member of this House do a better job, from my perspective, that means that the legislation we produce here, the proposals we produce here, the ideas that the people across Ontario send us here to come up with on their behalf, will ultimately be stronger.

1630

There are tons of reasons for every single member in this House to stand in their place when this comes for a vote to make sure that we send a very loud and clear message—that the proposal to create the Financial Accountability Office or Officer here, through Bill 95, is something that deserves very, very strong support from this chamber, from members on all three sides of the House—because it's important to send a message to the people of Ontario that we understand your concerns. We are right there with you when it comes to spending the tax dollars that you send to us on your behalf so that we can invest in building a stronger, more prosperous economy and help you in your everyday lives. We are here to do it. We are here to work with you.

I think every member in this House, both in the debate today and when this comes to a vote, has the opportunity to work with us to send a very clear message to people in all of their communities, whether they're from Scarborough-Guildwood or Scarborough Centre, Brampton West or Ottawa-Orléans, or any other riding across this province—to send that very clear message: "We understand. We support your desire. We respect that you deserve to have the level of accountability and transparency that we have always delivered throughout these last 10 years." With the creation of this position and the passage of this bill, Bill 95, we will help achieve that outcome.

I call on every member, both in the comments they're going to make here this afternoon and when this comes to a final vote, to stand with us to support this bill and move this item forward. Let's get it passed, let's get on with the work and let's continue to move Ontario's economy forward.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: It is my pleasure today to be sharing the time with the member from Nipissing, who is our finance critic.

I've had the privilege of being here for 18 years, and I put things into context. This bill—I'm going to try to stay on Bill 95, An Act to establish a Financial Accountability Officer. It's another layer of government, another layer of bureaucracy.

We don't disagree with the intent here. It was not the Liberal Party that brought this in. It was actually the NDP that brought this in as part of a budget motion. The Liberals had no intention of doing it, and they have no intention of following it. If you listened to the meeting this morning on the clause-by-clause and the amendments, you would know full well that they have no idea.

To put some context on this—and there were some references made by the prior speaker, who has been here for a brief time; he was a staff person for quite a while before that. I would say this: His references were unnecessary and unhelpful and not informed. In fact, it was Stephen Harper, the Prime Minister of Canada, who initiated the budget office in Ottawa, and he appointed Mr. Page as well. Some of the discussions—people have to look at Hansard to find out. The discussions on Bill 95, to some extent, are not clarified unless we deal with these things about the budget officer in Ottawa. That became quite newsworthy during the debate around the F-35. The role and definition of the scope for the budget officer was the real question, and his access to all the information. It may be correct that it wasn't within his mandate to have access to some of the information.

In fairness, to be honest, there were 13 amendments moved. One of them was the NDP motion, which we strongly supported, and that motion was to ensure that they had access to "all the information," not just the financial, and I commend the critic on the NDP for that.

I don't trust the Liberals, and I want to frame this—I don't trust them at all. But here's a bit of background. This bill is quite a small bill. It's six and a half pages. It's got 13 amendments, and the number of sections in it—there are 19 sections. But really, substantively, once you get beyond the description section, under the mandate and the reporting part of it is the substantive part of the bill. It's about a page and a half—really nothing in it. In fact, of six and a half pages, half of it is in French, so it's really only about three pages long. So it's not a very comprehensive bill.

We tried to make some positive amendments, and I could put those on the record. But, Mr. Speaker, I should say this: The Auditor General for Ontario has served the people of Ontario very well, telling us what is or is not working well, whether it's under the Highway Traffic Act or whether it's under provincial offences or a whole range of issues that they can look into.

I did file with the committee a report which all of us have access to. This report was issued—I'm going to read it here; it's worth putting it on the record. I gave all members a copy of it. It's called The Auditor General's Review of the 2011 Pre-Election Report on Ontario's Finances. It was issued by Jim McCarter, who, at that time, was the Auditor General of Ontario and prior to that he was the assistant auditor general. He issued the report June 28 before the election in October.

I'm going to put this in context because the discussion on this is that the auditor can only look back on issues that he wants to comment on. In fact, this report—which is authorized by legislation, I should say, and I'm going to put it in context:

"The government tabled its 2011 Pre-Election Report on Ontario's Finances on April 26, 2011,"—and I'm reading from the report—"as required by the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, 2004...." That's the act that required them, prior to an election, to issue a financial accountability report—that report was done by

the auditor—and this was being directed to look forward at the revenue and to look at the expenditure side and see if it was any way of being in balance, and here's what he said.

I see the parliamentary secretary has left, so he's not even paying attention.

It says in the report, "However, we concluded that many of the assumptions underlying its estimates for program expenses (that is, expenses excluding interest on the public debt and reserves) were optimistic and aggressive rather than cautious," which were the—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I seek unanimous consent that we allow the committees to sit at this time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Timmins–James Bay is seeking consent that the committees sit at this time.

Interjection: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I hear no.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm sure the House leaders could have slashed that out if he'd only work with the other House leaders. Anyway, that's a fact. I want that on the record as well. Thank you very much. The House leader for the NDP is trying to play other subliminal games, I suppose, that cause distrust here.

I would only say this, though: that in that context, there's the auditor saying that they made assumptions.

This report is worth every person in Ontario looking at, because what they said here—and it's all in here. I don't have enough time. If I had an hour, I could really cover it. Here's the issue. What was actually going on at the time was this: The actual average growth in Ontario from 2003 to 2011 in health care was—average growth per year was 7.1%. Their pre-budget election platform was cutting that to 3.6%, cutting health care in half.

The next thing was education, which was 4.8%, and it was being cut to 3%; post-secondary was 8.6%, and it was being cut to 2%.

Children and social services was 6.7%, going to 3.2%. In fact, they were going from an average spending per year of 7% to 1.8%, and the auditor said it was optimistic and aggressive; that could not be achieved.

Where are we now? The deficit is bigger, not smaller, and that's been the whole point of why it's out of control.

There are two other reports—now this, in context—my colleague the critic for finance, Mr. Fedeli, will be commenting in some detail with all the work he's done.

We had one report from the Auditor General, a special report in 2013—everybody's seen it—on the closing of the gas plant; half a billion dollars wasted—a scandalous waste of money. They withheld information from the committee. It's still a question in question period by both our party, Mr. Hudak, as well as from the NDP to allow the committee to have access to information. What did they do? They redacted most of the reports and never sent them all the reports. In fact, they deleted half the emails. You can't trust them. A person you're having a

contract relationship with that you can't trust makes it dysfunctional, and I suggest now that this government can't govern.

This bill is strictly wallpaper. It's got nothing to do with anything. If someone's not telling the truth, they're not telling the truth. That's just one report, and we're now waiting for the second report which we know they have a draft of. They can say honestly they don't have the report, but they have a draft; I'm sure of it. This report's going to be on the Oakville plant. That Oakville plant—I'm telling you now, viewers of Ontario: that gas plant scandal is a \$1-billion boondoggle—\$1 billion. You got nothing for it. In fact, it's more than that because some of the plants—in Lambton, they don't want the gas plant there. TransCanada does not want to be on public; they want to own the property. In fact, none of those plants have generated one megawatt of energy.

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Then we see the whole tragic mess they've made of the equine industry, the Slots at Racetracks Program—a great report written on this that is very, very critical of this government and its ability to manage.

Not only that; there's another report here. This one is by the Fraser Forum on the budget in Ontario. Here's a picture of the then-minister, who then resigned. Talk about accountability. He ran from the fire. It says here, Ontario Budget 2012: A Missed Opportunity. It went on to say—well, it was devastating. In fact, I think that was why he resigned—this whole report with his picture. It went on to say some things like, "Had Duncan actually seized the opportunity to balance Ontario's books, he could have done so in just two years—the same time horizon as the federal Liberals in the 1990s. In fact, if Duncan had emulated Paul Martin and cut program spending by" up to 9% "over two years, planned ... spending for 2013-14 would have decreased from \$117 billion to \$103 billion and the planned \$13 billion deficit would have been erased."

Our leader, Tim Hudak, has said nothing but that. When they make these statements about what we're going to do or not do—what we've put on the table is an across-the-board public sector wage freeze. It saves \$2 billion. It doesn't talk about anybody getting laid off or any cuts in service. What is this government doing? They're cutting physiotherapy. They're cutting your access to diabetic strips. They're cutting back access to drugs.

A patient just died today in my riding whom I had met here with the Minister of Health. That patient died today. His name is Mr. Derry, and I'm just heartbroken that this is a result of an inability to access the proper medication at the right time.

This government is not fit to govern, and this accountability bill is just another opportunity to say, listen, I can't work with someone I can't trust, and I don't trust this government. That is a fact. Whether it's your electricity bill, or another good example of how recklessly—for the people of Ontario who I'm really speaking to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I hate to break up the event, but there seem to be four people talking in the middle of the—if you'd like to go back to your seats or go outside to have your meeting, I'd appreciate it.

Continue with the debate. Thanks.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very, very much. I lost a few seconds there, so I've got to get to this report. This one here is a report called the Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services. This one here was done by Don Drummond. Don Drummond was Paul Martin's deputy minister. This is not some conservative person, necessarily—a fiscal conservative, perhaps; yes. He had 362 recommendations. Our leader, Tim Hudak—it's the basis of our platform, generally. You can't spend more than you earn for very long. We are robbing from the future of this province and our young people. Some of them here, the pages, will be paying off the debt.

Right now, every man, woman and child in Ontario, under the McGuinty-Wynne government, owes \$22,000. In fact, we're spending about—I believe it's \$28 million, every single day, more than we earn. They are mortgaging the future as we speak. It's not sustainable. We see how healthy the economy is. RIM almost closed. That's our poster child success story, and it's going to be shaved off and put into a number of pieces, I'm sure.

This recommends many of the decisions here that have to be made, and I've come to the conclusion, after 18 years here—here's how it really works here: We are elected in the trust of the people of Ontario, our constituents, to do the right thing at the right time for the right reasons. Anybody, with no consideration at all, could say yes all the time. It's like parents spoiling their child, saying, "Can I have the car? Why can't I have a cell-phone?" and never building any accountability into that.

This is what has happened to this government. They've given the teachers everything. They've given everybody everything they want. In fact, their average payroll increases have exceeded—this is what the Auditor General said—the growth in the standard of living or the cost of living in the last two settlements in the province of Ontario. That's why you have a structural deficit. You're expanding the growth faster than you are the revenue.

There's another report that serves as, "We've got people looking at it." We don't need another level of bureaucracy. I asked in committee, of the parliamentary secretary and indeed of the minister, Mr. Sousa, "You've got this idea, and we're going to start to work together and we're going to build accountability." Wouldn't it be a good way to say, "How much is it going to cost," first? I'm not saying how much it should cost. How much is it going to cost? They're planning this office, and the rent, the computers, the business cards, the severance packages, the insurance plans—how much is it going to cost to have this office? They have no idea. What they said is that they have no idea. You can't spend money you don't have. It's like me wanting to have another car. If I've lost my job I have to get rid of the car, not buy another one.

We know this. You know this, Speaker. You're a person with a great background in labour negotiations, I think. Here's what has happened: They've lost complete control. The only way they solve any problem is to write a cheque, a promissory note. It's like the mess they've made of the subway debate in Toronto. I wouldn't have them park my car. I have no trust for them. They just squander money recklessly without any accountability.

They actually defeated the motion that would have allowed this proposed officer of the Legislature to have access to "all the information." Can you imagine? They were forced into this, remember, by the NDP, who probably mean what they say. But I don't trust them. We're going to have another office. It's going to cost more money and I have no idea what he's going to do. The Auditor General could do it today; just give the Auditor General a broader scope of practice, and I'm certain he or she could account for the future forecasting. How much is full-day kindergarten going to cost? Were there any other options? Those are appropriate questions. Why couldn't they report to the finance and economic affairs committee?

We don't need more bureaucrats; we need less bureaucrats. We need more accountability by the ministers themselves. We had a question today on the Ornge helicopter from Mr. Klees, who has been the lead on another scandal: the Ornge helicopter scandal. There was a person who died because of a mistake from the operations of Ornge helicopter. That has been in the news for the last two to three years. It has been absolute chaos. The gas plants are just one part. eHealth is another part. The whole scandal on the gas plants is just unbelievable.

There's one more group that I think you should be aware of, and that's the people of Ontario. I talk to them regularly. People say, "Do you use social media stuff like Twitter and all that stuff?" I say, "Yes, I use social networks." I go to Tim Hortons about every single day I can, and three or four times on the weekends—different ones, from Uxbridge to Scugog and Clarington, and I talk to people. I listen to people. I say, "What's on your mind? What do you think the top issues are?" That's a social contact. This idea of tweeting and all this other stuff is not person-to-person, listening effectively and looking them in the eye and saying, "I earned your trust to be your representative." I don't sense this at all—Kathleen Wynne is a great chatterbox. She's always having these conversations—the Premier, I should say, with all respect, and I do respect that. I want to correct that.

It troubles me when these relationships from time to time are damaged. I am waiting for—our member from Nipissing is here now. He has led, on half of Tim Hudak and on behalf of our caucus, the most accountable discussion that has been held in this place certainly in the last number of years. This is on trying to bring some truth to power, that was said before, on the gas plants.

We've asked questions on it. The Premier has befooled us by saying that it's the House leader. The House

leader says, “It’s not within the scope of the charge that’s laid to the committee.”

I have more to say. I want to thank the staff that did a lot of the background work for us, the research paper by Jeff Parker—and the staff of the committee did a marvellous job. I was upset a couple of times, and I’ve made a very—and the last thing I should say is this: This whole debate has been time-allocated. It has been manipulated. They have limited the debate. In committee, they have limited the access to the information. It has been manipulated, and it is part of—what I’m trying to frame to you here: I say accountability starts here, it starts now, and I haven’t seen it yet. We’re dealing with the very bill that tends to deal with it.

I wish I had more time, but I do appreciate you listening respectfully.

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Mr. Jim Wilson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I seek unanimous consent from the House to allow our committees to sit as per normal. I’m sorry there was a mix-up a little earlier.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The House leader of the official opposition seeks unanimous consent to convene the committee meetings—that was done earlier.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I heard a no, so it won’t happen.

Continue with the debate.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This place never ceases to amaze me, Mr. Speaker. I just have to say that—a surprise every minute.

I wanted to start by saying that if you’re here for a while, you develop—all of us do—some peccadilloes. It’s true. I’ve been here seven years; I’m into my eighth year now. So, for example, when I walk up the grand staircase, I always like to rub the shoulder of Agnes Macphail’s bust there. It sounds a little racy, but just her shoulder—trust me. That’s really just to honour her, but I do admit, Mr. Speaker, it’s a little bit superstitious of me as well.

The other thing I do—the member from Beaches—East York always says, “Another day in paradise.” My shtick is I say, “Another day, another billion,” and I’ve said it every day, just about, I think, that I’ve been here.

But, in fact, I’ve learned I’m incorrect. It’s actually more than \$1 billion for every day that we sit in this place that we spend in this place.

I want to start where the member from Durham left off to say that that’s a lot of money. That’s a lot of money. It’s not just our money. It has really very little to do with the members in this chamber. It’s the money that’s worked for, paid for, by some incredibly hard-working Ontarians who don’t, these days, have a lot of money to spare.

Last night, I was at a poverty forum, and I listened to people who are living on social assistance. I can tell you

that when you start to talk in the millions and billions, it’s way over their head, because they’re lucky to speak most weeks in the hundreds. They, too, are paying tax into the coffers of this place.

So I can see that the member from Durham and his party have a point. This is an administration—the Wynne-McGuinty administration—that has actually doubled the real debt that this province has managed to accrue. Since Confederation, we developed a debt, a real debt, and in 10 years it’s been doubled. That’s a substantial accomplishment, if you want to look at it that way.

My very first introduction to this place and money when I was first elected was a government that had a bit of a surplus. I think it was about \$24 million left over. There was no deficit that year; that was before the recession hit in 2008—and that money went out the window. That money went out the window.

I know that one group that received some of that money was a cricket club. It wasn’t just some money they received; they received \$1 million just for asking. A cricket club received \$1 million.

Now, I can tell you that that doesn’t go over very well with groups like I met with last night, that when you’re trying to get by on just over \$500 a month or just over \$1,000 a month, to hear that a cricket club that asked for \$100,000 got \$1 million they didn’t know what to do with, doesn’t go over well.

Of course, in the years post that announcement, that \$1 million dollars seems like pretty chump change, because quite frankly, we have seen wasted in this place about \$3 billion—about \$3 billion since I’ve been here.

Where has the money gone? Well, there was the \$1 billion on eHealth—gone, and still no eHealth. There’s about that same amount, when all the dust settles, from Ornge, and, of course, now we’re looking at the movement of the power plants and what that costs. That’s going up by the hundreds of millions by the day and by the account.

Some \$3 billion—do you know how many houses that could have built, Mr. Speaker? How many paycheques for those on social assistance that could have helped along? Do you know how many—for example, I had a school group here from Runnymede elementary school. They’re desperate for room. They’re crowded; they’re living in portables. You know how many classrooms that money could have built?

Do you know that instead of, for example, delisting eye exams—which this government also has done—we could relist eye exams for those who can’t afford to pay for them? The money could have gone there.

Imagine transit—the hot mess, as our leader, Andrea Horwath, describes it, of transit planning from this government. We have been through many, many ribbon-cuttings. How many ribbon-cuttings does it take to actually get something you can ride on to work? Imagine how much transit \$3 billion could have built.

So that’s why the Financial Accountability Office is such a core and key demand that we in the New Democratic Party have put forward to this government. In fact,

in the last budget process, we were the ones who put forward all of the substantive motions to this government which they adopted.

I just want to kind of remind people what those were. We asked for the five-day home care guarantee. We asked for an extra \$200 for those who are living on next to nothing, on social assistance, that it not be clawed back. We asked for youth employment programs. We asked for a 15% reduction in auto insurance. And, you know, we got them—at least the promise of them. Of course, the promise of them is different than the reality of them, but we're working on it. That's where the Financial Accountability Office comes in, and it was a demand we made after, if people remember, the initial budget consultations.

By the way, we did our budget consultations with the people in Ontario. We didn't do it with the Don Drummonds, we didn't do it with the bankers, we didn't do it with the insurance companies, we didn't do it with our friends in EllisDon. We actually went out and asked people in Ontario what they needed and what they wanted, and they spoke to us, thousands of them spoke to us, and then we took that and we synthesized it into the demands we made. But what we heard from them is, "Liberals don't keep their promises. How do we know we will get our demands?" and that's where we came up with the Financial Accountability Office. So let's just talk about it.

By the way, before I go on, I want to talk about the fact that, yes, we mirrored this on the federal budget office, and the member from Durham fails to mention that that office actually called the Harper government to account in a pretty significant way. If we remember the F-35 scandal—and it was a scandal—fighter jets that their government said would cost about \$9 billion ended up being—the tab for that would have been up around the \$30-billion, \$35-billion mark, and that was done because they, in essence, had our version of the Financial Accountability Office. We wouldn't have known that.

Oh, by the way, history—history is an interesting thing. They say if you don't read it, you're doomed to repeat it. Well, again, to the member from Durham, he sat in a Conservative government that had a majority government, of course, in this province before them, that brought in closure motions all the time, time allocation motions all the time. So he can't really now say that there's a problem with time allocation motions, not based on history, anyway.

So what will this office do? Well, it is proactive. That's the joy of it. The joy of the Financial Accountability Office will be that it will be proactive, that it will look at money before it's spent, not as the Auditor General does, which is to look at what's been spent and how efficacious that was. Now, this office will look forward. It will say, "If you bring this bill in, if you put this into place or that into place, as the case may be, this is what you're going to end up spending." Boy, oh, boy, it will be interesting to see—just a thought—once this office is up and running—and by the way, it will save way more

money than it will cost. I think we've pegged the cost at around \$2.5 million, which is a lot less than other government offices. It will save that easily. Certainly the federal example has saved that easily for the taxpayers. This will save that money.

It will just be interesting; for example, if we went to the Financial Accountability Office and asked about the transportation minister's estimates on what it will cost to build a subway. That will be interesting, because we hear, certainly from our city councillor friends and others, that in fact it's a gross underestimation of what that line will actually cost. Again, this is an example of something we could check into. We could say, "Is it really \$1.4 billion or \$1.8 billion? What is it? What will it cost? What will it cost to maintain, and what will the engineering costs be?" etc. That's the kind of role that the Financial Accountability Officer can play. This is a critical role because it can save us money.

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My friends in the Progressive Conservative Party, the official opposition, should be happy, should be delighted with this. They should be dancing. The member from Durham should be doing a little jig. The Financial Accountability Office will save us money. If it's effective—and of course, we'll be watching—it should save us way more money than it will cost us. It certainly would have saved us, as I said—and I go back to that \$3-billion-and-counting mark. It certainly might have saved us many millions that could have been used to alleviate poverty, and again, I spoke to those people last night, who are living in poverty. Think about that.

Poverty is not destined to be with us. It's an aberration. It needn't happen. I've been to countries where they don't have our poverty problem. I've seen them in action. We could do that. We could get there if we managed our finances better. That's the reality. Surely and ethically, isn't that where we want to go?

I remember this government talking about a dental plan, for example. Remember the dental plan?

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Yes, a dental plan. Wouldn't it be great to be able to offer a dental plan to those who cannot afford dentistry? That would be wonderful. We could have used part of that \$3 billion to do just that. The 170,000-plus families who are waiting an average of 10 to 12 years or more for affordable housing in this province—a national disgrace—we could have used that money to house them.

This is the sad reality of those tax dollars, those precious tax dollars. Anybody who works hard can tell you, who works making an average salary in the province of Ontario and desperately tries to get by—not even those living in poverty; those who are living in the middle class, who are desperately just trying to get by, whose jobs are precarious. We know already that almost half the jobs in Ontario are precarious. When they hear about \$3 billion going nowhere, doing nothing, they want some accountability.

So again, the reason we moved on this, the reason we asked for this and the reason the government was forced to the table on this—I think in part to save their socks, of course, but also because they know the people actually want this—is this is immensely popular. People want to know, before the money goes out the window, how much it's going to cost them, and they want to rein that in. They want some control over what's going to happen.

And even to be fair, the best laid plans, you know: Sometimes you just can't predict particularly well into the future. That's why we need another set of eyes to look at what's being planned, to help with the legislative process no matter who's in government, to plan a little bit so the money that we really desperately need, we can actually use and have. That's what this is about.

I'm going to leave some time for my friends here. I'm going to leave some time for the member from Kitchener-Waterloo and also for the member from Davenport. The member from Kitchener-Waterloo, I'm sure, will want to talk about some of the amendments that were made and why.

But the critical point here really has very little to do with money and has everything to do with ethics. It has very little to do with an office and somebody sitting behind a desk and has everything to do with the people who sent us here in the first place, those who live in our constituencies, those people who have a hard time—whether they're living in poverty or they're living in the middle class—making ends meet every month, and where every added tax burden is an added tax burden. It's to them that we are accountable. That's why we truly need to be accountable, not in terms of the Auditor General or even the Ombudsman coming in and saying, "It's not working. It didn't work. This was a waste of money," but before the mistakes are made, right out of the gate. When they look at legislation and say, "This isn't going to work. This is going to cost more than projected," that's when we need that office, and that's when we need it the most.

This is a prudent move. It's a wise move. It's a move that any business and any organization would engage in, and so should we as government. It's a move that has proved its efficacy at the federal level. We know it works. That's why it upset that sitting government so much: because it works so well. We need it here, and we certainly need it in terms of some of the announcements coming from the government. To wit, I mentioned the subway, but there are many others. We need to look at those figures. We need to see if those figures are actually the real figures of what they purport to be before the money is wasted.

To all of those people who could have benefited from that \$3 billion, I say: We're changing course here. Trust me, it's only because of the work of the New Democratic Party and our colleagues that we are, because truly, we set the agenda with the last budget and truly, this is our bill. This is not an act of the government; this is an agreement with the government to act on something we came up with and we brought in.

But more importantly, we didn't do it alone. Again, thank you to all those thousands of people who we consulted with—the real people we're accountable to: the people who elected us—to bring this forward.

Here's to the Financial Accountability Office sooner rather than later. Let's get it going. Let's get it being effective.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand to talk about Bill 95. It has been quite an interesting process, actually. Really, what is happening in here today is truly an exercise in democracy. This debate on Bill 95 would not be happening if we were not in a minority government setting. Although I've been here for one year, I still remain optimistic about the way that parties can work together.

I did want to talk a little bit about the clause-by-clause process, because taking a piece of legislation, crafting it and making it stronger in the past has not always been possible because the Liberals had a majority government. I quite clearly remember four years ago, when I came to watch a piece of education legislation move through the House, and there were strong recommendations, smart, pragmatic recommendations that came from the NDP and the PCs at the time, and every suggestion was struck down because—well, because they could do that. They didn't necessarily have to listen and they didn't have to collaborate and be part of it.

I do think, though, that the minority government setting has great potential. As a New Democrat and as a representative of Kitchener-Waterloo, I'm incredibly proud that we have been able to make Bill 95, the Financial Accountability Office, a reality in the province of Ontario.

This morning, though, as we went through clause-by-clause, we were able to make it stronger for a couple of reasons. One is that we consulted with Kevin Page, who—it's been referenced already in the House—went through a very difficult and somewhat painful learning experience as the budget officer at the federal government. He served, actually, at the pleasure of the Prime Minister. That's why with this office it's so important to have that independence for the Financial Accountability Officer and to have that autonomy. This morning, as we were going through clause-by-clause, we felt as a party that we needed to embed that principle of independence and autonomy into the legislation.

For instance, this morning we expanded the scope a little bit of what information the Financial Accountability Officer could access. We used the example of the F-35. This came directly from Mr. Page when he appeared as a delegate to the committee. In that example, when Mr. Page was actually trying to get to the real cost of the F-35s, he wanted access around plane requirements, production schedules and specifications of those planes so that he could actually give an accurate financial assessment to the Prime Minister—who may or may not have been very interested in getting an accurate financial as-

essment, but I believe that Mr. Page and the people who worked in his office were determined to do that.

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In the case of the Financial Accountability Officer here in this province, that person, he or she, whoever it may be, and the staff they work with will be able to access all information that is relevant to providing to every MPP in this House an accurate assessment and analysis of the cost of any policy going forward, be it a white paper, be it a private member's bill.

I often think that what I would like to do is find out the true cost to the people of this province of proroguing this Parliament last October, because at that time over 100 orders on the book, over a year's worth of work was actually thrown out the window. There was a cost to prorogation. There was a cost to running, there was a cost to hiding from accountability and I'm actually very curious to find out what that cost was. Certainly, that's why it's at the finance committee, and hopefully the government will call that bill at some point so we can actually have an informed debate about the rules and regulations and the role of prorogation in a parliamentary setting.

We also, this morning, were able to ensure that there would be no excuse; there would be no reason to avoid providing information to the Legislature. We ensured that private information would be protected, but it would not be an excuse for the government of the day, be it Liberal, PC or NDP. We could never use that excuse to not provide a comprehensive picture of the cost of any policy going forward. We were quite pleased that this was actually supported by all the parties in this instance.

Finally, we were able to ensure that if at any time the Financial Accountability Office is being stymied or blocked or prevented from doing its job, this Legislature has the right to know—full disclosure—and therefore the people of this province would have the right to know, to what extent the Financial Accountability Office was being blocked. I think this speaks to a broader trust issue, and my colleague from Durham who sat on the committee over the last few days and through the clause-by-clause this morning expressed great frustration. I think that frustration is real, and I think it's in our best interest as legislators to admit that there is a serious trust issue in the province of Ontario. And if one party has a problem, then we all have a problem because it undermines civic engagement. It undermines the power of our democracy.

Some people would say, "Well, why do you have to go to this length? Why do you have to go this distance to ensure that government is truly accountable?" I think the track record speaks for itself. Perhaps, not to get too partisan, the 407 is truly another example. I mean, we can talk about gas plants, we can talk about eHealth, but every time I pay to drive on the 407, I do wonder what revenue we are losing as a province because it was sold under the Mike Harris government. Wouldn't it have been an informed debate if we actually had a dollar amount that we could point to, as to the failure of that decision?

I am disappointed in some respects, though, because there are games that are being played around this office.

It's just too important; we just need to get it right. This morning, there was some filibustering and some delaying of the clause-by-clause, which was really unfortunate, because this piece of legislation will set the tone for this entire session, I believe. People want to see us getting something done. When you're working as many hours as some of us do, it feels good when you actually are productive. So I am absolutely excited by the potential of the Financial Accountability Office, and I totally disagree with the member from Durham's classification that it is just wallpaper.

If he had been able to take the time to fully read and explore and look at the research that the research staff provided MPPs with around the Financial Accountability Office, the comparative research about where an office like this has proven to be very successful in other foreign jurisdictions, there would be no question. If you were truly looking at this bill with the eyes of someone who is actually willing to get something done, then you cannot question it. It is forward-thinking. It is pragmatic.

People at the door in the by-elections, for instance—we were able to knock on the door as New Democrats during the by-elections this summer and talk about this office. People get it. The people of this province understand that this office is needed, and was probably needed a long time ago. But because it's a minority government, we get to bring it forward. We get to bring this to the House; we get to debate it; we get to make it stronger; we get to vote on it, potentially tomorrow. We need to get this office up and running.

The member from Durham called it "wallpaper"; I totally disagree. It's a pessimistic, cynical view of an office where clearly the legislation brings another level, another layer of integrity to the spending that goes on in this province.

You know, we've been asked a lot of questions, though, over the last few weeks. They say, "This could affect you. If the NDP is government in the future, you will be held to the same account," and that's good. We are not afraid of accountability. In fact, we have a very strong record across the country, provincial NDP governments, of balancing budgets, of reducing deficit and of raising the bar on accountability, and, quite honestly, I'm quite proud of that.

We have to bring forward a piece of legislation like this as a programmed time allocation because, quite honestly, for almost two years, we have over-debated, to the point of being exhausted, pieces of legislation that should have been debated for two hours. The co-operative housing is one example—I think 17 hours—a perfectly common sense piece of legislation that needn't have been dragged out to the level that it was.

So there's a good reason for the Financial Accountability Office to be a programmed motion: because it's too important to play games with. As we went through the clause-by-clause this morning and as we made this piece of legislation stronger, in a fairly collaborative way, aside from some of the game-playing, we should all be able to stand up with some sense of assurance and

pride that this is a new measure of accountability that the people of the province can look to and say, “Okay, the people that we sent here”—because we’ve been sent here to work for the people of this province—“have recognized that there is a trust issue in the way that this government spends money, and there is a new and a renewed effort upon all parties to reprioritize spending in the province of Ontario.”

Some people—because I’m the critic for economic development and trade—have actually come out and said, “You know, this potentially could increase confidence.” It should increase confidence because we are raising the bar on accountability in the economy of the province of Ontario. We have to remember that there are billions of dollars out there just sitting in corporate bank accounts that need to come into play. We can point to Bay Street, to the corporations, and say, “Listen, we are playing hardball now. We’re not spending like thieves. We are not spending money without having a proper assessment of those policies. We are truly pushing ourselves collaboratively. Whether you want to come kicking or screaming, we are raising the bar on accountability, and I am absolutely proud about that.” As I said, people do understand it.

I understand, though, that this has been—I understand that the PCs are actually trying to course correct a little bit, because for two years, very little has been accomplished. We’ve been in a stalemate. With the voting and the support of the Financial Accountability Office, there exists the potential to actually signal to businesses—small and medium-sized businesses, corporations in the province of Ontario—that we are ready to hold ourselves to the same level of account as they do. We are more understanding of the financial situation, the financial reality of this province.

You know, getting the right information is that key piece, I think. At estimates over the last few weeks, it’s been very interesting to be able to question the Minister of Finance extensively about policy decisions that have, in turn, affected the financial state of this province. Just yesterday, I was asking him about, for instance, Bruce Power. Their headquarters is out of province, so Bruce Power does not pay taxes to the province of Ontario. They pay a federal tax and then they pay a provincial tax where their headquarters are, and that is part of the energy policy. The same goes for wind farms.

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We have to be cognizant of the fact that every time the government makes a policy decision on energy, on the economy, on infrastructure, on transit—those policy decisions, in the past, have not been fully accounted for. That will change with the passing of Bill 95. It has been a long, long time coming. But getting the information is key. It’s the first step in the right direction.

Of late, much has been made of MPPs’ rights to documentation of the business of the government. It’s been a long, hard fight at the justice committee, for instance—and even at estimates. We sought some information on the full costing of the Ontario Northlander and we were

denied that access because it’s another ministry. Any money that any ministry is spending in this House, from a legislative perspective, we should have a full accounting of. That’s just a whole other door that will be opened to every member of this House.

Why there was some resistance at the beginning from the PCs, I personally don’t understand. I think that in many respects, perhaps there is now an acknowledgement that voting against accountability is just not a good idea, and no party has a monopoly on accountability, as some parties pretend they do. I think, actually, we did push the envelope on this, and I have to give credit to our leader, Andrea Horwath, and the entire caucus, because financial accountability was the underpinning of all of the budget asks last year. When we put forward the ask to actually have a youth employment strategy, for instance, and a home care strategy, and we were trying to effect affordability for Ontarians by reducing auto insurance—these are tangible, meaningful goals that we brought to the budget discussion. But all of it was underpinned by having an effective and powerful Financial Accountability Office, because otherwise, it’s just another budget cycle. And another budget cycle that does not have the strong measures of accountability has clearly not been in the best interests of the people of this province for quite some time.

I was astounded this morning, though, when the minister for corrections was mentioning the new powers that the OPP will be transferring to security guards, for instance—that it’s a great idea, there’s no concern around civil liberties, regardless of our entire G20 experience; and then it got spun into a youth jobs strategy for young security guards and police. I would like the costing out of that idea, for sure, because it felt to me that we were just making up policy on the fly. I think that there are some legitimate concerns around increasing the powers of security guards to those of police for the Pan Am Games, and our party is going to stay vigilant on that issue.

As we move forward as a party and as a collective of three parties in this House, we should not ignore the fact that, with every decision we make, we have a renewed focus, a higher level of accountability on the impact that those decisions have. The people in the province outside of this House, some of the people who are watching, perhaps, need to know that some of us get it. Some of us understand that the trust issues are real. Some of us understand that what people expect from us, some of us do.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Oh, on this side of the House, they definitely do. People want to put their priorities first. They want to see us putting the interests of parties last and the interests of people first. I do think there is potential as we go forward.

I understand that there’s a lot of frustration out there with the way that things have proceeded. But the Financial Accountability Office is an opportunity for us to course correct. It’s why we hinged our support for the

2013 budget on accountability, and we are focused on making sure that those budget priorities come to fruition.

I was so impressed when Kevin Page talked about how our FAO model was better than the Parliamentary Budget Officer, and I want to leave you with this because he talked about that office at the federal level purely being—you know, on the surface, it sounded really good, and it was created by Prime Minister Harper. On the surface, actually, it sounded wonderful, but at every turn he was blocked because the facts ran counter to the partisan politics of the Conservative Party of Canada. We all need to understand and be cognizant of the fact that people have lost patience with partisan politics. They want to see that whatever policy decisions we are making, whatever legislation we are bringing forward, independent financial cost analyses of those policies need to be fully explored and fully costed out. That's a level of transparency that has not been a part of the last decade in this House; it just has not. But it is going forward.

As I said, I truly believe that this debate today, and the vote on the Financial Accountability Office, is an exercise in democracy. It's refreshing. It gives us an opportunity to refocus perhaps on the issues of poverty, the environmental issues, because we can stay focused with some confidence on private members' bills, new legislation and motions that won't cost us and the people of this province down the line, that there is some truth in the intention of the legislation that is coming forward. I'm absolutely encouraged by that.

I'm proud to be a New Democrat and stand in this House today and know that we drove the Financial Accountability Office to this place, in this time. I'm confident that once it is passed and once this office is set up, we will prevent scandals, we will save money and it will be forward-thinking. It's a long time coming, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very happy to stand in the House today and I urge everyone to support it.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak for the next 20 minutes to Bill 95, a bill to establish the Financial Accountability Office here in Ontario.

I'm going to start by reading a little bit of my notes, Speaker, which are the technical aspects of this bill. Ontario would be the first province to have a Financial Accountability Officer, if this bill is passed.

The Financial Accountability Officer is an officer of the Legislative Assembly. The mandate includes providing an independent analysis to the assembly about the state of the province's finances and trends in the provincial and national economies and, upon request from a member or committee of the assembly, to undertake certain research tasks or to estimate the financial costs or benefits to the province of any proposal that relates to a matter over which the Legislature has jurisdiction. The Financial Accountability Officer is required to report annually on the work of his or her office.

I want to address some points with respect to the content of the legislation a little later, Speaker, and you can imagine what those are going to be. But I would first like to take some time to address the intent of this bill and some background behind how it came into existence in the first place.

I think it can be characterized as too little too late. This legislation, sadly, is the result of one key truth which has now become evident over the past 18 months, and that is this: that the government simply cannot be trusted. They can't be trusted to tell the truth about anything, and their accounting, as we've seen time and time again, certainly can't be believed. It saddens me that we've come to the point in Ontario where the government has become so devoid of integrity that we need a Financial Accountability Office to coerce the government into doing such a simple thing as telling the truth.

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I'd like to highlight some of the many examples of why Bill 95 came into existence and how it may address similar situations in the future.

Let's start with eHealth, Speaker. I think almost everyone recalls the debacle that that exercise run by this government became, with consultants billing taxpayers for chocolate bars and the like: a billion-dollar scandal which the Liberals continue to try to shrug off to this very day. Would a Financial Accountability Office, if it had been in place then, have been able to head off this type of scandal? The hope is that it would, Speaker.

Let's go a little bit further down the road and talk about Ornge, another billion-dollar scandal. It seems like there's one of these billion-dollar scandals every year. This time, the health ministry turned a blind eye to the waste and self-serving operation of the province's air ambulance service, literally putting patients' lives at risk. For goodness' sake, they bought helicopters that were too small to enable paramedics to properly perform CPR. I stood in this Legislature after the death of several people in northern Ontario to talk about that very issue. That was part of a financial deal in which millions of dollars were paid out to a company, and for what? It's no wonder that the activities of the key figures at Ornge are the focus of an ongoing Ontario Provincial Police investigation. Would a Financial Accountability Office, as proposed in this bill, have raised the red flags early enough to catch on to and put a stop to this total disregard and abuse of the public purse of Ontario and prevent this from happening again? Again, my hope is that it would.

This, of course, leads us to the gas plants. First it was Oakville. This government continues to dodge responsibility for originally siting a gas plant where it didn't belong. Only one party put it there in the first place and only one party cancelled it, and that's the Liberal Party and the members opposite. It's truly amazing that we are coming up on the third anniversary of that cancellation and we still don't know the cost. All the documents—136,000, I believe it is now—and we still don't know the cost. We know one thing for sure, Speaker: only that it's not the \$40 million that these members I'm looking at

here continue to say it cost. They cling to this \$40-million number in a bid to keep the truth from Ontarians and to hold onto power. Again, in that context, it's worth asking: Would the Financial Accountability Officer, with the duties and responsibilities laid out in this legislation, have been able to, three years ago, start looking into the Oakville cancellation and give taxpayers a clearer view of what this would eventually cost them in the end?

Speaker, I can tell you, I have looked at many, many thousands of these documents that point to the cover-up of the facts. The fact of the matter is, those emails about Oakville show us that this government clearly cancelled it without having any regard for the taxpayer and the \$1 billion that I still forecast it will cost. Would that office have been able to report back with an estimate from the day it was cancelled 11 days before the election to the day of the election? Eleven days? They're all worthwhile questions to ponder, and I think we know that things may have been much different.

Speaking of the 2011 election campaign, let's spend some time talking about the Mississauga gas plant cancellation. This Premier, who was campaign co-chair for the Liberal Party in 2011, has said the gas plant cancellations were political decisions. She has admitted that. That means, again, there was no concern given to how much they were going to cost. It was all about saving five seats of Liberal members of this House, Speaker, and it almost worked. To this day, they refuse to take responsibility for siting a plant where it didn't belong. Again, only one party wanted to put it there and only one party cancelled it, and that was the Liberal Party across the aisle.

Let's recall what happened next. Construction continued on the site for two months, driving up the final cost to Ontario taxpayers. After nearly a year of legal wrangling and 10—count them: 10—side deals that we only learned about from the Auditor General, they finally reached an agreement. The cost, they said, was \$180 million. However, the proposed Financial Accountability Officer wouldn't even have had the time before the government was now changing its number: It's not 180; it's now \$190 million. That's thanks to one of those little side deals I referred to that the Auditor General disclosed in his report this past April—side deals the government did everything in its power to keep from public scrutiny, I might add.

Speaker, I stood up in this Legislature on two different occasions and asked about a \$5-million non-utility generation contract that I read about—five million. Nobody on that side would admit that that five million was additional money, part of the cancellation. They all said, "Oh, you don't know. That's nothing. It was for power." But I'll tell you, that deal, one of these terrible side deals, was offering \$5 million to a company to top up a deal. They called it a power contract, but if the government didn't need the power within a certain period of time, they got to keep the \$5 million. That's how they got around the rules and gave this company another \$5 million for absolutely nothing. That's on top of the \$150 million they gave them to pay off a \$49-million loan. It's a \$101-

million kiss for a company because these guys just did not care what it cost in their method of cancelling the power plant.

We all know what happened next. Months later, the Auditor General finally released the results of his investigation. It wasn't the \$180 million that they first said. It wasn't \$190 million either, a figure that the government knew was inaccurate way back in July of 2012, according to our documents. It was \$275 million. If you want to get into the details, it actually says it's \$350 million minus potential savings that the Ontario Power Authority believed might happen. It should be noted that the Auditor General discounted the OPA's approach in this regard, and you will soon find that it will actually be much higher than the 275. So, again, in this context, how would a Financial Accountability Office, as proposed in this legislation, have been able to provide Ontarians with an estimate of the cost the Liberals ran up cancelling this plan and cutting all those side deals?

We've been at it for almost two years now, and we still don't know the total cost of cancelling Oakville. Would perhaps just the existence of this officer have made the Liberal government think twice about some of their actions and made them put Ontario taxpayers and ratepayers first, instead of Liberal self-interest first? Again, it's interesting to ponder all these possibilities.

There's another scandal that's brewing that the government needs to address right now. If they do, they can prevent yet another Liberal billion-dollar boondoggle from happening. Of course, I'm talking about Ontario Northland. I want to take a few minutes to discuss the history for members here who are unfamiliar with northern Ontario and how a Financial Accountability Office, as described in this legislation, may have played a role all along. I am going to refer to page 96 of the 2012 budget papers. I'm going to read from here one sentence. It's about a fire sale of Ontario Northland, to which I absolutely disagree: "Once implemented, this will result in annual savings and avoid costs of approximately \$250 million over three years."

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This is a government document. This was in the budget. Then-finance minister Dwight Duncan read it, in his budget, in his calculations of how they're going to slash our deficit. It's on the backs of northern Ontario, saving \$250 million a year. Actually, if you get down into the paperwork, it's about \$265 million, but he's rounded it off for the speech portion of this.

This is where an accountability officer may well have saved the government some embarrassment. It certainly would have helped 1,000 families who live in North Bay and northern Ontario from the anguish that this Liberal government has put them through, because all this is nonsense. The saving \$265 million is absolute and utter nonsense, and perhaps a Financial Accountability Officer would have gotten to the truth earlier.

But I'm going to talk to you about the truth, because one of the benefits of this gas plant scandal is that we have received over 100,000 documents. In those were a

very interesting few pages that I'm going to read from, Speaker. This is an item headlined "Key Items with Fiscal Implications at Variance from the 2012 Budget." That's the long way of saying, "Oops. These things are above and beyond in changes to the budget. This is where we made a mistake."

Let me read to you about Ontario Northland divestment: The Ministry of Northern Development and Mines "expects to incur higher than projected transition costs as part of the divestment process," which also "may take longer than originally proposed."

So now they're talking about MNDM/Infrastructure Ontario. It is their high-range estimate, for divestment to now cost the government \$790 million.

Much has been made of saving \$265 million. We now learn, through confidential advice to cabinet that we never would have seen if it wasn't for the disclosure in the gas plant scandal—we now know there's a \$1-billion delta. The difference between saving \$265 million and spending up to \$790 million is \$1 billion.

Perhaps, had they talked to us in northern Ontario, we could have told them what they finally discovered. Again, "confidential—for discussion purposes only," this is an "Expenditure Analysis—Ministry of Northern Development and Mines." So these guys, on this side, all know about this. They've known about it for months, yet here the 1,000 families in North Bay and northern Ontario are waiting every day for news, wondering, "What's going to happen to my family? Should I buy a car? Do we put the kids in university or college?" Nothing's happening.

One company, one of the largest forestry companies in northern Ontario—in fact, when the member from Parry Sound and I took a 1,600-kilometre trip through the north and did consultations, unlike the government who made this fire sale announcement without consultations, they told us they'd stopped a \$10-million expansion because they don't know if the rail line will run: \$10 million. That may not sound a lot here in Queen's Park—they throw that around like nickels—but \$10 million in a small town around Kapuskasing is life and death to these families. Had they just talked to us, they would have learned.

Here's what they had. Here's where the \$790 million comes from: Labour and severance they put at \$25 million. Heck, anybody who lives in North Bay would have known there's a 14-year severance deal. That adds up, on the high scale, to \$450 million in severance. They've upped it to \$250 million. They call that the high end, by the way; I call this the low end. But at least they've changed it from \$25 million to \$250 million.

Post-retirement benefits: They had zero. They planned on giving no benefits to the pensioners, including the existing pensioners—zero. No benefits were going—they were going to be cut off from their benefits in northern Ontario. Had they talked to us—I have had many, many meetings with the pensioners, and we learn now, in their new documents, it's \$56 million.

Pension: This is their pension liability. Had they only ever read the North Bay Nugget, they would have known that that number is closer to \$150 million or more. We've pegged it around \$200 million.

The former Minister of Northern Development and Mines, in a North Bay Nugget article, said, "He doesn't know what he's talking about—\$200 million? He doesn't know what he's talking about. Don't listen to that Fedeli guy. He doesn't know." Their own document says it's now \$212 million. Had they only read the North Bay Nugget, they might not have been putting all these pensioners and all of their benefits at risk.

Finally, a subsidy to close—zero. This wasn't going to cost anything to close. It was all nothing, zero. It's \$72 million. You add those numbers up, Speaker, that is now \$790 million, which hopefully a Financial Accountability Office would have pegged and told us about, because these guys over on this end have done everything in their power to bury this. In fact, if you look at "Confidential advice to Cabinet" on divestment of ONTC business lines, their own finance department, the recommendation is "defer." They recommended they not, and do you know why, Speaker? Let me tell you why they said to defer.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the House to come to order so I can hear the member for Nipissing.

I return to the member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Well, you didn't listen enough because you're making the same mistakes over and over and over.

Now, the recommendation was to defer. Here's why. It says that the ministry's plan does not accommodate transition costs, which could include asset write-downs of \$215 million, severance of \$25 million, and pension liabilities of \$100 million. Back when they thought it was going to save them \$265 million, they still told them, at a savings of \$265 million, which they claimed incorrectly—even then they told them, "Defer. Don't go ahead with this," it says here, "until further due diligence and analysis of fiscal and policy implications" are understood. So they were told not to do this. They were told the number was wrong. They went ahead. They put all of these families in jeopardy. They've done it. They know they're wrong. They still haven't gone back and apologized to those families and corrected this and told the families, "This is not going to happen. We've made a drastic mistake."

Would a Financial Accountability Officer have done this? Well, we certainly would not have found this if it were not for the gas plant scandal, one of the other many scandals that this government is involved in. We learned of this egregious movement of numbers. They're \$1 billion wrong. If they go ahead with this, we may have just saved the taxpayers \$1 billion. You're welcome. We've saved you that embarrassment. We've got these numbers out now before you went ahead with that tragic divest-

ment that you planned on doing. We've saved their butts. We've saved their bacon.

I don't know if the Financial Accountability Office would have found this. We certainly found it. I don't know if they would have had as hard a time getting this kind of information from this government as we did. It took us reading over 100,000 documents before we actually got to the truth in this particular case. I have no idea whether that Financial Accountability Officer would have, but I'm certainly willing to support this. Thank you for the opportunity to bring northern Ontario to the front yet again.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I would just like to take a minute and talk about the Financial Accountability Office. One of the reasons why the NDP pushed so hard for it was the ONTC, because the government said, "We're going to save \$100 million," and everyone in northern Ontario—and I'd like to echo Mr. Fedeli—everyone in northern Ontario knew that it would cost, that it wouldn't save. It was a service we needed and it was going to cost millions. At that point, we had no one to ask except the government to prove those numbers ahead of time, before they put the families in jeopardy. At that point, we had no one to ask, and that's why the NDP, and only the NDP, pushed so hard in this minority Parliament for an accountability office so that we could demand those numbers before people's lives in the north and people's lives everywhere, but especially people's lives in the north, were put in jeopardy and are still put in jeopardy because this government has put the brakes on decisions but hasn't actually given anybody any guidance. We pushed hard for this Financial Accountability Office, and I'm very proud to be part of this party who got it done.

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

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm really pleased to speak to Bill 95 today at third reading, and hoping that all members will support this bill and put it into law. It's a good day in our Parliament Building in Ontario with the creation of a Financial Accountability Office. This will be a non-partisan, independent body that can look forward at legislation in a fair way and make sure that it suits the people of this province.

This is good, because when I speak to voters across this province and in Davenport, for too long people have given up hope in politicians and politics, and it's hard to blame them. It's hard to blame them when they see the kind of Liberal math that goes on in this place, the kind of crooked accounting that happens: seeing people, Liberals particularly, campaigning from the left and governing from the right, making promises when it suits them.

We need to turn this around. We need to make sure that people are engaged. We need to make sure that the money is there when we need it for the people of this province. We need to make sure that we have money for our public infrastructure, for public transit. We need to make sure that we're able to support our kids in schools, our child care system. We need to build affordable housing in this province.

This government has wasted billions of dollars, and they continue to put their own interests first. They have one lobbyist who comes in, and they pass legislation for that lobbyist. They pass Bill 115 in a couple of days. They prorogue Parliament at their own will.

The people of this province have been waiting for a long time for this place to work for them, and the Financial Accountability Office is a small piece of legislation, but a very important piece of legislation, that is going to bring accountability back to this province and some hope back to the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Del Duca has moved third reading of Bill 95. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

I would like to inform the House that I have received, from the chief government whip, a deferral notice, and as such, this vote is deferred until tomorrow at the time of deferred votes.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): As per the order of the House, this House is adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1753.

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Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
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Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
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Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
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Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / Thunder Bay-Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener-Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor-Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West-Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest-Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough-Guildwood	
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges-Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton-Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin-Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket-Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering-Scarborough East / Pickering-Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton-Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean-Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga-Brampton South / Mississauga-Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma-Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity-Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa-Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa-Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound-Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East-Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est-Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB) Natyshak, Taras (NDP) Nicholls, Rick (PC) O'Toole, John (PC)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre Essex Chatham-Kent-Essex Durham	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB) Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC) Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie Oshawa Perth-Wellington	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguéée à la Condition féminine
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB) Prue, Michael (NDP) Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest Beaches-East York Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB) Sattler, Peggy (NDP) Schein, Jonah (NDP) Scott, Laurie (PC)	Guelph London West / London-Ouest Davenport Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB) Shurman, Peter (PC) Singh, Jagmeet (NDP) Smith, Todd (PC)	York West / York-Ouest Thornhill Bramalea-Gore-Malton Prince Edward-Hastings	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB) Tabuns, Peter (NDP) Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB) Taylor, Monique (NDP) Thompson, Lisa M. (PC) Vanthof, John (NDP) Walker, Bill (PC) Wilson, Jim (PC)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud Toronto-Danforth Mississauga-Erindale Hamilton Mountain Huron-Bruce Timiskaming-Cochrane Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB) Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt 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) Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke Elgin-Middlesex-London	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Mike Colle, Kim Craitor
Joe Dickson, Michael Harris
Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
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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
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Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przezdziecki

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Rick Bartolucci
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Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
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Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
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Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack McLaren, 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

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent 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
Donna H. Cansfield, Dipika Damerla
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Rod Jackson, Monte Kwinter
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
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Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Helena Jaczek, Jane McKenna
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