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des débats
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Wednesday 23 October 2013

Mercredi 23 octobre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 23 October 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 23 octobre 2013

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LE CODE DE LA ROUTE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 16, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 34, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of permit denials and out-of-province service and evidence in certain proceedings and to make a consequential amendment to the Provincial Offences Act / Projet de loi 34, Loi visant à modifier le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les refus relatifs aux certificats d'immatriculation et la signification et les preuves extra-provinciales dans certaines instances, et à apporter une modification corrélative à la Loi sur les infractions provinciales.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to thank the minister for bringing this important bill forward, to start my comments. I think it's a very important bill. I think it's going to help municipalities to collect those much-needed fines and revenue.

But I want to start off by discussing an issue that comes up again and again every day in this House: the issue of downloading services to municipalities. That happened in the late 1990s and the early 2000s. It seems that so often in this House we are actually debating issues that boil down to one thing: the inability of municipalities to continue to address issues with their limited resources due to downloading that happened quite a few years ago.

Just yesterday, I rose in this House to discuss Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, which is a situation where municipalities are struggling to deal with the level of waste and waste management in their particular areas.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A little order, please.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker.

Before this current government, the Ontario Conservative government made it their prerogative to download

provincial responsibilities to municipalities. It might have reduced the province's expenses in the short term, but, as we see, municipalities simply are not capable of handling many of these services that have been placed upon them because of the lack of financial resources. They certainly try, and they make every effort. But, as the years have passed, the issues keep building, until we are once again forced to deal with these issues at a provincial level. So it speaks to the importance of long-term planning in politics when we make decisions here in this House. When we pass legislation, we need to be thinking about the long-term effects of those decisions.

An obvious situation is the gas plant scandal. When the Liberal government made the decision to scrap those gas plants, when they could have waited out the contract, they weren't thinking of what the future would be for Ontario when they made that decision. Now we see that Ontario will be paying for increased hydro rates for the next 25 years or more.

So when it comes to Bill 34, it's important to note that this bill is trying to solve issues at a municipal level. The bill does add a level of provincial support to incent fine evaders to pay, but it doesn't go far enough in providing support by the province. The bill is the first step in streamlining the process and giving municipalities more clarity; however, it does not resolve all of the collection issues. While municipalities are responsible for fine collection, there is a gap between responsibility for collection, available information and the authority that municipalities have in reality.

The report stipulates that even in the case of Ontario drivers, ministries don't share information, which makes fine collection very difficult. Ninety-one per cent of those infractions come from Ontario drivers, the rest from out of province, but our systems aren't connected with each other, so how does the province intend to rectify this situation about information sharing? Clearly, there is a serious lack of coordination within the government, which acts as a barrier to progress on this issue.

The Ontario NDP supports the idea behind this bill. We need to be collecting those unpaid fines not only for the purpose of increasing government revenue but to provide an incentive for drivers to avoid continuing to violate traffic laws, to make our roads safer and, hopefully, to save lives.

The truth is, this is a billion-dollar problem and it's only going to get bigger if we do not do something about it. Unpaid POA fines are growing and are a problem that needs to be addressed. Unpaid POA fines undermine public safety, the rule of law and accountability. They

also have a huge impact on municipalities and their finances.

Municipalities, courts, law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders have been advocating for decisions on this for years. On November 9, the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards released a report, and I quote Alok Mukherjee, president of the police services board: “Every unpaid fine undermines the justice system, frustrates our law enforcement officers, and denies local governments much-needed revenue in challenging economic times. Working with stakeholders we have developed sensible recommendations to tackle this billion-dollar problem. Action is long overdue and we look forward to working collaboratively with the government to stop this pattern of unpaid fines.”

Before I speak to this bill—what it does, its limitations and some recommendations—I will provide a brief background on the situation.

POA offences are non-criminal offences that are normally punishable with an out-of-court fine. Charges are laid by the police, and typically a person has 15 days to either pay a fine or arrange a court date. If the person does nothing, the matter goes before a JP, and if the person is convicted in absentia they are mailed written notice that the fine must be paid within 30 days. If the fine remains unpaid, governments have some tools at their disposal to compel payment, including referring the matter to a collection agency, adding the fine amount to a property tax bill or, in some limited instances, suspending plates or drivers’ licences. These POA offences include speeding, careless driving, not wearing a seat belt—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Folks, I can’t even hear the speaker. There have got to be at least seven sidebars going on. You know the rule: If you want to have a little discussion, take it outside. I’d like to hear what she has to say. Thank you.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker.

While these fines fall into many categories, this bill is dealing only with those that fall under the Highway Traffic Act. POA fines under the HTA accounted for 33% of all the POA fines and amounted to over \$300 million in 2010.

The problem of unpaid fines is growing and has been growing for decades, and one third of the fines across the province are not collected. Of course, this is different for each municipality. Toronto collects half; Dundas-Glenora only collects one third. Currently, whatever money is collected, after a portion is paid to the province, stays in that municipality. The estimated amount owed to municipalities is in excess of \$1 billion. It’s a lot of money that’s been pending for years, and there are a lot of new infractions and tickets each year.

There are several reasons for this continued growth in unpaid fines. The legal and social landscape in Ontario and Canada is very different today than it was when the POA came into effect. The need to efficiently address infractions has led to an increased reliance on fines rather than going to court and facing other penalties.

0910

When municipalities were downloaded and took over the fine-collection responsibilities, they were not appropriately resourced to assume these functions, and this resulted in very long delays in the courts and insufficient defaulter information, which means they didn’t really have the current addresses or phone numbers of the people who were in default.

Another reason for the continued growth in fines is a shortage of JPs to preside over the POA courts. This delayed cases moving through the system, which increased the amount of cases in the system and the low rate of collection. Some stakeholders suggest that it can take over six months to resolve a case in court, and as time passes, the possibility of the cases becoming uncollectable increases.

Because POA courts pay the same filing and issuing costs as the general public, their limited resources force them to abandon the pursuit of many cases, which means they do not get paid. The inability to afford enforcement and collection of fines adds to the amount of money in unpaid fines, and clearly there need to be more supports in place when it comes to fine collections.

Another reason for growth in unpaid fines is the amount of fines that are being given out. Between 1999 and 2007, municipalities and municipal police gave out 57% more fines while the OPP gave out 20% more POA fines. Since processing resources have not increased over time, the backlogs just continue to grow.

When it comes to unpaid fines, it isn’t just the number of unpaid fines that is increasing but the monetary amount. In 2010, the cost of many road fines had doubled or more.

With these higher fines, it has been noted that it can also impact unpaid fines, as individuals find it more difficult to afford the fines at all. While we can hope, by increasing fines and instituting higher penalties, that individuals will be incented to clear their name and pay the fines, it has the opposite effect in some cases. Repeat offenders will simply resist payment in order to avoid interaction with authorities. Municipalities have also complained about a lack of tools available to them that are available to others.

It is true that Highway 407 collection has the ability to take a picture and then access the Ministry of Transportation database to issue the fine directly to the driver’s house. Municipalities don’t have the same level of access. What is that about? Municipalities are our partners and they don’t have access, but a billion-dollar corporation has access to our MTO database. This speaks to a disconnect between municipalities and the province when it comes to addressing the issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I see you have two visitors over there.

Ms. Cindy Forster: While Bill 34 does take steps to increase the level of co-operation between municipalities and the province, it doesn’t go far enough. If private companies are able to use the province as a resource, the same level of access should be available to municipalities.

If passed, this legislation will deny licence plates to drivers who have unpaid fines for offences such as speeding, improper lane changes, illegal turns, driving without insurance, and careless driving. This can be seen as an effective way to incent offenders to pay their outstanding fines, but shouldn't we consider things like ability to pay and transit opportunities available? Considering the current economic climate, it might be unwise to inflict more financial restrictions on Ontarians.

When discussing this issue, it's important to mention AMO's role in advocating for change. AMO, a non-profit organization representing 444 municipal governments across this province, made addressing POAs one of its top 12 asks in the 2011 provincial election.

AMO welcomes Bill 34. "Municipalities have long pressed for these powers, which will help recoup millions of dollars for municipalities and, more importantly, will ensure that individuals are held responsible for their actions and that justice is served," said Russ Powers, AMO president."

They are worried at the present time that "the administrative changes necessary to support this legislation may take two years to complete. AMO urges the government to complete these changes as quickly as possible so that municipalities will be able to collect the fines owing."

The 2012 provincial budget mentioned some key commitments to improve the collection of unpaid fines. This included two new tools: vehicle licence plate denial, and offsetting unpaid fines against federal income tax refunds. As a result of this commitment, the Ministry of Transportation established yet another committee to explore this issue in greater detail. This committee of multiple ministries and municipal reps developed a solid plan to deliver improvements, but Bill 34 is only one small step that needs to be addressed.

POA fines are severely impacting Ontario's municipalities. Leeds and Grenville has lost somewhere in the range of \$6 million to \$7 million in revenue from uncollected POA fines accumulated over the past 10 to 15 years. Sault Ste. Marie has lost \$12 million.

In 2001, the fines under the POA that the province hadn't yet collected when they downloaded fine collection to municipalities were downloaded as arrears. So the province couldn't even collect their fines, but they downloaded that responsibility under the—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Welland—

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'm sorry.

Mr. Mike Colle: I tried to help.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you, to the member from Eglinton—Lawrence.

Now we have—a certain individual walked in here and said, "It's so quiet in here." Well, it isn't now. And the other two visitors: a little loud; you might want to go back to your fort, okay? Thank you.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Aren't we trying to all be friends here, Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thanks very much.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker.

In 2001, the fines under the POA that the province hadn't yet collected when they downloaded fine collection to municipalities—they also downloaded arrears at the same time. The province couldn't collect the fines, so they downloaded those to the municipalities without the appropriate resources.

Toronto courts are owed almost \$36 million in outstanding fines. To put this in perspective, this is the projected shortfall for the Toronto Transit Commission in 2012. Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry is owed the most in unpaid fines: over \$7 million, with less than one third being collected.

Collection is often seen as being about money rather than justice. Therefore, it's not considered essential to the justice system and not given the attention or resources that it actually needs to be really effective.

There has been some progress in addressing the problem of unpaid fines. Collection tools, including plate suspensions, licence suspensions, use of collection agencies, ability to add it to the property tax roll and repeal of statutory limitation periods, have varying success. Licence plate denial has been a very effective tool to compel the payment of certain fines and obligations, but it's currently used in very limited circumstances.

When the Ontario government transferred the enforcement of provincial offences to municipalities, it allowed them to hire collection agencies to pursue fines and fees. Collection agencies compete for those contracts, incenting them to perform better and collect more. This apparently is a cost-effective collection tool for municipalities, although I don't know how well the employees were actually paid.

In June 2010, amendments to the Ontario Municipal Act came into force, allowing municipalities to collect unpaid POA fines by adding them to the offender's property tax bill as arrears. I think this is an incentive, because most municipalities charge about 15% a year interest on unpaid taxes.

The city of Brampton identified 38 unpaid fines, totaling \$210,000. They sent letters to violators indicating that the amounts would be added to their tax bills. In less than a year, 25% of that has been collected.

The problem is that, to add it to the tax roll, whoever has actually created the violation of the law has to be the sole owner of the property. The fact is that there are many renters of the property, so it doesn't capture a huge amount of people.

There's a lack of coordination. There's a need for the ministries to get together and acknowledge their role in unpaid POA fines. According to the police services boards of Ontario, this is the single largest barrier to progress on the issue. For instance, the Ministry of Transportation and the Attorney General do not view the issue in the same way, according to the police services boards. When the POA system came into place, the idea was to take the burden off the administration of justice and

replace some offences with financial penalties. However, it seems that the Attorney General's primary concern is with administrative justice, as it should be, so where there is a disconnect between primary goals, there is also a disconnect between co-operation.

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Many individuals cannot be found and fines cannot be easily collected because their information is spread across fragmented databases. Because of this problem, stakeholders are calling for an integrated system that will streamline the collection system and make it easier to collect these fines. The police services board of Ontario has recommended in a white paper that the Ministry of Transportation's driver's licence, licence plate and Ministry of Attorney General databases be linked so offenders can be found and fines can be collected more easily. There are other ways of collecting fines: by hiring a collections clerk who reminds people of their overdue POA fines, such as in North Bay, where they have used this and have been successful.

There's also a need for operational changes to better align the authorities of the municipalities with their responsibilities, which they don't have currently. The province and municipalities need to work together to ensure that appropriate tools are in place to improve the ability to collect unpaid fines.

Now, there is a lack of incentive to pay. Many Ontarians have figured out which fines they have to pay and which fines they can avoid paying without penalty. Stakeholders have ideas on how this can be fixed, including discounts for early fine payment, doubling of late penalties and that offenders be required to pay fines in chronological order, so that if you have five or six fines outstanding, your payment goes to the first fine first. That way, they can't get out of paying the serious fines.

There's also a lack of available data on POA fines. Simply put, there's not enough data available to help guide public policymakers in figuring out how to address unpaid fines. The police services board of Ontario recommends that the Attorney General improve the quality and the accessibility of POA fines data analysis. This will lead to more collaboration between government and stakeholders.

There's a need for greater stakeholder engagement. Regular forums between the appropriate ministries and stakeholders to discuss best practices and identifying issues would go a long way to addressing the need for change and the range of solutions available.

I think it's becoming clear that Bill 34 is only a very small step toward resolving the POA fine issue.

After listening to what needs to be done, here's what the bill does: It amends the POA to allow the province to not validate or issue permits to convicted persons for traffic violations until a fine is paid. It outlines the infractions. It adds a section to the act that outlines documents for out-of-province drivers, a document certified by the provincial offences officers as having been obtained from any government to keep records of vehicle permits. It stipulates the process of issuing tickets, in-

cluding the officer's signature on the certificate; it also provides a copy of the driver's permit. It's pretty clear that much more needs to be done if we expect the system to work and these unpaid fines to be reined in.

As a member of the Ontario NDP, we will be supporting this bill but we look forward to the committee process, where amendments can be made.

Now, as I speak to this bill, I'd like to take an opportunity to comment on the remarks by the Minister of Transportation and the member from Newmarket-Aurora. I would be remiss if I didn't mention some of the issues I had with regard to their comments during their lead.

The Minister of Transportation spoke about the north and the fact that he's done a lot of driving in Thunder Bay, Hearst, Kenora or Dryden in a blizzard or storm and the challenges in doing this. And then he went on to congratulate the government for their leadership on the safest roads in North America. But I would say that our members in the north—Timmins-James Bay, Timiskaming-Cochrane, Kenora-Rainy River, Nickel Belt and Algoma-Manitoulin—would not agree that the highways in the north of this province are the safest in North America. In fact, they've been asking questions for the past several years about the snowplow operations and the reduced standards on all the roads during the winter driving months, regardless of the classification of those roads.

The government chose to contract out those services, and we've got contractors being supervised by another contractor as opposed to by ministry staff. The road conditions have been abysmal, and the circuits that were set up to clean the roads leave the snowplow operators running as much as 100 kilometres to 150 kilometres on one side before a return is done.

It has impacted the safety of drivers and their loved ones in the north. They are now driving on the wrong side of the road because it takes the operator 10 hours to clean the second side of the road, and there have been fatalities and serious injuries due to this reduced level of service in areas of this province where weather conditions can change dramatically on these long stretches of road.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: They've had five fatalities.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Five fatalities. Just this past winter I am sure this question was asked of the Minister of Transportation by at least three NDP members of this caucus.

Additionally, the snowplowing operations contract did not extend long enough into the spring to ensure continued safety of roads in areas where winter ends four to six weeks after southern Ontario and starts four weeks sooner than southern Ontario. In fact, my friends from Nickel Belt and Timmins-James Bay told me that they had snow last weekend and it has been snowing Monday and Tuesday up in areas of the north. So I wonder if the minister has that new, improved standards contract for snow removal in place right now—right now—to ensure the safety of our northern residents. Perhaps some of this new fine-collection money can be used from the pro-

vincial share to beef up winter contracts across this province in the north and in the southwest.

Our member for Windsor–Tecumseh has asked a number of questions in the House since he was elected in the summer about the installation of deficient girders on the Herb Gray Parkway project. This too is a road safety issue that's not going away. It may not have immediate impact on the drivers or their families in Windsor, or those travelling through the Windsor area, but somewhere down the road this will become a significant safety and economic issue for this province.

We—and I mean the NDP caucus—are waiting to hear from the Minister of Transportation on this issue as to whether they are going to order removal of the deficient girders already installed and what the go-forward plan is to ensure that we're getting value for the contract that was signed and that the deficiencies are corrected so we are using taxpayers' dollars in the most cost-effective and quality-effective ways, because there's no point in trying to collect millions of dollars of fines if we're just going to throw it away on deficient contracts and buyouts to contractors for cancelled gas plants and cancelled nuclear projects.

Centralization of programs and services, like Service-Ontario, POA courts and the court system in general, has become quite a problem for municipalities and for residents of those municipalities outside of the GTA, because there are municipalities outside of the GTA where transportation systems are ineffective or nonexistent to get people to these services to either pay a fine, get a renewal for a driver's licence or update your plate sticker.

You think government is actually there to ensure that these services are available and that they're accessible, but it becomes increasingly difficult as this government tries to balance its budget by cutting services. In Niagara, for example, there's no longer a Via Rail service or GO trains, and GO buses only travel to St. Catharines; there are no GO trains to St. Catharines. In Niagara Falls, there are only GO trains in the summer, to get the tourists there.

Mr. Rob Leone: There it is.

Ms. Cindy Forster: There it is.

It takes people from Port Colborne, Fort Erie and Welland—which are in Niagara as well—up to 50 minutes to drive, if they have access to a car, and they may not, once their plate is withheld. Although there's a regional bus service in its third-year trial, there are no direct routes. It could take one and a half to two hours for someone to get from Fort Erie to Niagara Falls, which is the only way then to get to St. Catharines, to access transportation to a GO bus out of the region or to get to the POA court in St. Catharines to either have their day in court or pay a fine.

Now, you'll hear that you can pay online, but many people don't use that system. I think I read something about how the government House leader didn't even know that the system was available, so I don't know that we're doing a great job of communicating our online services. There are many people who don't have a

computer, don't have access to one and don't have transportation to get to the library to actually go online and do that.

So if the government wants to increase penalties and fines for offenders, they must consider ability to pay and ability to travel before they consider leaving residents to the failing public transit system in Ontario.

We heard from the member from Oakville as well, during the government lead, that between 1970 and 2000, the outstanding fines were significantly less than what we're experiencing from 2000 to now, and he couldn't quite seem to understand why that might be.

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I think you have to look at the fact that many people don't have jobs. We are in precarious employment situations, minimum-wage jobs, part-time work. So you make a decision: Do I eat? Do I pay my rent? Or do I pay a fine? What options are available to me when I'm living on a minimum wage, or when I'm living below the poverty level?

It was over the last 10 to 12 years that Ontario lost hundreds of thousands of good-paying manufacturing jobs across this province. Many of these workers have ended up in jobs paying 50% or less of what they were earning, if they have obtained employment at all.

I have friends, Speaker, who are office workers, bank employees, nurses, teachers, and are married to former manufacturing workers, who are and have been the sole breadwinners for many years since those manufacturing jobs have disappeared. So is it any wonder that people may not be able to find the money to pay outstanding fines and choose, instead, to try and struggle through another week or another month? Is it right that people don't pay their fines? No, it isn't. But there are many reasons why they don't.

Part of this legislation is about punishing bad drivers, or at least making sure they understand the consequences of their infractions with fines or denial of plate renewal. This is a good thing, and hopefully it will reduce the number of infractions, make our roads safe for other drivers, pedestrians and communities in general.

That is why the NDP and, in particular, our justice critic, the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, have been tirelessly advocating for reduced auto insurance rates for good drivers. We believe there should be an immediate 15% average decrease achieved through savings that insurance companies enjoyed when the Liberal government allowed them to reduce accident benefits two years ago, resulting in several billions of dollars in profits to insurance companies. So in a way, we want to ensure that bad drivers understand there are consequences for the infractions and for not paying fines. Good drivers also want to reap rewards for safe driving records.

Unfortunately, we've heard from many drivers since the spring budget who have told us their rates are going up, some by 30% or more, and not down, as promised by the government in the spring budget. Perhaps if Ontarians weren't paying so much in auto insurance, they could actually afford to pay their POA fines.

Now, the member from Durham—I'm sorry he's not with us today, but he actually spoke to this bill back in April. He was responding to the government lead by the Minister of Transportation saying that we should be congratulating Mike Harris—if you can believe this—for the history of this POA issue. Under Harris, the Provincial Offences Act and Highway Traffic Act—back in 1998, when the PCs under Harris were looking at municipal realignments of service and revenues, changes were made which committed this much-needed revenue to municipalities. The member from Durham is complaining because Mike Harris has never once been thanked for giving that revenue to municipalities.

I cannot believe what I heard, Speaker. This is the same Mike Harris that downloaded the most expensive programs to municipalities, like community and social services that had never seen an increase in funding; huge housing portfolios downloaded with very little reserves and, in many cases, so old and falling apart that they had to be gutted and completely renovated or rebuilt; ODSP and Ontario Works clients' benefits cut by 20% that were already 50% below the poverty line, and it has taken 20 years for those recipients to climb back up out of that hole where they were 20 years ago. The outstanding fines at the time of the transfer were in the millions. For Niagara alone, I believe there were \$12 million in outstanding fines when this POA was transferred.

I would suggest to the member from Durham that the trade-off was not an equal one. I can tell you that, having been a municipal politician at the time. Mike Harris surely does not deserve any thanks for municipal realignment of services at that time.

All right. Now to add some local flair today to my remarks. I want to present an issue about the region of Niagara. It paints a picture of a resource-strapped municipality with a high unemployment rate trying very hard to deal with the enormity of this issue. It represents the case for what is happening in municipalities across the province.

As of December 2012, the Niagara POA has 42,000 active delinquent fines, with a balance of \$36.1 million owing. Active defaulted fines don't include any fines which have a pending or granted extension, which are closed or written off or which are not being pursued. These are the latest facts available.

However, for a more thorough look at the region's situation, I've acquired a report from 2010. Looking through it, it provides a lot of insight into the trends of the POA collection process, and it highlights the need for action, which will also show the capacity that municipalities have shown for dealing with this impossible issue.

So 2010, the year the study was done, was the busiest in the Niagara POA courts. According to the Ministry of the Attorney General, Niagara's courts experienced a 104% increase in charges filed in a five-year period. This increase is the second-highest percentage increase in all municipally administered courts in the province—second-highest. There are cities much larger than the Niagara

region, which has a population of just over 400,000. Since assuming responsibility for POAs, the region and its municipal area partners have each received \$12 million in net revenue, while payments to the province during that same period amounted to just over \$16 million, or 26% more than each municipal partner. So the province isn't doing any work, but they're clearly getting a better share of the profits.

From 2009 to 2010, the number of customers served at Niagara's service counters increased by 4%, with a 50% increase from 2005 to 2010. Also, the burden of the courts is growing: appeal applications increased by 13%, reopenings by 61% and trial requests—a very expensive process—by 30%. These increases have forced the regional senior justice of the peace to permanently increase the master court schedule from 367 to 442 days, as well as the scheduled 112 days of court on an ad hoc basis. Given these growth trends, there's a concern that Niagara is approaching maximum court capacity. The age and conditions of facilities can be expected to lead to escalating maintenance and operating costs in the future. These higher costs will undercut the potential for maximizing net revenue. Maximizing net revenue assists both the region and the area municipalities, because that funding is actually split.

When it comes to delinquent cases, in 2010, 1,100 cases on average were added each month, representing a 34% increase from 2009 and \$24.2 million in delinquency in 2010. The Niagara POA staff work collaboratively with defendants who are unable to pay the full fine amount yet need to retain their driver's licence to remain gainfully employed. So the region of Niagara at least has this sense of wanting to work with people who rely on their car because of the lack of reliable public transit. Staff review the defendant's financial status to determine their ability to pay, and they will negotiate a payment plan.

The report states that given the recent economic downturn it's no surprise that the total dollar value is up and the number of delinquent cases continues to increase. This is important to why we should move forward with this bill and try to address the unpaid fine issue. We must consider, though, the hardships faced by Ontarians in today's economy. While it's important that we enforce fines on offenders who are contributing to unsafe road conditions, we have to work with them to ensure that their ability to pay is considered and not negatively impacted by collection tools.

It's clear, however, that municipalities are being pushed to the limit of their resources and their capacities and vast changes need to occur to help municipalities collect unpaid fines. We see now that the government is touting their investment in infrastructure as their plan to help municipalities. They talk about—I think it's a \$100-million investment to help rural Ontario. Surely that number sounds big. It may sound big out there to the viewers of this today, but, in fact, there are 444 municipalities in this province. There may be—I don't know—300, 350 that are small, rural, and this will have a very small impact on those communities.

0940

I'll tell you this: In my municipality of Welland, the bridge crossing the canal—just to repaint it is a \$10-million price tag. It's been on the books for 10 years and they can't afford to even get to that project. It's \$10 million for one bridge. A small bridge over Lyons Creek in my riding, out in the rural part of my riding: \$1 million for a bridge to go over that creek because it had to meet the standards of the MTO and the MOE.

We've known for a long time that this government is interested in press conferences and newspaper headlines more than actually bringing about positive change. If we want to help municipalities in a significant way, we need to deal with issues like unpaid fines and waste management. We need to do the hard work that's necessary to help municipalities deal with services that were down-loaded on to them a decade ago.

I want to spend the rest of my time talking about MTO issues. The member from Aurora raised some important issues under MTO when he did his lead, and I wanted to take this opportunity to raise some of those issues with the Minister of Transportation, who is here.

Probably on a weekly basis, we get complaints on a variety of issues from constituents in the riding around the Ministry of Transportation. One of the common threads is the wait times to get through to ServiceOntario. On average, people tell us that the wait time on the phone can be 50 minutes to an hour, for somebody sitting, waiting on the phone to try and get through to ask a question.

We had a man, actually, who was trying to arrange for MTO to come out and do presentations to a seniors' group around MTO issues. They were unable to effect that. Although they had had a commitment from the MTO, a verbal commitment, at the end of the day, the MTO couldn't meet that commitment. I've got copies of letters here from constituents who have come into my office; it's taken months to actually resolve their issues.

The member from Aurora spoke about a staff member. I'm assuming she's a senior staff member at the Ministry of Transportation. Her name is Elena Tersigni. He highly commended her in his time when he was in that ministry, when the PCs were in government. He said in his statement that day that he thought there needed to be a review of the Ministry of Transportation and it was because of constituent concerns. I'm sure that all of us in this House have concerns coming from our constituents and I wanted to share a couple of those with you today.

Here's one. I've got a letter dated April 5:

"You'll recall ... I faxed you what appears to be a confirmation of ... medical reports from Dr. K. Kundi (the constituent's family doctor)" to your ministry on January 18.

"Elena, it does appear that the ministry did receive these reports.

"I am hoping"—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Scarborough—Rouge River is a little loud.

Ms. Cindy Forster: "I am hoping you can arrange to expedite this medical review, if in fact it has not been actioned, as I believe the required medical was received ... January 18...."

This is three months later and the Ministry of Transportation is saying, "We never received the medical," even though we have a faxed report showing that it went to the ministry. It is sad that people are waiting three months.

I have one where people are actually waiting eight months. It was to the Honourable Minister of Transportation at the time, in 2012. This constituent was having a problem with a medical review of his driving privileges: "Our ministry liaison has advised us to follow up on the status of the file in three weeks. We are told the committee which reviews medical files does not meet weekly." Why aren't they meeting weekly?

This constituent's "life is being negatively impacted by the suspension of his driver's licence. He has been further frustrated by delays in the processing of information and by a lack of communication."

His suspension and review dragged on for eight months, almost an entire year.

Further medical was requested in mid-September; it was sent by fax. The wife tried to follow up by phone a month later. She was on hold for 55 minutes, which she says was a standard wait time for phone access to the Ministry of Transportation throughout the process. When he was finally able to get through, he was told that the fax sent two weeks ago by his doctor was illegible and a new submission was required. But nobody had contacted them.

He was at a complete loss as to why that fax was sitting on somebody's desk at the MTO without anyone alerting him so he could correct the situation in a timely manner. The answer? The ministry's medical review team does not contact drivers or physicians. Our question is, why not? If you get a piece of information and it's insufficient or it's illegible, why wouldn't you pick up the phone and call to get the information that you need?

When I asked my staff to actually give me some of these things, it was a bit nostalgic because, at the end of the day—I'm going to share this little story with you. The subject was—and I can share this name—Mr. Donald James Curley. This was in 2007. Peter Kormos was the MPP in Welland at the time. The letter is from one of my staff to the Minister of Transportation at that time.

"I am writing to you regarding constituent and the family of Mr. Donald Curley," living in Welland, "regarding his driver's licence. Please be advised, Mr. Curley served this country" in our armed forces.

He "returned to Ontario from Georgia in ... 2007 after losing all of his identification in a house fire. Upon return, he initiated a request to exchange his valid Georgia driver's licence for an Ontario driver's licence. After an eight-month ordeal of not being able to drive, Mr. Curley is still inexplicably waiting for his licence.

"Two weeks ago, I contacted management employees within the ministry and was assured Mr. Curley had met

all the requirements and he wouldn't have any further barriers to getting his Ontario driver's licence. However, at his last attempt in doing so and despite my assurances to them from your ministry staff, he was again unsuccessful. Mr. Curley has met the requested requirements each time only to be turned away again to meet new requirements.

"Again, I remind you, Mr. Curley is a veteran of this country who proudly answered the call of duty when required. I ask that you investigate and ensure prompt and correct attention to this matter."

Well, I want to tell you about this story, because this story is about my father. It's about my father, Speaker, who was a veteran.

I can tell you that I took him to the ministry office in St. Catharines five times to try and get his driver's licence. This was a man who lived out of country for 30 or 40 years. He moved back to the area. We didn't know that he wasn't well at the time.

He wanted two things in his life at the age of—I think he was 83 at the time. He wanted his veteran's medals, which were burned in a fire—which I was actually able to get, through Veterans Affairs, in about four weeks; kudos to Veterans Affairs—and he wanted his driver's licence, because there's nothing more important to men than their cars and remote controls, right?

Five times, I took this man to St. Catharines. Each time, they requested something different—each time. The first time we went, they said, well, he needed some medical proof that he had had his cataracts done, even though he had a valid Georgia driver's licence. We go down to get the licence; "No, you can't get it."

We took him back five times: eight months, and probably \$100 worth of gas, back and forth from Welland to St. Catharines.

Finally, by the time he did get his driver's licence, which I believe was in January 2008—so now it's probably 13 months—he's too sick. He's too sick to drive. So the man never drove again, because the Ministry of Transportation took so many months to not give this man—to make him jump through so many hoops that he was never able to drive again. It's not a good thing.

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My hope in raising this today is that, in fact, no other senior, no other veteran, in this country who has a valid licence and is just trying to exchange it for an Ontario licence, trying to do the right thing—because, frankly, if I were him, I would have just driven with my Georgia licence until somebody caught me. Right? Why would he change it? So he ended up losing it for the rest of the period of his life.

I've got some other ones here. I've got one:

"Last year I was charged with the following offence—class G1 driver unaccompanied. This charge also included a suspension.

"I attended appeal court and the charges were withdrawn/dismissed. However, my abstract was never corrected." We hear this probably on a monthly basis. "I have since secured employment in St. Catharines and had

attempted to secure car insurance." He couldn't get car insurance because his record wasn't corrected by the ministry.

"In speaking with Driver Control with the Ministry of Transportation and communication, I understand that it will take ... five weeks" to get this matter resolved. That's the earliest that we could be expected to address this. "This creates undue hardship and a risk to my unemployment as I reside in Welland and attend St. Catharines daily.

"I believe that the wait time of five weeks is inappropriate," because it's the ministry's fault that you didn't correct the record after he went to court and had the charges withdrawn. I think the Minister of Transportation needs to deal with some of these issues. The MTO "did not register/change my abstract." He needs some help. It still took months after this to get this fixed for this guy.

As I tell you, we live in Niagara. We don't have a direct public transportation system, as they don't in London. London has one of the worst city transportation systems in the province. There are people who are suffering in this province because the Ministry of Transportation offices aren't dealing with some of these issues. So I kind of agree with the member from Aurora that perhaps the ministry needs to do a review.

I've got a couple more that I'll share with you. Here's one. This man was a professional truck driver.

"At age 64 he must find a new way to meet his financial obligations. That is a tall order in this day and age.

"He slipped when helping a friend repair a tractor trailer tire last December. He fell and hit his head. That one mishap led to a series of events which altered his life in ways he could not have imagined."

He "describes the after effects as being consistent with a concussion. He took a two-hour nap in the bunk of his own transport truck, then got back on the road and headed home. Near his destination he hit a guardrail." It is his first accident, Speaker, in 40 years. For 40 years, he was a professional truck driver.

He is required to undergo a series of medical tests. One of those tests uncovers a small irregularity with his vision. That leads to them removing his A licence, so he can no longer drive.

Mr. Mustard goes to the doctor. He does all the right things. He sees the specialist. He sees the family doctor. The doctors tell him it's just an eye irregularity, a side effect of aging and diabetes. Lots of people have the same health problems, and they're still driving in Ontario. Yet he has to undergo a driving examination.

What sticks in Mr. Mustard's craw is that the Ministry of Transportation "sets the bar to achieving a licence reinstatement higher for him because he drove for a living and because of a sudden series of unfortunate events. He believes that this is unfair."

We've asked the ministry to investigate the circumstances surrounding the removal of his A licence and to ensure that all options for its reinstatement are presented to him. We also asked the ministry to explain the min-

istry's rationale for requiring this constituent to jump through hoops, when other older drivers with similar health issues are not required to meet the same standards. I think we're still actually waiting for a response on that one.

I'll continue on, Speaker. I've got a few minutes left.

I think that these particular constituent issues are important to raise, because each and every one of us hears about them every day—and I hope the Minister of Transportation is listening. The department is probably under-resourced and understaffed and that's why they can't get to these issues in a timely way, but it really is negatively impacting the lives of many of our constituents, of their families.

This one is back in 2010. This constituent goes to the hospital; she's suffering from some unexplained shaking in her legs and arm. The visit initiates a November 9 request by your ministry for a medical review, which the constituent has made every effort to provide. Now, you'll know that it's really hard to get to see some specialists in this province. People can wait a year or two years to get to a pain clinic, to see a pain specialist. You can wait for up to a year to get to see a neurosurgeon or a neurologist, and you may never see a psychiatrist in this province, because of the lack of psychiatrists across the country.

Anyway, this constituent commutes to her job, so she wants to ensure that the medical evidence requested in the letter from the ministry is forwarded and received quickly, as there's already a 10-day delay between the date of issue and the date she received the request. She phones the Ministry of Transportation to follow up on her file and she has experienced a wait time in excess of 40 minutes before being told that the medical submission from McMaster Hospital was not attached to her file. She subsequently phones a number of times, each preceded by a lengthy wait on hold, leaving her frustrated enough to request to talk to a supervisor. The last person she speaks to at the ministry's toll-free number tells Ms. Hayward that it's impossible. It's impossible that she has had to wait this long; it's impossible that they didn't get the medical information.

Our liaison with your ministry gives assurances that her licence in this particular situation will still be valid on this date, as the medical submission requirement has been met. But we've undertaken to follow up so that Ms. Hayward can find out at the earliest opportunity the status of her medical review.

This constituent is disappointed with the treatment that she received by the Ministry of Transportation office, about the delays she had to incur in her phone calls, about the delays she had to incur in receiving the actual physical information. Our office, of course, asked the ministry to investigate, to talk about wait times and the inaccessibility of supervisors and to respond directly to this constituent's concerns.

These issues go on day after day, and they're important issues too. In fact, I think they're perhaps more important than the issue of fine collections. Yes, people who break the law need to pay their fines, but the Minis-

try of Transportation is there to deal with more than just making sure that legislation gets changed to deal with the collection of fines. Municipalities are cash-strapped and they need the ability to do that, but I think the people who pay the taxes, who pay the freight in this province, deserve a better service. They deserve a timely service. They deserve better access to the services that they need, particularly these people who depend, in their lives, on their driver's licence or on their licence plate.

I can tell you that I had my own experience this past year at ServiceOntario in my riding. I'm thinking I went over to renew my registration on one vehicle, and I was told at the ServiceOntario booth that I didn't have any insurance. Well, clearly, I did have insurance. I didn't have my pink slip with me; it was in my vehicle. But they were insisting.

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I said, "Well, if I don't have insurance, how did you actually issue me a plate sticker in May?" So I must have been going to have my driver's licence renewed. I said, "You issued me a plate sticker in May, on May 15, on my birthday." "Well, no. You don't have any insurance, and you're going to have to contact your insurance company to get this figured out," and whatever, "and you need to do that right away." I said, "Why can't you contact the insurance company? Just make a call. Hopefully there's something in the database that says Cindy Forster has insurance." Well, there wasn't.

So I go home and I call my Buckley Insurance up there in Aurora, and I say, "Do I have insurance?" And they said, "Oh, yes, you do." I said, "They say you have to call them and tell them that I have insurance," and they said, "Well, no, no. All they've got to do is look at the database, and if the database is incorrect, it's not our fault. We've sent your insurance in. They need to correct that database and make sure that the correct information is in there for the people who actually pay very high auto insurance rates in this province."

Just to close—I've got 51 seconds—I want to take the opportunity to thank everybody who has spoken to this issue at the moment, and while the NDP will support this bill, as you've heard today from me and from the member from Aurora and from the people who had done the two-minute comments and hits on this back in April—can you believe it was actually back in April that we last talked about this bill? It takes a long time to get things through here.

We look forward to talking about the bill, we look forward to actually hearing from the people who will be making deputations to us, and we will be bringing forward amendments that we think will make this bill much more effective, not only for municipalities but for the people who pay the freight in this province.

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for her comments. I'm very happy to speak briefly in support of Bill 34. There is one aspect of this particular bill which is very important to me personally. This particular

bill is very much supported by my community of Ottawa Centre and my city of Ottawa, and both our city council and the mayor, Jim Watson, are very supportive of this bill.

The one particular issue that is close to me personally is the issuing of offence notices for those who are caught through a red light camera and they come from out of province. As you know, Ottawa being a border town, this is a significant issue. Back on October 4, 2012, I in fact introduced a private member's bill, Bill 131, entitled the Enhancing Red Light Camera System Enforcement Act, which allowed for municipalities like Ottawa to issue red light camera offence tickets to those car drivers who have licence plates out of province.

I'm very happy to see this, and I thank the Minister of Transportation for adopting my private member's bill in this particular bill. It's an important issue for my city. It's an issue of road safety and pedestrian safety. We want to make sure that all drivers are treated equally in cities like Ottawa, and it doesn't matter where you come from, what licence plate you have: If you break the red light law, then you should pay the fine.

I want to thank our mayor, Jim Watson, for his support, and our deputy mayor, Steve Desroches, for his hard work on this file. He and I worked very closely together. I thank the government and the Minister of Transportation for adopting Bill 131, my private member's bill, and making it part of Bill 34.

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

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I'd like to congratulate the member from Welland on her speech. I found it fascinating. I happen to agree with just about everything she said.

This bill, in my opinion, is clearly about the money. We have a government here that is broke, and this is another example of looking for more places to collect money from the same people they've got to collect it from every time. It's going to be billions of dollars, if they go back as far as 40 years. I went to a briefing by the MTO on what this bill is all about—the money collection part—and I find it appalling when we have so much unemployment, so many people having a hard time with other bills this government has created, like hydro bills etc. Now we have a new way of collecting more money from the same people who are having a hard time out there paying the bills the government already gives them.

There are all kinds of cases of hardship and tough times among all these unemployed people. Imagine going back to somebody some years afterwards who has now lost his job, because he's one of the 500,000 unemployed people here, and saying, "You didn't pay your ticket some years ago." Or maybe you're unhealthy or maybe you lost your licence for some reason. You're asking people who can't give to give more.

I think what we're going to find here is that you're going to force people to do things they wouldn't otherwise do. They're going to break the law. If they have to drive to go to the hospital, if they have to drive to get groceries

and they haven't got a licence because they can't pay the fines, they're going to do it. And if you don't have a licence, why do you need insurance? So they're not going to have insurance. We're going to create and force people to do things they wouldn't normally do.

It's a bad idea, Mr. Speaker, and it's all about the money. It's a government that's broke that's doing it.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank the member from Welland for her remarks. I think she showed a strong grasp of the policy issues related to this legislation and also brought a wealth of experience based on her own background as a municipally elected official. I think that kind of experience is really helpful for us in this House as we debate issues that affect municipal downloading.

Certainly she has been working very hard on behalf of her constituents, and we heard that from the number of issues she identified with the bureaucratic roadblocks that people are experiencing in her riding and in all of our ridings in dealing with different government ministries.

There were a couple of issues she raised that I found particularly insightful and important as we consider the content of this bill and moving forward on this issue. We know that there has been significant downloading of responsibilities to municipalities without providing municipalities with the tools they need to enforce these new responsibilities. We've seen municipalities struggling to deal with infrastructure deficits. The member from Welland mentioned my own community of London and the challenges that we've been experiencing to improve our transit system, the length of time that's going to be required to introduce a more effective transit strategy for the people of London.

Municipalities have been asking for this for a very long time. It's very much needed. I really appreciate the comments that have been made and the support that has been stated for this bill. It's an important one and I think it's time to move forward.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Every once in a while you hear a comment in here that sort of stops you dead in your tracks. I listened carefully to the member opposite and I thought it was a thoughtful intervention. I was very shocked by the response of the member from Mississippi Mills.

This is about people who endanger the lives of seniors, of children. This is about people who commit serious and dangerous acts on our roads for the privilege of driving. This is about a financial penalty for people who endanger other people's lives.

Whatever happened to the Conservatives who believed in personal responsibility? The fines for this, relatively speaking, in my role, are relatively minor for the danger these people provide. A cash grab for the provincial government, the honourable member suggests: What absolute nonsense. All of the money does not come to the government; it does not come to us at all in Ontario. This

is money for municipalities to improve traffic lights, crossing guards, make our communities safer and help with police enforcement. We fund 700 police officers. We have uploaded health and social services that were downloaded by the previous government.

Comments were made about London. We have \$14 billion in infrastructure. London's priority, from their municipal council, is not public transit; it is four major interchanges, which we're paying for as a provincial government. At 100% a pop, that's about \$40 million. I have been meeting with London Transit to try and engage them. They also get the gas tax. They're also not having to pay health or social services. They have more financial room. Infrastructure spending traditionally, until we came to government, was \$3 billion; it's now \$14 billion. London has never had more money available to it in its history. Any time they want to expand a transit line or put a proposal in, like the ones Kitchener or Ottawa has, we'll be all over it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Welland has two minutes.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to thank the members from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, London West, the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Transportation for their comments.

I think this issue is about doing the right thing and it's about making sure people are punished for breaking the law, as a way to hopefully prevent them from breaking the law again. But I don't think we're talking about bad people here. Every one of us can have an infraction of the law at some point in time around driving offences. It is about money as well. It's about putting some money to that to actually send a message to offenders.

I think that perhaps there needs to be a review of the revenue-sharing of these fines, because the municipal portion is certainly getting less and less as they have to improve the infrastructure to collect these fines.

I'm glad that I actually had the opportunity—although it was a shock to me to receive the information about my father from my staff, I was glad to have the opportunity to revisit that and talk about how important it really is for the Ministry of Transportation, and all ministries for that matter, to review and request from our constituency offices on a whole myriad of issues in a timely way and provide that access to people. Really, that's what we're all here for at the end of the day: to serve the constituents that we represent.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

APOLOGY

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A point of order, the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Speaker. I'll be the first to admit when I make an error. I'd like to withdraw and apologize for the final comment I made yesterday during my debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you for that. Accepted.

It is close to 10:15. This House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Walter McKenzie, who is the mayor of West Perth, and Ken Ahrens, who is a retired project manager with Dofasco. Welcome to the House.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to introduce, in the members' lobby, Jeff Mole, who is here in order to circulate and help members remember that he has a petition in regards to waterfalls and the protection thereof.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to introduce my guest in the members' lobby, and that is Liz Young, who works in my office in the town of Oakville.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome delegations coming from the Canadian cement association today. I know they'll be at Queen's Park, but they're also hosting the reception tonight in the dining room, and I encourage all members to go down and join those folks tonight.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: I'd like to introduce Anis Farah from Laurentian University, representing the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations. I welcome her to Queen's Park, and we look forward to our meeting.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park Richard and Carol Anjo from the great riding of Northumberland–Quinte West. They're here to welcome.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm thrilled to introduce today our page captain, who is Arianna Dossa from my riding of Pickering–Scarborough East. With her today are her family members: her mom, Dinar; father, Farid; grandfather Nazir; grandmother Yasmin; grandfather Ashraf; grandmother Parviz; and great aunt Mary. It's very wonderful to have them all here today at the Legislature. Welcome.

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's my pleasure to welcome the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations and their reps. They're joining us today from across the province. I'd also like to invite them to a reception tonight: 4:30 in committee rooms 228 and 230. Welcome, and thank you for being here.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Not to be outdone by my friend the Deputy Premier, I want to welcome to the world my newest grandchild, my first grandson, Hugh William Wesley, who was born last night in Orangeville.

Hon. David Zimmer: I would like to introduce and welcome Chief James Marsden from the Alderville First Nation, who is visiting the chamber today, and I'll be meeting with him in Alderville tomorrow.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to welcome to Queen's Park Mrs. Anis Farah, from Laurentian University, and Gyllian Phillips, from Nipissing University,

who are here with the council of university faculties. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In the Speaker's gallery, we have joining us a new friend to Ontario, Akhilesh Mishra, the consul general of India in Toronto. Welcome and join us. Namaste.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: My question is for the Premier. Premier, the people of Ontario have lost confidence in your Liberal government after you wasted almost \$1 billion to save seats in Oakville and Mississauga in the 2011 election. Taxpayers are fed up with you wasting their money so the Liberals can cling to power. They want the Liberal Party of Ontario to pay it back. Will you support my private member's resolution tomorrow and commit to reimbursing taxpayers the \$950 million that the Liberal Party wasted?

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And while the clock is stopped—I don't normally do this, but I'm blanket telling you that I will be tough today, and if you don't get the message, you'll get it quick.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I believe that the question is in the context of all of the issues that have been raised as a result of the relocation of the gas plants. Those questions have been raised repeatedly at the committee. We have sent tens of thousands of sheets of paper and documents to the committee. We broadened the scope of committee so all the questions could be asked. I think there is a much better understanding of what happened in the process of moving those gas plants, something that we all in this House agreed needed to happen.

I have said repeatedly that there were decisions made that shouldn't have been made. What's really important is that, as we go forward, we have in place a process that will ensure this will not happen again, and that's what we are doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Saying sorry doesn't fix the problem because now we've moved on to Pan Am.

Nevertheless, Premier, you signed a cabinet document authorizing the plant cancellation and you served as co-chair of the campaign that made the decision. When will you take responsibility for the money missing from the provincial treasury? This is money that the Auditor General said didn't need to be spent.

Saying sorry just is not enough. You need to pay back the money that you owe the taxpayers. You need to stop

using taxpayers as a personal ATM. Will you reimburse the hundreds of millions of dollars that you owe the Ontario people?

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, you asked the question. That's enough.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Kitchener—Conestoga, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I think a discussion of money lost to the provincial treasury would be a very interesting one.

If we look at an asset like the 407, I can remember when I was campaigning in 2003, I met a former employee of MTO and he said to me that the \$3 billion that was paid for the 407 was a fraction of what that asset was worth. There are billions of dollars at the outset that probably should have been paid, but that was a fire sale. But in an ongoing way, I believe the revenue—I'll stand to be corrected by the Minister of Transportation—that could have gone into the provincial treasury is in the order of \$700 million a year. That goes into a private company because of the fire sale that was made by the party opposite. That's where—

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

Mrs. Jane McKenna: You keep looking at the past because you don't want to deal with the future.

I was just asked this question: Am I trying to bankrupt the Liberal Party? Well, you've bankrupted Ontario taxpayers.

Premier, it's your job as the government of Ontario to put the interests of the people of this province first. You failed to do that. We are calling on you to finally do the right thing. It's time the people of this province saw that the money would be returned.

As the saying goes, if you can't do the time, don't do the crime. Your government spent \$950 million for—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I know what I'm doing. I'm not liking the tone of that particular issue, and I would ask the member to withdraw. I'm going to tell everybody that I don't like that tone about crime and criminality.

Carry on and withdraw, please.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Withdraw.

Now it's time for the government to take responsibility for its actions. Premier, will you acknowledge your mistake in taking that money from taxpayers and pay it back to the treasury?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

1040

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

As I have said, we've had many, many opportunities to talk about these issues at the committee, and that discussion is ongoing.

Interjection.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke says that people don't care about what happened 10 years ago, but I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that if the revenues I spoke to on the 407 were continuing to come into the provincial treasury, that would be billions of dollars that we would have, as a government and as a Legislature, that we could spend on services.

The question to the member opposite would be, will the party opposite find a way to pay back the billions on the 407, the hundreds of millions on the Eglinton subway, the stranded hydro debt? I think the member opposite understands that that is forgone revenue from the provincial treasury, and I would like to know what her leader would say about those debts.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Back to the Premier: I obviously want to congratulate her and Jane for their first grandchild. That's exciting—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Third grandchild; first grandson.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Oh, sorry—first grandson. That's fantastic. Hopefully, he'll be wearing some Tory blue today.

Speaker, I'd like to go back on this matter of the gas plants, because it is clear that there's no confidence left in the government's handling of the energy file. In the last two weeks alone, the auditor confirmed they blew \$1.1 billion in cancelling the gas plants. Then they cancelled \$181 million worth of nuclear reactors. Then the OEB raised hydro rates. Then the 402 was shut down by angry Ontarians in rural communities who are opposed to this wind turbine development scheme. So if their energy policy wasn't in shambles two weeks ago, it certainly is now. There is zero credibility left.

If you won't support my colleague from Burlington in her effort to get you to pay back that \$950 million, will you at least be honest with the taxpayers of this province when they open their energy bill—

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Energy will want to speak to this, but I want to just talk, because this notion about the \$180 million that has been spent on getting ready for a new nuclear spend, Mr. Speaker—I just want to be clear about what that \$180 million was for, because I think people need to know that.

Ontario Power Generation invested \$180 million in environmental approvals, in project planning, public and stakeholder consultations, around a potential new build. All of the OPG's expenditures related to the new nuclear planning were reviewed by the Ontario Energy Board,

which is an independent, semi-judicial agency, as the member opposite knows, and those expenses were posted publicly on their website.

Much of what OPG is investing can be repurposed for the future, if and when the province decides to move ahead. So that is not lost money. That is money that has bought information.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I don't think that helps the Premier escape the fact that the last two weeks in the energy file have been absolutely disastrous and have had a major impact on the ratepayers across this province.

We know that she was in the middle of a series of very bad decisions, Speaker, with respect to the Oakville gas plant. It doesn't matter how many panels she creates for so-called "open government." Everyone knows that she signed the cabinet document to cancel that power plant. Everyone knows that she was the campaign chair to make that decision. And now everyone knows, because of the Deputy Minister of Energy, that she knew well before she was quoting the \$33-million to \$40-million cancellation fee that it would be upwards of \$750 million or more.

If her party will not pay back the funds they stole from the taxpayers of this province, the only thing that she can do now is actually tell Ontario taxpayers exactly how much it's costing them.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, we have been asking for several months for the Progressive Conservative Party to come forward with its costing when it campaigned so aggressively for the cancellation of both of these plants. They have not been forthcoming.

Mayor Rob Burton of Oakville put something on his website that I'd like to quote. You'll want to hear this. It's called "The timeline..."

"On September 25, 2011, PC leader Tim Hudak says the Oakville power plant cancellation 'cost \$1 billion' and suggests the Mississauga power plant cancellation 'may cost another \$1 billion.'

"On October 5, 2011"—you'll want to hear this—"on the day before the provincial election, in front of the still under construction Mississauga power plant, PC leader Tim Hudak promises to stop the power plant if he wins the election, after only days before warning that he's sure it 'may cost another \$1 billion.'"

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to go back to the Premier. It's really nice for the government House leader to try and get up and talk about something that really doesn't matter. It doesn't matter because, I'll tell you something, Speaker, it was their government that cancelled the gas plant, it was their government that relocated to Napanee and it was their government that cost taxpayers in this province \$1.1 billion.

Back to the Premier: It's clear that the government either doesn't know or doesn't care how much ratepayers are being charged for these disastrous scandals of the past two weeks. They are making policy decisions on the fly.

It is not in the best interests of our energy sector nor is it in the best interests of the people who are paying for it across the province. If she can't tell us what that bill means and what the people of this province are paying when they open their hydro bills, when they open their natural gas bills, she's not doing her job or she's incompetent. Perhaps it's both. Will she actually ask the Auditor General to open up the books since she simply won't do it?

Hon. John Milloy: The member can shout and scream and put on all the dramatics she wants, but she cannot deny the fact that it was the leader of her party who stood up and said that if he was elected Premier of this province, the Mississauga power plant, in his words, would be "done, done, done."

We have heard for months and months this criticism from them that somehow the decision that we took—the same one they promised—has been the worst thing to befall civilization. Well, it's time they came clean. It's time they allow their candidates to come before the committee and talk about their costing, talk about their analysis and talk about why Tim Hudak, after admitting it would cost \$1 billion—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Objection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do object. Sit down.

The member is asked, as all members are, to use the title or to use the riding, please. You have 10 seconds to wrap up.

Hon. John Milloy: It's time they come clean—why their leader stood, after admitting it would cost \$1 billion, in his estimate—and explain their costing and explain why they made the exact same promise.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Ontario families are paying the highest electricity bills in Canada. They've seen this government spend over \$1 billion cancelling power plants and at least \$180 million for a nuclear expansion scheme that the government now admits is too expensive to carry forward.

Can the Premier tell us what contracts have been signed in regard to the refurbishment of the nuclear plant at Darlington?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Energy will want to speak to the supplementary, but I want to, as I did in a previous question, address the issue of the information that has been gathered and the planning that was done in anticipation of a new nuclear build. That money was spent, as I say, on planning, on public and stakeholder consultations, on environmental approvals. All of that work stands in good stead for usage in the future. That is not money that has been wasted. That is money that was invested in information that can be used at a future date. I just wanted the leader of the third party to have that information.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'll help the Premier out. In documents that we've obtained, the Minister of Energy

tells us that contracts worth \$950 million have already been signed for Darlington. Can the Premier then tell us what the final price tag will be for this project?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know I said I would send the question to the Minister of Energy; I'll send the next one to the Minister of Energy.

But again, I just want to get at what it is the leader of the third party is saying. The new nuclear: There's a problem with that decision. She doesn't like the idea of us refurbishing. We know that the NDP doesn't support nuclear, doesn't support having a baseload of nuclear, but they also don't support green energy. It's really hard to identify what their energy plan is.

We have said that we will refurbish our nuclear stock. We've said that having a baseload of nuclear is very, very important for this province, that it will be part of our long-term energy plan. It's really a bit bemusing that the leader of the third party doesn't seem to have any strategy for a long-term energy plan, where we do actually have that plan.

Interjections.

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

1050

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What New Democrats are concerned about is prudence in terms of knowing what we're paying for before we commit to spending the money.

We got an answer to our question about the costs in a document from the Minister of Energy, and I'm going to quote from that document: "The final timeline and cost will not be known until ... construction contracts are signed."

Can the Premier confirm that the government has no idea what the final price tag will be for this project, even though they've already signed contracts worth \$950 million?

Interjection.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Next question. The Minister of Energy won't trust me; I'll give him the next question.

I have to respond to the notion of prudence. Prudence is absolutely at the heart of having a plan for energy in this province. I don't know if the leader of the third party is familiar with the way large capital projects work, but the reality is that, yes, you won't know the construction costs until a contract is signed. There are many moving parts and unknowns, but what we have is a plan to have a long-term, stable energy supply in this province. Part of that is refurbishing our nuclear stock, so it would be irresponsible of us not to have put in place the planning in order to get those contracts in place. It would be irresponsible of us not to look at how much time we needed in order to refurbish that nuclear capacity. We have a prudent plan in place.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Premier, I would say that prudence is not only having a plan, but knowing how much

you're going to put the taxpayers of this province on the hook for the cost of that plan. That's prudence.

Here are the facts: The government has signed contracts worth nearly \$1 billion to get started on a refurbishment of Darlington, but, by their own admission, they have no idea what the final cost is going to be. You wouldn't start making payments on a car without knowing what the final price tag was going to be.

Of course, this question is to the Premier. Does the Premier think that it makes sense to once again start making payments and signing contracts for a new electricity plan without having any idea what the final cost is going to be?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I think it's important that we know what's going on in this place this morning. The critic for the NDP is quoted publicly, and he said it on several different occasions: He supports not building new nuclear.

Here's what's happening: We've had an outpouring of support for that decision from across the province. Much of it comes from organizations and from people who would normally be supporting the NDP, so rather than state that they support the idea of not building new, they're trying to undermine the decision by attacking the previous costs and by talking about refurbishment.

I have a clear question for the leader of the third party: Does she support cancelling new nuclear construction?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. I don't get things quiet so other people can add their two cents' worth. That includes the member from Cambridge; if I ask him to go to his chair, then I can ask him to stop.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Gee, Speaker, if the Liberals had listened to the New Democrats for the last 10 years we wouldn't have wasted \$180 million on planning for nuclear plants that we're not going to build.

This all sounds very familiar to the people of Ontario. Two years ago, the Premier was signing documents that ended up giving away the farm to private power companies, costing Ontarians \$1.1 billion. Now we find out that the government has signed off on another billion dollars in contracts to refurbish the Darlington nuclear plant, but has no idea how high that price tag is going to be.

What does the Premier have to say to people who fear that she hasn't learned a thing from the gas plant fiasco?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I take her answer to say yes, she supports not building new nuclear. She knew the costs that were out there. Why did she support cancelling new nuclear? She's doing and saying exactly what we're doing. Now she's upset that the people in her party, the organizations that she thinks are the exclusive possession of the NDP, are very, very vocal in supporting the initiative we've taken.

The OPG has been very responsible in how it has been dealing with the nuclear issue. The refurbishment will be 15,000 jobs. Does she want to kill those 15,000 jobs? They have spent money on contracts. They have done

environmental assessment. They have been doing project work, and that work is now there for us to use as a guide for the next 10 years when we make decisions on nuclear. It's the right thing to do. We're not going to spend money on power we don't—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario families and businesses are paying the highest electricity bills in Canada, and they want their government to take steps to get costs under control. Instead, here's what they see: over \$1 billion handed to private power companies to scrap the gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville, \$180 million spent on a doomed plan for new nuclear plants, and now the government is signing almost \$1 billion worth of contracts for projects even though—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence, come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath:—final price tag will be.

Now, what does the Premier have to say to businesses and households who are tired of paying for this government's electricity messes? Have the Liberals learned nothing?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: One thing we agree on—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Holding a paper in front of your face doesn't mean that I don't know that it's you. But the problem is that you're having a conversation with people on this side while they're trying to answer, and even while the question was being put, so let's just stop, please.

Carry on.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: One thing we've done to mitigate price increases in the electricity system is to cancel \$15 billion of energy construction which we don't need, because we have a surplus. Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? If she wants to go ahead with new nuclear for \$15 billion, then she is going to have to answer to the ratepayers for the increase. We are making decisions that are responsible to ratepayers. We have made responsible decisions moving forward, and I want to say that refurbishing the Candu reactors will allow Darlington to continue operating until approximately 2055.

We are realizing on the investments we've already made. OPG is proceeding with definition work. They're proceeding with environmental assessments. That \$180 million is an asset we can use to—

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

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. I'd like to ask the Premier a question about a \$770-million contract that she signed off on as the Minister of Transportation in June 2010. That contract commits the government, through Metrolinx, to buy 182 LRT vehicles with very specific delivery dates. Well, the first delivery

date has come and gone, and the reason that the government was not able to take delivery is that it has nowhere to put them.

Given the Premier's new doctrine of transparency, I'd like to ask the Premier this: What are the penalties to date that the taxpayers have incurred as a result of that contract, and will the Premier agree to table that contract with us so that we can see the details of that contract?

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: There are a number of—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Of scandals ongoing with this government.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: —contracts out, right across—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew will come to order, now. That's the second time. Carry on.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: There are a number of contracts right now. I know that many people think of these as Toronto projects, but, actually, it is in the riding of Barrie that all the tunnelling equipment is being manufactured; it is in Thunder Bay. Metrolinx has been doing a remarkable job of delivering on 15 major build-out projects, almost all of them—I think all of them—significantly under budget and on time. I have not heard of any particular problems with those.

I know there is management of these contracts, and the timings are adjusted. They're hardly scandalous when you're doing 15 major projects at the same time. I have a lot of confidence in Metrolinx to manage these contracts in the public interest.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: The Premier should have briefed her Minister of Transportation on this \$770-million contract with Bombardier Transportation.

Interjection.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: He clearly knows nothing about it. The fact of the matter is that we have it on good authority that the penalties on that single contract to date are more than \$70 million and growing by the day.

I'd like to ask the Premier this question: Will you, in light of your commitment to transparency, let your Minister of Transportation know what's in that contract? Will you table that contract with us here in the Legislature? Will you agree not to download the cost of that contract onto municipalities who are being blackmailed into taking those vehicles against their will, and will you commit that any municipal transit projects will be open to public tender from this point forward, so that they don't have to—

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You know, it just kind of galls me to hear from the party that downloaded billions of dollars of health and social services costs, forced

amalgamation onto municipalities, standing in the House, really being pretty petty and silly about this.

We work in a very challenging environment on what is quite frankly a \$50-billion transit build-out. There are changes that are made, some requested by members opposite, and they're complex. We are in the middle of negotiations right now, through Metrolinx, with the TTC and with the city to accommodate requests they've made. That will mean the cancellation of storage facilities and the reassignment of cars at additional costs. If you don't want to be a high-handed government and you actually want to work with municipalities, there will be costs and changes to meet those. We have respect in municipal government, and the party opposite could take a few lessons from us on that.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question to the Premier: According to the Auditor General of Ontario, the cabinet decision signed by the Premier "clearly favoured" TransCanada "and gave it the upper hand in the negotiations for a project to replace the Oakville plant."

Last week, New Democrats said publicly that we're calling for the Premier to attend the justice committee and explain why she set the wheels in motion to pay TransCanada more to cancel the plant than the original cost. The Premier is on notice in the press, here in the Legislature and with correspondence from the Clerks.

Will the Premier come to the justice committee to explain why she signed on to a plan that the auditors said "favoured TCE and waived the protections the OPA had under the Oakville contract"?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the government House leader will want to comment on the broader issues, but I have actually not received an invitation from the committee, as far as I know. As I have said in this House, I have been to the committee, I have answered all the questions that were asked of me and I have given all the information that I have on this matter. Again, if the member has a specific question, I'd be happy to answer it here in the House, but as I say, I've acted responsibly; I've been to the committee. What I really think would be terrific right now is if all the information that has been gleaned by the committee could come together in a report and we could get some advice from that committee on what we need to do going forward, because we're putting a plan in place, but it would be great to have the committee's perspective on that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The Premier has claimed that she wants to be more open. Since the Premier's last appearance, the Auditor General put the true waste of the gas plants at \$1.1 billion. The auditor specifically highlighted decisions signed off by the Premier.

Will the Premier respond in committee to those issues? Will the Premier come to the justice committee and explain why she was signing a document that helped put money into the pockets of private companies and

took it out of the pockets of Ontarians, or will she keep hiding from the committee?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, it was this Premier that asked the Auditor General to look into the Oakville situation. It was this Premier who worked and asked me, as House leader, to work with the opposition to establish a committee process which has full access to witnesses and to documents to move forward. But you know, it's a little strange that this member has changed his tune about this particular document, because on April 11, he had this to say about the cabinet directive that he just asked about: "I don't see it as a smoking gun. We knew that the cabinet was approving this process. So this does not surprise me."

The simple fact of the matter is the Premier has appeared in front of the committee. She answered dozens and dozens of questions. She has been forthcoming with documents. Members of her staff, members of her cabinet—I had a very enjoyable hour and a half in front of the committee answering questions about documents I had never seen and meetings I had never attended. We have been as forthcoming as possible, and it's time for the committee to wrap up its work and issue—

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

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, over the summer and through the fall, I've had the opportunity to meet with many residents and families of Ottawa South and listen to their interests and their concerns. All of us here know that the most important part of what we do is to connect people to government and the services that they and their families need.

I've met with a number of families and groups who are wondering what the future may hold for those with a developmental disability, whether it be for a friend or family member. After listening to their concerns, I fully understand and share them. I know that there are limited resources available and I also know that this government has consistently expressed a commitment to help. Could the minister tell us what actions the government is taking this year to help individuals with a developmental disability and their families?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, I'm first going to ask for some mercy because I'm losing my voice. But I want to thank the member for his question.

Our government's commitment to this sector is strong and continues to be strong. In fact, this year we're investing over \$1.7 billion in the developmental services sector, and I think it's important to point out that 98% of that funding goes directly for services to individuals.

This year, the additional \$42.5 million in the budget will help more than 1,100 adults and their families, and that's good. Since we came to office in 2003, funding for

this sector has increased by 62%, and I know that the demand for developmental services continues to grow. That's why we all in this place need to work tirelessly to understand the needs and to respond to them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to thank the minister for that answer. It's encouraging to hear about these investments the government has been making to support families in need. I know that there are more people in urgent need of care, and it's good to learn that more families will be receiving the care that they need with these steps.

As encouraging as that is, we all know that the need is great and there is more to do. I would ask the minister if he can elaborate on what this government's vision is for those with a developmental disability.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd be delighted to do that, and I appreciate again the question because it highlights the concern that I think all members of this House have for people in this sector.

I believe we have a common goal, all of us here, to make sure that we respond as best we can. We all want to see people with developmental disabilities receiving appropriate supports and taking part in their communities as full and equitable members, but there's a lot more to do. Let's not kid ourselves about it. That's why I was so pleased to support the resolution that came from the honourable member opposite to create a select committee. I understand that that select committee will actually be meeting today, and we pledge, from this side of the House, to do everything we can to assist them in their work.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday we discussed the fact that you had had 36 consultation groups since you've taken over nine months ago. In the course of that I had some questions from people about why Conservatives are involved in some of these groups. Of course, the obvious answer to that is that they give credibility to it.

In thinking about the matter, what we've really concluded is that you have 37 groups. And, of course, the 37th group is the most important group of all, the one that you consult with every day, the one that's making the real decisions around here: our colleagues here to the left.

1110

My question is, when are you going to formalize this arrangement and let the people of Ontario know who is really running this place?

Interjections.

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

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing says, it's sort of hard to know where to start in answering that question. But, Mr. Speaker, I think I'll start here, and that is that, as I said yesterday, we are a government who believes that it is

better to talk to people who know, who have expertise, who are able to give us advice on a range of subjects. I really believe that that is how good decisions are made.

I will just paint a picture, and again it goes back to a time that I know the member opposite remembers, when it was impossible to get a meeting with a minister. I remember during the discussions around amalgamation, I tried to have a meeting with the minister of the time Al Leach, and his doors were locked; his people wouldn't answer our calls. We couldn't get a meeting with him to talk about amalgamation. I remember being a school trustee, not being able to get a meeting to talk about amalgamation of school boards. That's not how we operate; that's how they operate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: This again is to the Premier. It's very easy to try to offset blame by blaming somebody else and bringing up examples of things that you think happened many, many years ago. But the fact is, right in this very House this morning, we had the perfect example of open and transparent: MPP Klees asked you and your minister for some information on a contract, and he got a bunch of gobbledygook and no answer whatsoever. Now, what in the world is going on? The residents of Ontario are entitled to an answer; we're entitled to an answer. When are you going to become open and transparent?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.
Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm not going to say it's a good question, but I'm glad that the member opposite has asked this question, because, obviously, if there is a question about a specific issue and we don't have the specific information about that contract, we will get that information for the member opposite. That is how it works.

I know that the member opposite hasn't been a minister of the crown, but the member for Newmarket–Aurora has been a minister, and he knows perfectly well that when there are specific questions about a contract or a situation, the minister can go back and get that information from officials, which we will do.

But, fundamentally, I was not blaming anyone. What I was saying was, there is a contrast in the way we do business with the way they do business. There always has been. Listening to people and taking advice and making decisions in that way—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. New question.

SENATE OF CANADA

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speaker, my question is to the Premier. What's clear is that senators Mike Duffy and Pamela Wallin and others are really making the case that we should be getting rid of the federal Senate.

Applause.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I like that.

Your former leader, Mr. McGuinty, was pretty clear on abolishing the Senate. Why don't you take the same position? How can you now say, in light of everything that's going on with the federal Senate, that you think this institution could be reformed rather than scrapped?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are not the federal government, if the member opposite hadn't noticed. This is not a decision that we can make on our own.

My job, as Premier, is to unite people, not to divide them. The changes that are being advanced by the federal government fundamentally alter the nature of the Senate. So I have taken the position that I think that there is the possibility of reform. That is my personal position, Mr. Speaker. It is a discussion that has to happen across the country, and it has to be led by the Prime Minister, as he said he would.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, what's clear is that people in this country, and people in this province, are united in trying to get rid of the Senate. What we've now got is we have Senator Duffy and others who are demonstrating, quite frankly, that that institution long should be gone.

We as a province have a role to play, because amending the Constitution—which it will take to get rid of the Senate—takes provincial approval. So I say again, as the leader of the government, are you prepared to take the position that in fact Ontario should adopt the position of abolishing the Senate in this country?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite may want to suggest that this is a burning issue on the mind of every single person in this province, but I can tell you, as the chair of the Council of the Federation, when this issue was raised in the summer by one of my colleague Premiers—one Premier raised it—it was such a non-issue in terms of constituency around the table, no one else even wanted to comment on it. There was no discussion.

There was a consensus that this was something that the federal government needed to lead, that Prime Minister Harper had said he wanted to put on the table, and he was going to lead the discussion. That's where the discussion has to take place. I believe that it's rightly there, and I would hope that the member opposite is in active conversation with Thomas Mulcair. Let them have that discussion at the federal level.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Mauro: I've got a question today for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, our government's economic plan to drive jobs and growth has three pillars: We're investing in people, we're investing in infrastructure and we're supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate in Ontario.

Now, I know in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, I've got great examples of what we've done on the infrastructure front, bringing forward projects that have been sought after for decades actually that we are now delivering on, that have created tremendous infrastructure

improvements and are also creating a lot of work, and so that's a wonderful piece. On the business climate piece, through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund and through a long list of significant tax reforms, we've gone a long way to support businesses in Ontario as well.

As the minister has reminded us many times in this House, Ontario is the leading jurisdiction for exploration and production of minerals in Canada and remains to this day a major player across the world. There is no question that the mining and exploration industry is an important contributor to our provincial economy. Will the minister please inform the Legislature how our government's economic plan to drive jobs and growth is working hand in hand to grow Ontario's mining industry?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you to the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan; he put it so well.

Yesterday was a great example of that. I had the great pleasure of being at the Lac des Iles mine site north of Thunder Bay at the commissioning of a new mine shaft, our great platinum and palladium mine. It's a very impressive project, a \$400-million investment by North American Palladium, sustaining 500 jobs. It's just a great example of how our mineral exploration strategy is working.

Our government has invested over \$140 million in Ontario's mineral sector activity to date, and the success is there to be seen. The real good example is that over the last 10 years that we've been in government, 23 new mines have opened in the province of Ontario, more than anywhere else in Canada.

We are confident that by providing the right climate to attract investment in mining, we're going to continue to support job creation and economic activity that will help to continue to grow Ontario's economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Minister, obviously 23 new mines opening over the course of 10 years speaks very clearly to the support and the climate that we've helped to create here in Ontario.

One of the projects that's on the minds of many Ontarians, especially those in northern Ontario, is the Ring of Fire. I must say I'm always amazed, and find it remarkable, the criticism that comes forward—that we expect as a government, but the incredible simplicity of the criticism. Many of the members who will criticize us on this project will not speak about the First Nations involvement. They won't talk about the federal government's role. They will criticize us as the provincial government. They don't talk about the individual municipalities or the federations of municipalities that have their own perspectives on these issues. They don't talk about infrastructure, and, of course, they don't talk about the multiple mining companies that all have a role in this.

Minister, please share with the members of the Legislature how our government is working hard to ensure the development of this project, including considerations such as investments in communities and infrastructure.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It really is a great question. Thanks so very much to the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan. The truth is he has given a great example of

just how complex it is to realize the economic potential of this extraordinary opportunity.

We know a number of things. We know that in order for a community to take advantage of this tremendous opportunity, they need to be ready, and that's the kind of work that's under way in our ministry. I'll mention the work we did with the Matawa First Nations on a historic framework agreement, and community readiness strategies for communities such as Thunder Bay and Greenstone, which will ultimately be the transportation hub for the Ring of Fire.

1120

I want to encourage all members to speak to us about the work that we're doing, because indeed that's going forward in a positive way. We're having discussions with all interested companies. Those discussions obviously will include important infrastructure links. We recognize how important infrastructure is. You've got to be able to have, obviously, access to the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: —and you've got to have access out. It's key.

Let me tell you this: We are assessing a number of options that will see the greatest benefit for Ontarians. We're looking at those—

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

Hon. Michael Gravelle: —the most beneficial and appropriate role for—

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

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the Premier. Premier, your Liberal government has refused to recognize the opportunity that the development of Alberta's oil and gas sector would mean to the economy of Ontario.

Alberta will require an estimated \$120 billion in goods and services over the next 20 years. On Friday, it's my understanding, you'll be in Calgary to discuss economic issues and energy with the Alberta government. Will you commit today to this House to creating those conditions of economic growth and job creation in Ontario by pledging your unwavering support—and your government's—for the Alberta oil and gas sector and those thousands of well-paying jobs and the billions in investment that will create in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you for the question, because I am very pleased that I'm going to be able to meet over the next couple of days with both Premier Selinger and Premier Redford. You are absolutely right that oil and gas and the importance of our relationship with Alberta are going to be at the core and at the heart of my conversation with Premier Redford. I have said probably many times that I understand the interconnections, and I understand how important it is that we strengthen that relationship.

On the issues around oil and gas and the transportation of fuel, I again have been very clear that I understand

how important it is that we're able to move those goods across the country while at the same time ensuring that the environmental protections are in place and making sure that the relationships with First Nations people are in place as we do that. It is a fundamental concern to me. I have said that publicly, and I will be reinforcing that with the Premier of Alberta.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Back to the Premier: Premier, experts agree that the greatest beneficiary of developing the oil and gas and resource sector in Alberta and the west outside of that wild rose country is the province of Ontario and our highly skilled workforce in this province, despite the fact that your predecessor, Premier McGuinty, was steadfastly opposed to Ontario benefiting from the Alberta oil sands development.

Premier, will you stand in your place today and admit that the former Premier was wrong, and instead outline what you will do to make sure Ontario benefits from the Alberta resource and makes it an Ontario advantage?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: My predecessor took a leadership role in bringing people together across this country and working with Premiers across the country, and particularly with Premier Redford, as a matter of fact.

It is very important to me, as this year's chair of the Council of the Federation and as the Premier of Ontario, that we understand that this country will work better if we work together.

The leadership that the Minister of Finance has taken on a single securities regulator is extremely important to the well-being of the country. The leadership that I want to take on advancing the cause of enhancing the CPP so that people in this country can have a retirement and can look forward to a decent and dignified retirement is something that is very important to me. I will be working with my colleague Premiers to raise that issue, and I hope to engage the federal Minister of Finance on that. That's the kind of leadership that we want—

Interjections.

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

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, two little girls in Sudbury shaved their heads, and they did it to honour the memory of Sam Bruno, a close member of their family, and to raise money for the cause that he championed until the very day he died: bringing a PET scanner to Sudbury.

Northwestern Ontario has had a PET scanner, and southwestern Ontario has several PET scanners. This is about equity. If a 10-year-old and an eight-year-old get it, why can't this government understand that patients in northeastern Ontario deserve a PET scanner?

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I first want to say to the two 10-year-old girls who care so passionately about

health care that they would shave their heads, thank you for caring so much about health care.

I think it's very important to acknowledge that people in northeastern Ontario do have access to PET services. All people in Ontario have access to PET scans when they need them. Every LHIN and every hospital makes decisions about how they spend resources. The issue of whether or not a PET scanner is required in northeastern Ontario is a decision that is of the LHIN and of the hospital, Speaker.

What's important to me is that people get access to the care. We know that in northeastern Ontario, this has been a request—I know the member from Nickel Belt has talked about this—but we must be very careful about how we spend the health care dollars.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, perhaps the Minister of Health needs to be reminded that the LHIN and all of the hospitals have actually requested the PET scanner be brought to this part of the province.

PET scanners can help very sick patients. They give doctors a special set of eyes that can help determine a course of treatment.

Anyone who has supported a loved one suffering from cancer knows that getting them out of bed and into a car is hard enough, never mind transporting them hundreds of kilometres away for a test.

There's no doubt that PET scanners are expensive, Speaker, but the community is doing its part to offset the costs. In fact, they're holding another fundraiser tomorrow night.

If this government can blow more than a billion dollars of public money on moving gas plants around in southern Ontario, why can't it spare some change to bring a PET scanner to Sudbury?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's disappointing, frankly, to hear the leader of the third party talk about the costs of operating a PET scanner as loose change. PET scanners are very expensive machines and operating them is a very costly undertaking. So it's important that we're smart about where we locate PET scanners.

I take issue, Speaker: To the best of my knowledge, neither the LHIN nor the hospital agrees that a PET scanner is the priority investment right now. I have not had an update on that in the last few months. If that has changed, I will happily correct my record. But my understanding is that that is not a priority for the hospital or for the LHIN at this time.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Energy.

Mr. Speaker, protecting the health and environment of Ontarians has been a priority for me as long as I have been a member of this Legislature, so I was proud when our government committed in 2003 to eliminating the use of coal-fired generation in the province.

Eliminating the use of dirty coal is providing numerous and significant benefits to the people of Ontario. For

one, it's going to mean cleaner air for people in all parts of the province and less Ontarians suffering from air-pollution-related diseases.

I understand that this morning the Minister of Energy announced an update on the progress of our government's initiative to get off coal. Could you please share with the House the progress we have made on this important initiative, Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member from Ottawa–Orléans for his question.

Speaker, it was my pleasure to announce this morning that the Lambton generating station has burned its last coal. This leaves the Nanticoke generating station, slated to close at the end of this year—

Applause.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: You're using my time. Now I'm going to have to talk more quickly.

This leaves the Nanticoke generating station, slated to close at the end of this year, as the last operating coal-fired facility in southern Ontario.

Ontario is now on track to become the first jurisdiction in North America to totally eliminate coal-fired generation. Getting off coal is going to save our health care system \$4.4 billion in avoided health care costs, and it's going to lower Ontario's carbon emissions by over 30 megatonnes. Mr. Speaker, that's like taking seven million cars off the road.

Today, we have Canada's most modern electricity system, its most advanced smart grid and a diverse and reliable supply of clean and renewable energy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you to the minister for the update. I believe that this makes Ontario a global leader in clean energy initiatives.

Along with improving the health of Ontarians and reducing health care costs by reducing illnesses from pollution, I understand that getting off coal also represents one of the largest climate change initiatives in all of North America. As the minister mentioned, it means a massive reduction in climate-change-causing emissions that our province produces, especially as the carbon content of our atmosphere moves beyond 400 parts per million this year. All this adds up to a substantial improvement in both the health and the environment for the province.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that Ontario's efforts to get off coal have made it a global leader in clean energy. Can the minister please tell the House how this government's initiative compares with the efforts of other jurisdictions to decrease their dependence on dirty coal?

1130

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Getting off coal is the single largest climate change initiative in North America. Don't just take it from me. Listen to what the federal Minister of Foreign Affairs, John Baird, said earlier this year: "We're the only country in the world that's committed to getting out of the dirty coal electricity generation business."

If the federal Conservatives can support our efforts to stop burning coal, why can't their counterparts at Queen's Park understand the importance of this initiative? Maybe it's because when the PC Party was last in office, the use of dirty coal grew by 127%.

Our efforts to get off dirty coal are making Ontario a healthier place to live, and we think it's time the opposition joined their federal colleagues and supported a cleaner, healthier Ontario.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Premier. More than 20 years ago, a group of peaceful, respectful people known as the Buddhist Association of Canada's Cham Shan Temple toured the township of Cavan Monaghan in the area of what would become the city of Kawartha Lakes. They purchased land for its beautiful scenery and peacefulness.

Their \$40-million plan was to build a picturesque retreat that would include replicas of the four great Buddhist mountain sites of China. It would include a restaurant, a gift shop and accommodations. This peaceful operation has the potential to bring in millions of dollars in tourism revenue for the area, but the proposed wind farms call for at least four industrial wind turbines to be built right beside them, which would ruin the tranquil scenery and harm the peacefulness of this retreat.

Premier, will the Buddhist dream be gone with the wind?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I appreciate the question from the member. I have not personally, and I don't believe my office has, heard from this particular group. I certainly would welcome to invite them into my office and have a conversation with them, but I have to say that we have taken some very, very significant decisions in how to properly site our energy infrastructure.

The issue is—and I put this to the member very, very clearly—that there is an existing wind contract. I'm asking her whether or not her leader supports cancelling existing wind contracts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: They have asked to have a meeting with you, and have not had any acknowledgement of that, so I'll be taking that back to you. But it is alarming to me that the Liberal government will go to any length for their own self-interest, even if it means ruining a legitimate project on land purchased more than 20 years ago. The government wants to allow its own interests to prevent millions of dollars being spent in a region that has high unemployment and is in desperate need of jobs.

The Buddhist Association of Canada is a peaceful group of people who want to run something that will be spiritually, economically and visually pleasing for people. Minister Chan has visited the site and is in support. The local councils of Kawartha Lakes and Cavan Monaghan have done their part by voting down proposed wind turbines.

I ask the Premier again if she will put an end to this issue and stop forcing wind turbines on unwilling communities.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Unlock the door. Let them in.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That door is ready to be used by somebody. Thank you. Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I heard a lot of shouting coming from the member from North Bay. He was one of the biggest supporters of wind. We have all kinds of quotes. His municipality did it.

What's really important here is that we have existing wind contracts. The issue is, how do we deal with existing wind contracts? I have asked the Leader of the Opposition to clarify his position, and clarify it for the purpose of the member. Will he cancel existing contracts for wind? Yes or no? He has said yes, then he said no, then he said yes. He's all over the map. He has no policy in any way, shape—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: You're supposed to answer the questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And you're supposed to stop when I stand. New question.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. More than 78,000 young Ontarians have participated in the ranger program since 1944. The unique part of this program is that it places 17-year-olds to work in parts of our great province far from their homes. The program built awareness, job skills, an overall appreciation of the diversity of our great province in yesterday's and today's leaders, but sadly, not tomorrow's, because the Liberal government cut the program.

Today we'll present a petition with over 6,000 signatures to save the program. Will the government listen and commit to reinstating the full ranger program and give young people the chance of a lifetime?

Hon. David Oraziotti: I certainly appreciate the question from the member opposite on this very important issue. I'm very pleased that in our ministry we continue to be the top employer of young people in the government—1,974 jobs through the Ministry of Natural Resources. That continues to remain the same, despite the financial challenges that we have as a government, which I think speaks to the Premier's commitment and our government's commitment to helping to support opportunities for young people in the province of Ontario.

In fact, with the change of the youth ranger program to a day-based program, we've added 17 additional locations across the province of Ontario. We've gone from 13 locations to 30 locations in Ontario. In fact, there are three in the riding of the member opposite which provide fantastic opportunities for young people in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the minister. In my youth I was fortunate to have participated in the ranger program for two years. I learned and accomplished real tasks that, to a great extent, have shaped and made me who I am today. But now the MNR budget is being cut, parks are being closed and young people are not getting the opportunity to explore and learn.

Will this government commit to reinstating the ranger program and not deny our youth this invaluable experience?

Hon. David Oraziotti: I appreciate hearing that from the member opposite. The member opposite is well aware that there are about 74,000 alumni of the program throughout the province who are very active and certainly appreciate the experiences that they've been able to gain. That is why, despite the incredible financial pressure that we're facing in our ministry and across the government, we have maintained this program in a way that continues to bring these opportunities to young people right across Ontario. In fact, we've enhanced the locations in the province by adding 17 more locations in Ontario that will allow young people to gain these opportunities, and we're committed to ensuring that this program is one that continues in the future.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd just like to welcome my good friend Linda McQuaig from the riding of Toronto Centre to Queen's Park today.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Point of order, Speaker: I'm not sure whether to challenge the energy minister for his comment, but I will make a point of order on the comment made by the environment minister. He talked about the privacy commissioner. The privacy commissioner ruled—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I remind all members that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm waiting for attention, please. Thank you. That's not a point of order.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to welcome to the House today my brother, Andrew Hunter. He has spent the last 10 years playing international basketball in over 40 countries. He has recently graduated with his MBA and will be starting his business career in St. Thomas, Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland–Quinte West on a point of order.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I would like to also welcome Chief Marsden from Alderville First Nation to Queen's Park this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands adjourned until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: The group that I expect in just a little bit are from the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations. I met with them: Shirley Van Nuland of UOIT, Sue Wurtele and Jocelyn Williams from Trent, and Cathy Christie and Constance Adamson from Queen's. Welcome to Queen's Park, and good luck in your pursuit of resolving the issues in post-secondary education.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'd like to introduce some friends and family members of my colleague the late Tony Silipo. They are Anne Marie Miraglia, Filomena Miraglia, Adrian Silipo, Cosimo Silipo, Josie Silipo, Rosa Silipo, Silvana Silipo, and friends Martin Silva and Corrado Paina, who are here today. I welcome them all here today and will speak about the issue a bit later.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I just want to introduce my friend Jeff Mole, a friend of many of us here. He has been here many times. He's with Trillium Energy and is a big supporter of community power.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SCUGOG SPORTS HALL OF FAME

Mr. John O'Toole: It's my privilege to pay tribute to the inductees into the Scugog Sports Hall of Fame, which will be on October 24. This year's honourees include the father-and-son slalom water skiing champions Dave Mann and his son Michael Mann. Dave Mann's latest accomplishment was breaking the men's VI Canadian slalom record this year at the age of 60—10 years younger than I am. His son Michael's achievements included gold medals in 2008 and 2009 as a member of the junior team at the Can-Am challenge in St. Louis.

Multi-sport athlete Garnett Warriner skipped the provincial senior men's legion curling team in 2005. He also skipped the Labatt senior mixed curling team to three Ontario finals.

Barb Ward was an outstanding softball player who later excelled as a coach and administrator in the Greenbank minor softball league.

The "Midget C" Cy Wilson Motors Mustangs will be inducted for their success in the OMHA hockey championship series in 1970-71.

I'd like to also recognize the volunteers on the Hall of Fame committee. They include Leanne Ashbridge, Gary Edgar, Rodd Foster, Doug McLatchy, Ron Redman, Wayne Venning, Dave Dalton, Rob Scott, Councillors Jim Howard and John Hancock, and Mayor Chuck Mercier and his staff members Craig Belfry and Lindsay Burnett.

Congratulations to the 2013 inductees and to the committee on this great recognition of local talent.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Ms. Sarah Campbell: This past weekend, five people lost their lives on the Trans-Canada Highway, 15

kilometres outside of English River. At this point, we do not know what the cause of this horrific crash was, but it has left people in my riding and across the northwest worried about travelling the roads this winter and what level of winter road maintenance service they can expect to receive.

Over the past couple of years, many people have contacted my offices to tell me that they have never seen the roads in such poor condition, nor have they ever felt so afraid to venture out of their home communities. Speaker, this is unacceptable. This government spends a lot of time talking about gridlock and transportation issues in other areas of the province, like Toronto, but not nearly enough talking about northwestern Ontario's own transportation issues, like gridlock.

If our highways aren't safe to travel, they are impassable. People across the northwest are wondering: Where is this Liberal government's comprehensive plan to tackle the very urgent transportation challenges that we face? Many believe that part of the solution is to begin four-laning our highway from the Manitoba border to Thunder Bay, something this government has promised to do but has failed to deliver.

But the other more important solution is for this government to step up and ensure that our roads are maintained to a high standard so that we can travel safely to medical appointments and for work. We can't endure another winter of poor conditions with more fatalities. When will this government step up to the plate and tell northerners that we deserve the same basic services as those living in Toronto?

MASUMEEN ISLAMIC CENTRE

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm pleased to share with this House that this past weekend I had the opportunity to attend the Eid al-Adha and the 10th-anniversary celebration of the Masumeen Islamic Centre in my great riding of Mississauga-Brampton South.

Eid al-Adha is a time for special prayers and a time to give thanks for blessings received. On this significant annual Islamic observance, families and friends gather, exchange gifts and support those in need.

I'm proud to represent such a compassionate and culturally diverse community.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Masumeen Islamic Centre on 10 great years. The centre provides services such as youth programs, seniors' activities, useful publications and many other important functions. Our province is enriched by their countless contributions. To all the members of Masumeen Islamic Centre and their dedicated volunteers, happy 10th anniversary and Eid Mubarak.

WASTE REDUCTION

Mr. Michael Harris: Today across the country, Canadians are taking part in Waste Reduction Week. This event informs and educates all of us on the importance of

reducing, reusing and recycling every day of the year. Whether we need to dispose of batteries, paint cans or an old TV set, this week reminds us that we all have a part to play to ensure that those materials are recycled and don't end up in a landfill. So I'm pleased to see that many groups and municipalities are using this week to encourage residents in their area to make the right choices to protect our environment.

Waste Reduction Week also reminds us of the importance of having the right provincial policies in place to ensure that we can increase overall waste diversion. As many know, Ontario's recycling rate has been hopelessly stalled at just 23% for 10 long years under the Liberal government, so it's time to turn this record of failure around by putting the right plan in place. Unfortunately, the government has tabled Bill 91, which would keep waste diversion stalled at just 23%, kill jobs in Ontario's manufacturing sector and lead to more time being spent fighting over money than setting priorities to protect our environment.

So I hope that Waste Reduction Week will help to convince my colleagues on the other side of the House to do the right thing: Drop Bill 91 and table a real plan today.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Ms. Catherine Fife: I rise today to speak about worker safety in the province of Ontario. On Friday, October 11, as Kitchener-Waterloo was celebrating the opening ceremonies of Oktoberfest, a young man working on a construction site in Waterloo fell to his death. Mr. Speaker, my eyes were opened that day to the precarious state of worker safety in the province of Ontario.

Nick Lalonde was 23 years old. He was a young father. He had a 19-month-old daughter with his girlfriend, Chelsey Suchard. I'd like to again offer my condolences to the family.

Like many young people, Nick worked in construction seasonally. During the winter months he worked at a restaurant. Nick had many friends and a loving family, and his loss leaves a void in all of their lives.

No one should ever have to wonder if they will return home safely from work. No one should ever have to worry about their family member's safety while at work. Despite improvements in workplace safety, the death of Nick Lalonde reminds us that serious injuries continue to happen on the job in Ontario. It is simply unacceptable, and these tragedies cannot continue to happen.

Since September 2013, 11 workers have died on the job in the construction sector alone. In August, a 29-year-old worker fell 55 storeys on a Toronto high-rise project. In July, a 38-year-old Haliburton construction worker was killed when he fell off a roof.

Since 1998, in the construction sector, 308 workers have lost their lives in the province of Ontario. We need to be doing more in this province to ensure that number comes down to zero.

AFFAIRES FRANCOPHONES

FRANCOPHONE AFFAIRS

M. Phil McNeely: C'est avec fierté et gratitude que je désire souligner, aujourd'hui, les 10 ans de service de ma collègue et amie Madeleine Meilleur à titre de ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones.

Notre gouvernement, avec Madeleine Meilleur à la tête de l'Office des affaires francophones, n'a cessé de déployer des efforts constants, depuis 2003, pour soutenir la plus grande communauté francophone hors du Québec.

1510

Ce sont 10 ans de travail acharné auprès de la francophonie ontarienne que l'on doit à la ministre Meilleur, et des réalisations telles la création en 2007 du Commissariat aux services en français; l'adoption d'une loi donnant l'autonomie à TFO en la reconnaissant comme une entité complètement indépendante en 2008; et en 2010, l'adoption de la Loi sur le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes, proclamant le 25 septembre de chaque année le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes. Plus récemment, une étape majeure a été réalisée lorsque la ministre Meilleur a annoncé à toute la communauté francophone d'Ottawa la désignation de l'Hôpital Montfort comme hôpital d'enseignement universitaire.

Alors toutes mes félicitations à la ministre Meilleur pour ses 10 ans au service de la francophonie ontarienne, et j'invite tout le monde—I invite everyone to stand and to acknowledge 10 years of successful work by our minister of francophone affairs in Ontario.

CARP FAIR

Mr. Jack MacLaren: The Carp Fair recently celebrated its 150th anniversary with record crowds and more heavy horses than ever before.

The celebration started on September 14 with the unveiling of a 10-foot-by-80-foot mural of the history of the Carp Fair titled, "Everyone Loves a Parade in Carp." The mural was so detailed that the faces of many of the people who made the fair a success in past decades were easily recognizable: Joyce Trafford, the fair manager; Stan Carruthers, a heavy horseman from the area; and Weldon Johnston, who was president in 1954 and is 92 years old today.

Opening ceremonies for the fair happened on September 28. They were hosted by co-presidents Matt Munro and Wendy Cox, and many local dignitaries attended.

People came to see the beautiful teams of heavy horses that came from across Ontario and Quebec, which have always been the main attraction of the Carp Fair.

This year, there were 25 teams of six horses pulling wagons in the ring at the same time. What an impressive and beautiful sight that was. It is a world record: 150 heavy horses in the ring at one time on Carp Fair's 150th anniversary.

It was a proud weekend for the people who organized the Carp Fair.

CAMERON'S BREWING CO.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a great pleasure to rise in the House today to mark the 10th anniversary of a great business in my community: Cameron's Brewing Co. Cameron's Brewing Co. is an award-winning, family-run craft brewer that's based in my riding of Oakville. They've been passionately brewing all their natural ales and lagers since 1997 in the community of Oakville.

It was started by a gentleman by the name of Cameron Howe, who was actually a chemical engineer by trade. He began his journey into the idea of introducing quality craft beer into the Ontario marketplace, but what began as a mere hobby quickly turned into a flourishing small business.

Today, Cameron's remains true to its roots, with a dedicated team of beer experts committed to brewing quality, award-winning and locally crafted beer.

Cameron's Brewing Co. is both environmentally and socially conscious in their day-to-day practices. I'm so proud that Oakville's highly educated and skilled workforce, along with very strong market conditions, have made Oakville an attractive location for companies such as Cameron's to invest in.

So today, Speaker, I'm very proud to have Cameron's Brewery Co. in Oakville and to wish them, on their 10th anniversary, many, many more years of brewing success.

CHARLIE BUTLER

Mr. John Yakabuski: This past Friday, I had the pleasure of joining friends and family to honour Charlie Butler for 50 years in the automotive business.

While working in forestry in his native New Brunswick, Charlie took up the call to join the Canadian Armed Forces. He rose through the ranks and became a tank commander and was stationed in Petawawa.

While serving his country, Charlie began to realize that there would have to be life after the military, and so it began. Selling a couple of used cars at a time from his home, Charlie sensed that this could be his future.

Following his heart and establishing his motto, one that he remains steadfastly faithful to, "Serving One Customer at a Time," Charlie grew from that home base to owning a number of dealerships, most notably his flagship Butler GM Cadillac in Pembroke, Ontario.

His success has benefited his community as well. Charlie is well known as a philanthropist who has never been shy to support his community. While some of his charitable works are widely known, there are so many more that no one ever hears about except the recipients of his generosity. At the age of 82, Charlie can still be found daily in his office at Butler.

At the reception the other night, he showed me once again how hands-on he really is. While I was admiring a particular Corvette on display, Charlie, without ever looking, told me everything about the car, including the list price to the penny.

It's always a great story when you can talk about someone reaching the pinnacle of success, largely by their own efforts and honest business practices. Charlie Butler is such a man. I congratulate Charlie, his good wife Betty, their families and their staff on this tremendous milestone and wish them many, many more years of success.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements. I just want to know from the member from Renfrew: Did you buy the car?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: He's not listening to you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): He's still not listening to me. Did you buy it?

Mr. John Yakabuski: No. There were too many pennies involved.

TONY SILIPO

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to Mr. Tony Silipo, former member of this Legislature for Dovercourt, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to pay tribute to former member Tony Silipo. Do we agree? Agreed.

We'll start with the member for York South-Weston.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a real honour for me to speak on behalf of my party and our Premier in tribute to the former MPP for Dovercourt, the late Tony Silipo, in the presence of his family. We welcome here at Queen's Park his wife, Anne Marie Miraglia; his son, Adrian Silipo; his mother, Signora Rosa Silipo; sisters Josie and Silvana; his brother, Cosimo; his mother-in-law, Filomena Miraglia; and his good friend Martin Silva.

Although I did not have the pleasure to serve with him in this House, I did know Tony Silipo. I got to know him in my role as a journalist and anchor at OMNI television.

Tony was a man of integrity, a straight shooter whose genuine compassion for others endeared him to all who knew him. He was a quiet man who never heckled, and whose ability to listen intently to different points of view earned him the respect of his supporters and the esteem of his opponents. Throughout his endeavours, his ultimate objective was to identify the common ground and to find solutions.

The former member for Dovercourt held a remarkable record of dedicated service to his constituents and to this province during his tenure of nine years here at Queen's Park. His unwavering commitment to public service was evident in everything he did, in and out of the House.

Tony's public life, as we know, began in 1978 as a trustee to the Toronto public school board, of which he then became chair in 1989. It was during this period of time that I first had the opportunity to meet him and to interview him on a number of occasions, as he was a tireless champion of heritage language programs.

After being elected to the Legislature in 1990, he joined Bob Rae's cabinet, first as Minister of Education and then as Minister of Community and Social Services. As education minister, he is remembered in our province for changing the practice of streaming students from immigrant and working-class families into non-academic courses. This opened the doors to higher education for many immigrant children.

Not everyone may know that Tony Silipo was born in Italy, in Calabria to be exact, in the very, very small town of Martone, in 1957. He arrived in Canada at the tender age of 12 and never lost contact with his roots. He remained a proud son of Calabria. I recall his joy and delight when, as education minister, he returned to his birthplace in 1992 to receive honorary citizenship and was followed by a substantial number of Canadian and Italian media reporters. Even though he had been living in Canada for decades, he surprised Italian reporters when he stated that the passage of time had not diminished his love for his ancient hometown, and he remained extremely proud of his roots.

1520

One of my former colleagues at OMNI, Mr. Corrado Paina, who is here today with us in the House, who went on to work with Tony Silipo, remembers that trip very well and how the sublime geography of this ancient land and the sea that surrounds the region was etched indelibly in their memory and was reflected in the character and the spirit of the man.

After public life, Silipo continued his career as vice-chair of the workplace safety and appeals tribunal and remained active within the Italian-Canadian community, taking on the role of president of the Calabria federation of Canada. He had a dream.

Well-known journalist and author Antonio Nicaso, who succeeded Tony in that presidency, describes Tony Silipo as a man of vision who wanted to build a cultural centre for the Calabrian community in the GTA. Nicaso remembers Silipo as a uniting figure, a positive spirit whose charisma rallied people to a common cause.

In the latter years of his life, he remained engaged with young people, helping second- and third-generation Italian-Canadians to reconnect with their heritage.

His commitment to public service never wavered. Although his life was cut short and he died at the age of 54, his legacy lives on. Tony Silipo was a man who valued lofty ideals. Notwithstanding his humble beginnings, he championed values of integrity, honesty and compassion. We join the Silipo family and all who knew Tony in remembering him today.

Addio, Tony.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: First, I'd also like to extend our welcome to the family and friends of Tony Silipo.

It is an honour to pay tribute to Tony Silipo today on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and members of the official opposition. Tony Silipo was a member of this House representing Dovercourt from September 1990 to June 1999.

Integrity, compassion and dedication are the three words that describe how Tony served his constituents and our province—a quiet and effective gentleman. It was a privilege to be a member of the 36th Parliament at the same time as Tony Silipo, when he was representing the riding of Dovercourt. In fact, we served on finance and economic affairs together.

We sat on opposite sides of the House, but I did listen to his wisdom and experience. Tony's integrity, compassion and dedication to public service were widely respected by the elected members and staff across the House. Tony's gifts as a leader were clearly recognized wherever his public service career took him.

He was first elected in 1978 to the Toronto District School Board at the age of 21 and later became the chair of the board. He won the provincial election in Dovercourt in 1990. During the first term in the Legislature, he served as Chair of Management Board, Minister of Education, Minister of Community and Social Services and deputy leader.

As an opposition MPP, he was tenacious as critic in several high-profile portfolios, including finance, GTA issues and economic development, trade and tourism. He also served on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs effectively.

After leaving public office, he continued his career as a public servant in his responsibility as vice-chair of the Workplace Safety and Appeals Tribunal. My recollection of Tony is that although he was well versed on all aspects of public policy, education was his true passion. As Minister of Education, he took great pride. He is remembered as an advocate for integrating exceptional children into the classroom and supporting destreaming of classrooms at that time. He wanted to ensure that every student had the best start in life and equal opportunity to achieve his or her full potential. Tony Silipo strove to ensure that no student was left behind because of gender, ethnicity, special needs or the family's socio-economic status.

In a speech to the Legislature in 1992, he called on the members to build an education system that was "sensitive to and better reflects the ethnocultural and multiracial diversity of our society." He described an equitable "system free of barriers raised on the basis of gender or socioeconomic level."

In his remarks, as recorded in Hansard on April 29, 1992, he said, "The destreaming of grade 9 in 1993 and the mandating of junior kindergarten programs in 1994 are policies that reflect this commitment to equity for every student. We are also committed to integrating more students with special needs into local community classrooms and schools in 1993."

Clearly, his passion and philosophy in education were guided by the values described in a quotation from him as "excellence, equity, accountability and partnership." He said, "Excellence means a new commitment to the highest possible achievement in literacy and numeracy for all of our students. It means a commitment to helping students develop analytical and critical skills that prepare them for a life of learning, genuine and responsible

citizenship and full participation in our society and economy”—a visionary person.

A scholarship in Tony's name at the Toronto board of education is a fitting tribute to his legacy in education and public service.

At age 54, Tony was taken far too soon. Yet we are inspired and encouraged by his talents, his energy and how he used his skills so well and so generously as a leader in public service.

On behalf of Tim Hudak and the opposition party, I extend my condolences to his wife, Anne Marie; his son, Adrian; his mother; and family members and friends who join us today. Thank you for his contribution and the time he gave to public service on our behalf.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I can remember Tony coming to me in 1977 and saying, “I'm going to run for school trustee.” I said, “That's great.” I had become a teacher, didn't know what a school trustee was, didn't know what school trustees did, and I said, “That's great.” While young men are still in diapers at age 21, Tony Silipo, at age 21, the year after, in 1978, became a school trustee with the Toronto school board. Think about that. It's a huge accomplishment. How many young men say, “I'm going to be a school trustee” or want to be a school trustee? They don't have a clue who they are or what they want to be. But Tony, at age 21, became a school trustee—a young man from the west end of Toronto, in the riding of Dovercourt.

He became chair of the HELACON committee, the heritage languages consultative committee. He was instrumental in making sure that students at the Toronto Board of Education were learning third languages. He chaired that committee for a long, long time. It was represented by 40 different language groups, and black heritage was part of that program at that time. Each and every one of those committee members loved him, I say. It was a genuine love for the work that he had done for many, many years as a strong advocate of third-language learning. He recognized then something that very few people recognized: Learning a third language is a good thing. It's part of a cultural capital. It's part of a Canadian cultural value. Learning a second language, or a first language for some, and the second language, which is the bilingual nature of who we are—not first and second, but the bilingual nature of who we are—and learning a third language, whatever that is, whether it be Italian, Portuguese, Chinese or Greek, which were the programs that we used to teach, and many others, was a valuable thing. It doesn't take away from who you are. It builds an extra piece of skill that allows you to connect to your grandparents and that allows you, economically, to connect to the rest of the world.

We fought those who used to say that if you learn a second or third language, somehow it's bad for you; that you might not learn English. There were people who used to say that. I couldn't believe it. I suspect there are still people who say that now. Tony was a leader in that regard. Both he and I were part of this expression that

I've used in this House often, and that is: Unilingualism can be cured.

1530

Tony used to speak Italian and French, a skill shared by his wife, Anne Marie, who has been teaching and has taught at the university level, has taught French at the university for a long, long time. They together shared that value of multilingualism as a Canadian cultural value. It's a beautiful thing.

Tony became the chair of the school board, another great achievement; not something that very many people are able to achieve, but he did that. It's part of that interest and desire and a view of what it is that he wanted to do. It was a huge accomplishment for Tony.

In 1990, Tony and I talked about running for office here in this place, and we thought how great it would be if we got elected. At that time, in 1990, New Democrats were doing well, but some of us never thought we'd be here. We thought that if we got elected, it would be great; we'll have a strong opposition and we'll show the Liberals. Well, we formed the government. Some of us were shocked, but imagine the shock of the Liberal Party and imagine the shock of the Conservative Party. They were not at all pleased. But it was a beautiful thing for us.

Tony, as others mentioned, was the Chair of Management Board—a huge accomplishment—Minister of Education and the Minister of Community and Social Services. As the Minister of Education, he did something that I strongly shared with him, and that is that we should destream the school system as much as we possibly can so as to give every child an opportunity to go wherever they want. His experience and mine was that many working-class kids of Italian background, dare I say, Portuguese-Canadian background and black students were often diverted into the technical schools and the commercial schools, and the collegiates were for somebody else.

So he helped, when he became Minister of Education, to destream our educational system in grade 9, which allowed students choices, because you don't want to stream a student as soon as he gets into high school. You don't want to do that as much as you possibly can. By destreaming grade 9, it allowed students an opportunity to get a feel for secondary education and a sense of what that's like, with the ability to possibly choose a different course of life. He did that when he was the Minister of Education.

Tony was respected by all of us, not just in our party but by the opposition parties as well. He was a humble person. He was earnest, sincere—something that exuded from the person that he was. He was competent, and that's something that I had a great deal of pride in, and so did many of the friends that knew him. I'm happy that Martin Silva came here today, and Corrado Paina, because they knew him well. I'm glad they were able to come and hear what we have to say.

To the family that I have known for a long, long time, I share with you the pride. I share with you the accomplishments. I share with you the memories and the un-

timely loss. Our party has been very supportive of the family. Our party is proud to have had him as a member. We share with all of you—to name all of you again—our respect and love. To Anne Marie Miraglia, the wife; Filomena Miraglia, the mother-in-law; Adrian Silipo, the son; Cosimo Silipo, the brother; Josie Silipo, the sister; Rosa Silipo, the mother; Silvana Silipo, the sister; and Martin Silva, a friend, and Corrado, whom I already mentioned, our love to all of you.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their kind and heartfelt words. As colleagues, it is always rewarding to come together to highlight the dedication and commitment of all of our members past and present, and today Tony Silipo.

To the family, you will receive a DVD of the presentation today and the words of Hansard to provide for the family a keepsake of our endearment of Tony Silipo.

Thank you, everyone. I appreciate your efforts today.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EMERGENCY SERVICES SERVICES D'URGENCE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and minister responsible for francophone affairs.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Francophone affairs; it's my 10th anniversary today.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to 13 emergency services personnel who lost their lives in the line of duty. On Sunday, Premier Wynne and I, along with other dignitaries representing the Canadian Armed Forces and Ontario's fire, paramedic and police services, attended the Tribute to the Fallen ceremony at Queen's Park. We had the opportunity to meet and present plaques to the family members of those honoured in this year's ceremony. I would also like to thank MPPs who joined us at the event on Sunday: Linda Jeffrey, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing; Monte Kwinter, the member for York Centre; Steve Clark, the member for Leeds–Grenville; and Michael Prue, the member for Beaches–East York.

Les personnes décédées en service ont fait un choix de carrière inspirant, un choix qui présentait un certain risque. Ces personnes ont donné la priorité aux besoins des autres, démontrant ainsi une grande force de caractère et un dévouement exceptionnel à leur communauté.

Of those honoured last weekend, seven were firefighters, one was a police officer, four were paramedics and one was an air ambulance pilot. Each loss is tragic, and all of the families have experienced tremendous pain. We share in grieving their loss.

It is my privilege to read out the names of the fallen individuals before this House in honour of their sacrifice:

—Randy Burch, Toronto firefighter, died November 2012;

—Dustin-Lee Dagenais, James Bay Ambulance Service and Ornge, died May 2013;

—Wayne Dufty, Toronto Emergency Medical Services, died May 2003;

—Richard Eldon, Toronto firefighter, died May 2012;

—Don Filliter, Ministry of Natural Resources and Ornge, died May 2013;

—Jerry Hagerman, Toronto Fire Services, died February 2013;

—Jennifer Kovach, Guelph Police Service, died March 2013;

—Antonius Lippers, Caledon Fire and Emergency Services, died May 2013;

—Herbert Lytle, Ottawa Fire Services, died June 2013;

—Shane McCready, Brampton Fire and Emergency Services, died October 2012;

—Paul Wayne Patterson, Sun Parlour Emergency Services, died February 2007;

—Christopher Snowball, Ornge, died May 2013; and

—Barry White, Toronto Fire Services, died January 2009.

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Before I conclude, I would like to thank the thousands of brave men and women across Ontario who provide the front-line emergency services that allow the rest of us to feel safe, protected and cared for in times of need.

Ces hommes et femmes donnent priorité à la sécurité d'autrui, au service des Ontariens et Ontariennes, tout comme l'ont fait ceux et celles que nous honorons aujourd'hui.

I would like to recognize the families of emergency responders: their husbands, wives and partners; the mothers and fathers; and especially the children. Emergency service providers have jobs that are demanding physically and emotionally, and I want to thank the families for sharing these great men and women with all of us.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a privilege, on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, to respond to the minister's statement regarding Sunday's Tribute to the Fallen ceremony honouring 13 brave men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of their fellow citizens. They truly are heroes among us. People use that phrase often, but we can't say it enough, especially on a day like today.

As the minister said, I watched as family members came forward to be presented with a plaque honouring the sacrifice of their loved one. It struck me how the strength and courage they showed reflected the characteristics that motivated their loved ones to put themselves in harm's way to keep us safe. How proud those 13 fallen Ontarians would have been to see how their legacy was

living on in those closest to them, especially their children.

How fitting, as well, that the ceremony on Sunday was here at Queen's Park. After all, the bravery our military and first responders show just by putting on their uniforms is part of the foundation upon which our democracy and society are built. We owe them a debt of gratitude that can't be repaid. It's important to take every opportunity possible to recognize their sacrifice and, sadly, what they sometimes sacrifice in doing a job where no day is ever routine.

The provincial government has honoured Ontario's military personnel, firefighters and police officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty at Tribute to the Fallen services since 2006. This year marked the first year that paramedics were honoured at that ceremony. Paramedics Wayne Dufty, Christopher Snowball, Paul Wayne Patterson and Dustin-Lee Dagenais, along with air ambulance pilot Captain Don Filliter, were the first of this group to be honoured. Certainly, it's a very fitting inclusion and an important recognition for the brave paramedics who risk their lives serving in communities across the province.

Captain Filliter, along with paramedics Snowball and Dagenais—and, it should be added, First Officer Jacques Dupuis of Quebec—were killed in the tragic Ornge air ambulance crash near Moosonee in May of this year. The terrible toll was a stark reminder of the danger that is the constant companion of all first responders when they are trying to save the life of someone else.

We can never eliminate the danger. It's part of the job—something everyone special enough to answer the call to serve understands. But I truly want to honour the lives of the fallen. If we do, we must resolve in this place to do all we can to ensure that front-line emergency personnel have every chance to come home at the end of the day.

Seven firefighters were honoured: Deputy Fire Chief Antonius Lippers, from Caledon Fire and Emergency Services; Acting Captain Shane McCreedy, from Brampton Fire and Emergency Services; Captain Herbert Lytle, from the Ottawa fire department; and from Toronto Fire Services, Captain Jerry Hagerman, firefighter Richard Eldon, District Chief Barry White and firefighter Randy Burch; and one police officer, Constable Jennifer Kovach of the Guelph Police Service.

With this year's Tribute to the Fallen ceremony, Ontario has honoured 203 paramedics, police officers, firefighters and Canadian Armed Forces members in this way. Each of these heroes had a unique story, one that lives on through their families, friends and everyone their careers brought them into contact with. But they all share at least one thing in common: When help was needed, whether the call came from a colleague or a complete stranger, they would selflessly rush towards danger.

As I mentioned earlier, we owe these men and women a debt we can't repay. Through ceremonies like the Tribute to the Fallen, we honour their memory by ensuring that their sacrifices are never forgotten.

These ceremonies also allow citizens to express to the families of the fallen our heartfelt gratitude for everything their loved ones stood for, and to let them know they are not alone in their grief.

As individuals, if we truly want to make an effort at repaying that debt, we can do it by honouring their legacy in the best possible way. We can strive to live our lives as they did. No, we may not be heroes by the same definition they were, but we can be heroes in our own small way by committing to put service above self, to make our communities a better place.

On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I extend my sincere condolences to the families of those recognized at this year's Tribute to the Fallen. And I join everyone here and across the province in offering a heartfelt thank you to all first responders and military personnel for the bravery you show in service to all Ontarians.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's a privilege for me to rise in this House today to pay tribute to the first responders who have sacrificed their lives in the call of duty.

First responders are the courageous women and men whom citizens of this province rely on in moments of urgency and need. They are the brave and selfless public servants who are on the scene in those critical first moments as an emergency unfolds. They arrive ready to save lives, but the nature of their jobs is such that they are not afraid to lose their own.

This past Sunday, 13 individuals were honoured at a special ceremony here at Queen's Park. These fallen heroes included seven firefighters, four paramedics, one police officer and an air ambulance pilot, all of whom tragically lost their lives while answering the call of duty between 2007 and 2013.

Remembering their legacy and reflecting upon their sacrifice gives MPPs an opportunity to come together and affirm our commitment to equipping emergency services personnel with the tools they need to do their jobs, while also providing them with supports to deal with the mental, physical and emotional challenges of the daily demands of their work.

For example, New Democrats have long fought for amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to provide coverage for all front-line workers diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder following an incident at work. In 2010, my colleague the MPP for Parkdale–High Park brought forth legislation that would have done just that.

The need for such change is growing. Recent statistics indicate that the rate of PTSD among police officers in Ontario is twice the national average, yet claims are often denied at the initial stages and only accepted following an appeal. This is a lengthy process that no one should have to go through, especially those who are dealing with the condition because of their occupation. First responders deserve to have access to appropriate care quickly in order to prevent long-term health issues associated with PTSD.

While recognizing our fallen heroes today, I would like to take a moment to thank all the brave emergency

services personnel who take on the heavy responsibility of protecting the lives of the people of this province.

In particular, as MPP for London West, I would like to recognize the city of London firefighters who worked courageously over the night of October 10 on a major high-rise fire in my riding that left one dead and two others critically injured. The fire trapped residents in smoke-filled stairwells and forced others to tie sheets from their balconies before London firefighters arrived to rescue them. Several of the firefighters who were on the scene that night were taken to hospital with smoke-related injuries, but thankfully, all were released.

Speaking to residents the day after the fire, I heard stories of unparalleled bravery by London firefighters, and called the fire chief to share with him the deep gratitude expressed to me by residents for the firefighters' efforts.

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Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my leader, Andrea Horwath, and all members of the NDP caucus, I extend our most sincere and heartfelt thanks to those fallen heroes who faced tremendous odds in the line of duty and gave up their lives so that others could be saved: those who were recognized at this weekend's ceremony and those we lost before. To their loved ones—to their partners, children, parents, friends and family—we grieve with you for your loss and remain forever indebted to you for your sacrifice.

Finally, to the firefighters, police officers, paramedics, air ambulance pilots and others who face extraordinary risks and put their lives on the line every day, all in the name of public service, we remain enormously grateful for your service and for the risks you take on a daily basis to keep our communities safe.

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

PETITIONS

PROTECTION OF RESOURCES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario waterfalls and natural resources are being hoarded by private developers for energy projects worth billions; and

“Whereas crown land is too valuable to be awarded to private individuals or corporations for energy undertakings; and

“Whereas renewable energy alternatives must be considered with a view to investing the profits for the betterment of the community and for the betterment of Ontario, not the enrichment of private investors; and

“Whereas the Ontario government must facilitate a better process to enable communities to respectfully consider available options for local energy opportunities;

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

“That the members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario amend the Public Lands Act to prohibit the disposition of crown land for private energy projects.”

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity to present this petition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Oxford. Sorry; Durham.

DARLINGTON NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The recognition is exceptional.

“Whereas approximately 20% of Ontario's electricity is produced at the Darlington generating station” in my riding of Durham;

“Whereas in addition to refurbishing the four existing reactors at the Darlington the building of new capacity” in “the future of Ontario's manufacturing sector and for jobs and investment in our Ontario” is essential;

“Whereas a study by the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters in 2012 concluded the building of a new two-reactor plant at Darlington would directly employ more than 10,000 people and would support employment for an additional 10,000 others in Canada for approximately a five-year period;

“Whereas Ontario's Ministry of Energy says Ontario Power Generation already has spent an estimated \$180 million in preparation proceeding with the two new” nuclear reactors—the planned nuclear reactors;

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

“That Ontario's elected MPPs and the provincial government reaffirm their commitment to the complete refurbishment of all four units at the Darlington generating station and that the Ontario government reinstate the original plan for the completion of two new reactors at the Darlington generating station” as soon as possible.

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to page Kate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I missed the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

BEAR HUNTING

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, thank you very much. I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Whereas the spring bear hunt was eliminated by the previous government in 1999;

“Whereas the absence of the spring bear hunt has reduced the number of black bears harvested each year by an average of approximately 1,400 bears;

“Whereas over the course of 14 years, that has likely resulted in a substantial rise in the bear population;

“Whereas the growth of the bear population seems to be resulting in more human-bear encounters and an increased risk that aggressive bear activity could result in people's physical harm or death;

“Whereas the growing bear population also negatively impacts livestock, bees and moose calves;

“Whereas the return of Ontario’s spring bear hunt could help address these issues—as well as increasing tourism in northern Ontario, which could provide a boost to the region’s economy;

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

“To support MPP Bill Mauro’s private member’s bill, Bill 114, to bring about the return of Ontario’s spring bear hunt.”

Speaker, I obviously support this bill. I will affix my signature to it and give it to Jake to present to the table.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Bill Walker: “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 current policies of the McGuinty/Wynne Liberal 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 fully support this petition, will affix my name and send it with page Christina.

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 affix my signature to this petition, and I’ll give it to Evan.

WASTE REDUCTION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I’ve got a petition here from the people of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone’s responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

“Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

“Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

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

“That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013 by the Ontario Minister of Environment.”

I agree with this wholeheartedly, will sign it and will send it down with Helen.

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 agree with this petition, affix my signature and send it with Owen.

MARKDALE HOSPITAL

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

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

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

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

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

I support it, will sign my signature and send it with page Nicholas.

ONTARIO RANGER PROGRAM

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

“We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, draw attention to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

“The Ontario Ranger Program takes youth out of their comfort zones by taking youth from the south and placing them in northern camps and vice versa, allowing for personal growth;

“The Ontario Ranger Program also helps nearby rural communities as the Ontario Rangers help with various work projects and build partnerships within the communities...;

“An extensive amount of work maintaining the interior routes in major provincial parks such as Quetico, Algonquin and Temagami is completed by Ontario Rangers...;

“The lifelong skills and friendships built during the Ontario Ranger Program help youth develop into mature, confident, independent individuals, which is well worth the money spent on the program...;

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“Therefore, your petitioners call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demonstrate that the Ontario Ranger Program is a valuable program to the youth of Ontario, reverse the decision to close the Ontario Ranger Program and continue to help youth make a difference in Ontario.”

I fully agree with the thousands of people who signed their signatures, and give it to page Aiden.

WASTE REDUCTION

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly signed by a group of people from Toronto. It’s my pleasure to read it. It reads as follows:

“Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone’s responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

“Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

“Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

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

“That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013 by the Ontario Minister of Environment.”

Speaker, it’s an excellent petition. I’m pleased to sign and support it and send it down with page Kate.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

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

“Whereas, despite having high unemployment, Ontario is actually facing a shortage of skilled workers; and

“Whereas more bureaucracy and red tape will serve to aggravate this shortage of workers; and

“Whereas the College of Trades represents more regulation of the labour market; and

“Whereas funding the College of Trades will cost tradespeople more than \$100 per year, and employers more than \$500 per year; and

“Whereas the Ontario Construction Employers Coalition has said these fees will cost industry \$84 million annually to create a ‘costly and unnecessary bureaucracy’;

“We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the government of Ontario to abolish the so-called College of Trades and institute a new system designed in co-operation with stakeholders to address our shortage of skilled workers.”

I agree with these petitioners and sign my name and give it to page Owen.

ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES

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

“Whereas these”—all-terrain—“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 their 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 de-

nied to off-road vehicles (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 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; and (d) carries passengers and has a steering wheel.”

I agree with this petition and present it to page Tristan to bring down to the Clerks.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I have a petition here 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 current policies of the McGuinty/Wynne Liberal 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, Mr. Speaker, and I’ll affix my name to it.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: This is a petition 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 Jack.

LYME DISEASE

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

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

“Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of its professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario;

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

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

I agree with this petition and will send it to the table with Christina.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

REGULATED HEALTH PROFESSIONS AMENDMENT ACT (SPOUSAL EXCEPTION), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES PROFESSIONS DE LA SANTÉ RÉGLEMENTÉES (EXCEPTION RELATIVE AU CONJOINT)

Mr. Clark moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 70, An Act to amend the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 70, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Clark.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If I might, at the very start of my address, I’d like to

introduce a number of people in the west members' gallery today.

With us we have the president of the Ontario Dental Association, Dr. Rick Caldwell, and his wife—a pharmacist—Ms. Nancy Caldwell. We have a number of board of directors members from the Ontario Dental Association: Dr. Ron Yim, Dr. Raffy Chouljian, Dr. David Stevenson, Dr. Andy Syriopoulos and Dr. Arnie Weingarten. I'd like to welcome all those members of the board.

As well, I'd like to welcome Dr. Kerr Banduk, Dr. Martin Frankel, Dr. Jim Jeffs and his wife, Sandy Jeffs, Dr. Mel Perlmutter and Dr. Lynn Tomkins, the past president of ODA.

I'd like to welcome Tom Magyarody, the executive director of the Ontario Dental Association, and Frank Bevilacqua from the Ontario Dental Association. I also see Maggie Head from ODA.

As well, I'd like to introduce the director of policy and communications at the Association of Ontario Midwives, Ms. Juana Berinstein; Bob Kanduth, government relations and communications at the Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists; and Ada Maxwell-Alleyne, the senior policy adviser at the Ontario Medical Association. I don't believe the member for Burlington has introduced them yet, but I'd also like to introduce Dr. Larry Pedlar and his wife, Margo Pedlar.

Welcome, everyone, to Queen's Park today for debate on Bill 70.

I'd also like to acknowledge some people who were here at second reading. At second reading, we had people from the Royal College of Dental Surgeons, we had folks from the Ontario Chiropractic Association, and also attending at second reading, in addition to ODA and the Association of Ontario Midwives, we had people from the Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario.

So I feel very honoured that we're debating a private member's bill. Since I've been a member of provincial Parliament, for three and a half years, I've had the opportunity to have third reading debate. First of all, it was with two proclamations. One was a proclamation that I co-sponsored with the member for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry of the day, Mr. Brownell, which was a proclamation bill for British home children.

I worked with the member from Niagara Falls, who now is no longer in this place, and also the member for Welland on a proclamation bill for Major-General Sir Isaac Brock Day.

1610

When I first tabled this bill, Bill 70—actually, when I first tabled it, it was Bill 68. This is the third draft of this particular bill, and I'll get to that in a moment. I never thought that we would get here.

I do want to thank all of the health care groups that are here today for all of their advocacy, especially ODA. I know that the members of our caucus want to thank ODA for their leadership role in communicating to members the importance of this bill.

I'd also like to acknowledge, as I did at second reading, Minister Matthews, who is across, and her ministry

for their work when we sat down and decided upon the final draft of the bill.

It's very unique that you would have a private member's bill that, again, would be withdrawn. On my second attempt, Bill 40, I tabled it, and then I withdrew it once I sat down with the ministry.

I really think this has been a good thing for the Legislature, to have a bill that the three parties can get back to this place. I think when we all go back to our home ridings there's an expectation that a private member's bill can make it to the floor for third reading debate. I think it's hard for us when we go back and explain—because I think we've all said it—that a private member's bill very rarely even gets to this stage of third reading debate in the Legislature. It's really not a common thing that happens in this Legislature, and I think somehow we've got to get past that.

I'm so glad that my caucus has supported me throughout this journey that has brought us here today for third reading.

I also want to acknowledge some emails that I've received over the last 24 hours. It's amazing, once something gets scheduled for debate, the way that your inbox just seems to fill up. I have had a number of dental hygienists and also representatives from the Ontario Dental Hygienists' Association email me over the last day or so, supporting this bill.

I'd also like to acknowledge people who came and made presentations before the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly. I know that Dr. Caldwell was there. He was the first presenter. I'd also like to acknowledge Dr. John Glenney and Dr. LouAnn Visconti for presenting at the committee that day. A number of other organizations and individuals made deputation with their thoughts, so I want to acknowledge them as well.

Even though the ODA have been the ones that we've dealt with the most, as we all know, this represents, or could have the opportunity to represent, other regulated health professions.

Just a quick thing, Speaker: I'll go back to what happened to me just before the last election. I had a bit of a dental issue, so I stopped in to my local dentist, Doug Harvey. He was a smart, smart dentist. He waited until I got in the chair, and then he talked about this letter that Tim Hudak had sent to then-President Harry Hoediono, talking about the bill and the whole spousal exception issue. It was very good that Dr. Harvey waited until I was in the chair, because I was very interested to hear about the spousal exception and exemption when I was sitting in the chair. When I met with Maggie and Frank at another event here in the Legislature a few months after the election, I had mentioned it to them, not really realizing that we would be here today debating the bill.

So I want to thank my friend Doug Harvey, who I saw on our constituency week last week; I had a checkup. He was very excited about the fact that a discussion we had—I think it was in the same chair—that we've come so far, just since May of this year. I want to thank him and thank all of the regulated health professions for providing us feedback on this piece of legislation.

It was a very interesting process for me to be able to table the bill—then the House prorogued and the bill died on the order paper—then reintroduce a bill that looked at the issue completely differently, and then to be able to sit with the ministry and deal with those two final sections. I think it was very important.

I do want to stress, and I did at committee, as I did at second reading—because I think it's very important—that this bill does not undermine in any way the zero-tolerance policy on sexual abuse.

I think any regulated health profession that ultimately takes what Bill 70—if it does receive royal assent. If the choice of each college to either exempt or not exempt—for those that do, if this bill becomes law, for those regulated health professions that ultimately decide they're going to provide this exemption for spouses, I just say to them to take that decision with a lot of thought and ensure that whatever you decide, whatever profession we're in, whether it's a regulated health profession or whether it's our profession of being legislators, we always take that zero tolerance policy to heart and make sure that it's always the policy that we feel is a priority.

I know that a number of my colleagues want to have a few words. I just want to say that whether it be the House leader, Mr. Wilson, or our leader of the party, Mr. Hudak, all of the members of caucus—I knew that when we ultimately made a decision on how we were going to prioritize private members' bills, I wasn't going to be the first bill that they prioritized. It was going to be this gentleman in front of me, Mr. Hardeman, and his Hawkins-Gignac bill—

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: I wanted to make that comment because I do hope, as part of the programming motion, that very soon we have Mr. Hardeman's bill. It's something that I believe in. I didn't want to just deal with Bill 70 today; I also wanted to give the member for Oxford credit for all his work. I hope to be standing here at some point very soon making sure that his bill gets third reading, just like this one.

So with that, Speaker, it's with a lot of honour that I have the opportunity to move third reading, to be able to debate third reading, and I hope that all members of the Legislative Assembly will give these regulated health professions the option of having their college provide this exemption. It's a policy that I think we can all share—that was something that happened that wasn't intended. Again, I just want to thank you for giving me this opportunity today, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker. It's always a pleasure to see you in the chair.

Today is a great day. Today is a day that brings close to an end a lot of hard work by a lot of people over a very long period of time. I want to tell you that this issue first came on my radar when Elizabeth Witmer was in this House. Elizabeth was the previous member for Kitchener-Waterloo, the new member being at my left.

Her spouse, her husband, is a dentist. She was also a health critic, so Elizabeth and I had many opportunities to chat, and she was the one who first brought that to my attention.

Then we had HPRAC. HPRAC had done a report, they had done a consultation, and basically showed that this needed to change. In order for this to change—that is, for health professionals to be allowed to treat their spouses—it needed legislative change. It needed a piece of legislation to go through.

Then comes the member for Leeds-Grenville, who tried, I'd say on three occasions, to bring that bill forward. It wasn't easy. It required a lot of people doing a lot of work. But today, those people need to be congratulated for the hard work they've done. Some of them have already been mentioned, but I would like to add a few.

Certainly in Nickel Belt, in my riding, it was Dr. Roch St-Aubin, who was the one who drilled that point into me on a regular basis and made sure that I understood how this issue was evolving and how the bill was also evolving to make it more and more precise.

So when HPRAC first came out and made the recommendations that colleges—because in Ontario it's colleges that decide the conduct of their members. The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario basically protects the public by directing physicians. The same thing happens with the college of dentists and the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario, and there are 27 of them. So all of the colleges are there. But in order for a college to allow this to happen, we needed a piece of legislation.

1620

Bringing legislation through this House is never easy. Bringing a private member's bill through this House is, I would say, not as rare as the Maple Leafs winning the Stanley Cup but about on the same range—

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's going to happen next year.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's going to happen next year, my colleague says.

This is happening here today; we will go through third reading. I can assure you that the NDP will be voting in favour of this piece of legislation. It has done its work.

First reading came about, and a few voices started to be heard. I participated in the debate at second reading and brought forward some of the concerns that I had started to hear. Not only were there voices in favour of this, there were also a few voices that felt that they needed to be heard. So we held deputations after second reading to see what people had to say about the bill, and we saw quite a few people speaking in favour. We saw quite a few groups telling us to be careful about this area. But, basically, we saw that we had more or less struck the right balance: for colleges for which it made sense for them to treat their spouse, they would now be allowed to do this; for other colleges for which it makes no sense for them to treat their spouse, they would continue to be preempted from doing this by their college.

It took a long while to get here, and a lot of visits from a lot of dentists to Queen's Park. I know that this work is not easy. Coming to Queen's Park is never easy. First of

all, you don't know where to park, and, then, once you finally find a place to park your car, how do you get here? You go through security. To say that we are a welcoming place would be a huge lie. But those people kept coming. They did have Maggie, who knew her way around pretty well and could facilitate some of this, but still it meant that a lot of dentists—they were mainly dentists who pushed for this bill, who took time away from their practices, took time away from their livelihoods to come and speak to their Legislature and say that this needs to change. Today, they can be very proud that all of that time, that effort, that energy that they've put in to talk to us, has succeeded. The bill passed second reading.

Third reading is happening this afternoon. It will wrap up. I expect a deferred vote, and that we will vote on it tomorrow. But as I've already said, it will have the support of the NDP.

Although I am really pleased to acknowledge the hard work that has been done, I kind of feel like, "One done." When the dentists come and visit us, they also have other issues that they would like us to listen to, and some of those other issues are very pressing. Some of the issues that they bring forward—and here, again, Dr. Roch St-Aubin is very good at putting that out. They've made this chart that I'm not allowed to use because it's a prop, but I will try to describe it for you.

It basically shows many different government programs that help kids access dental care. All of them have different levels of income to qualify, different children who qualify. You have, of course, children in need of treatment. You actually have to have a cavity or be in need of treatment. For Healthy Smiles Ontario, the list of criteria to qualify is different. Your parents have to make less than \$20,000 a year.

Then there are the kids whose parents are on Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program. All of this is money that our government invests so that we can get dental care for kids—and it does not work, Mr. Speaker. It does not work. We're spending a lot of money on a lot of programs with a lot of criteria, and all of those good people sitting here today have come to our offices and explained to us that we can do better.

I hope that the same amount of time, effort and energy that they've put in will continue. You have a winning recipe there. Don't let it go by. I hope that we're able to do more.

For some reason that escapes me, our teeth and our eyes were excluded from medicare. Every other body part is included, but our eyes and our teeth are not. Why that is, I have no idea.

If you look at visits to the emergency room right here, right now in Ontario, you will see that—I can speak for my LHIN, the North East LHIN. We've had 6,091 visits to the emergency room for dental care.

In 2001—because this is the last year that I could find stats for—56,977 people went to the emergency room, most of them because of abscessed teeth or toothaches,

but because of dental pain, and it cost our system a ton of money.

An average emergency room visit will cost the health care system \$513, and we will pay that \$513 if you go to the emergency room with an abscessed tooth. But all of those good people will tell you that it would have been a whole lot cheaper to have good preventative oral health, to have this cavity filled before it abscessed and to actually have good oral health.

I have this petition with me. It's called, "Why Am I Living With Pain and Infection?" I will read it to you. I'll read the English one because I had the French one first:

"Thousands of adults live with pain and infection because they cannot afford dental care.

"OHIP pays to treat pain and infection in every part of the body except the mouth.

"I support extending provincial programs to include adults who need, and cannot afford, emergency dental treatment."

If you look at people living on Ontario Works or people depending on the Ontario Disability Support Program, the working poor, the people who were previously employed, their badge of dishonour is their teeth. A lot of them never smile. It's pretty hard to go to a job interview and secure this good job when you don't smile.

Why don't they smile? Well, because they're missing teeth, because their teeth are rotten, because their teeth really look bad, because their oral health is so bad that their breath is really bothering them and everybody else in the room. This is the badge of dishonour that every poor person in Ontario has to bear with them every single day of their lives. Why? Because they cannot access the good service that those people are willing to give us. We will pay the \$513 once it's too late, once the tooth is abscessed and once they end up in the emergency room, but we won't help them have a healthy smile. We won't help them with their oral health.

I know that today is a day of celebration, a day of culmination of a lot of work, and I'm really happy to be part of this, but I wouldn't want to let that day go by, when all of the dentists are here today, without talking to you about the risk that we put Ontarians in because we don't have a good dental health plan.

People who have dental coverage go to the dentist regularly. The member for Leeds–Grenville knows that very well. He heard about this issue while he was going for his regular checkup with his dentist.

But when you can barely make ends meet, when you have a choice between paying rent and electricity, buying food or going to the dentist, it's the going to the dentist that usually gets passed over.

Public Health Ontario, an agency led by Dr. King, found out in a report that one in every five Ontarians does not visit a dentist at all. They just don't go to the dentist because they can't afford it.

Ontario has the lowest rate of public funding for dental care in Canada.

1630

Ontario is not the only one where teeth were excluded from medicare. All the provinces' medicare is the same,

no matter what province you are in. But other provinces have put in place government-funded programs to allow people to go to the dentist.

In Ontario in 2005—the stats are a little bit dated—71% of Ontarians visited the dentist. But, if you look at lower income and lower education, only half of this—not even 30% of them—went to the dentist. Ontarians with lower income and lower education, as well as those with no insurance, don't go to the dentist. The same thing is true for people over 65, because most people over 65 lose their dental benefits and they can't go to the dentist.

When we ask people who go to the dentist why they don't go, the number one reason is that they can't afford it. For low-income Ontarians, the most likely reported mouth condition that causes them to avoid social interactions like laughing, conversation or smiling is their teeth. It is very isolating. Once you have bad teeth, once you have lost some of your front teeth, it is really hard to be socially active. You get discriminated against the minute you open your mouth, the minute you try to smile.

Thousands of people in Ontario suffer with pain and infection from poor oral health, and many have no choice but to go to the emergency room, where they can get a painkiller and get treated for their infection, but they still won't get dental treatment, because we don't pay for this.

If you take the 56,977 people who went to emerg, St. Michael's tells us that the average cost for them is 513 bucks. I'm strong in math: You've just spent \$30 million of ER visits treating pain and inflammation, but you still don't have dental care. This problem has a hard chance of reoccurring or of you losing your teeth. I think this money could be better spent.

To make matters worse, not only is it terrible not to be able to smile, not to be able to have nice teeth, but research shows us that there is a direct link between poor oral health and diabetes, between poor oral health and cardiovascular disease, between poor oral health and pneumonia and Alzheimer's. What does that mean? That means that all those people that cannot afford to go to the dentist are at higher risk of getting diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, pneumonia and Alzheimer's.

Those are not the kinds of health problems that are solved easily. Those are not the kinds of health problems that I would like to be subject to. Why are we not listening to the dentists who have come into our offices and told us that the patchwork of services we have now is not working, that we are spending tens of millions of dollars and we're not getting what we need out of this?

We have four programs for kids: Children In Need Of Treatment, better known as CINOT; Healthy Smiles; Ontario Works; and the Ontario Disability Support Program. There is overlap, there is confusion, there is a whole bunch of bureaucracy, and none of this works.

Let's start with Healthy Smiles. In 2010, the government proudly announced Healthy Smiles Ontario, which offers preventive and early-treatment dental care for low-income children under the age of 18. This is a really good step in the right direction. I was proud when the Minister

of Health put that out. It seemed like the tide was turning a little bit; we were going to be investing in oral health.

It sounded great, and it still sounds great, except that today, at 26 CHCs that are offering oral health services, the good news is a little bit short, because a lot of those programs have not been supported financially. There is a problem between the health units and the community health centres: that the eligibility level has been put at \$20,000, which means that for a lot of kids whose parents make just a little bit above \$20,000, they can't access the program. If you have a mum and dad working part-time on low income and they make just over \$20,000—we all know the price of raising kids; we all know how expensive it is. Well, if you make \$21,000 and are supporting yourself and a child, chances are you don't have the money to go to the dentist. The ceiling has been put so low that only 12,000 children were able to access the program. Also, although the program was funded for—I think the goal was to serve 130,000 children who were not having access to dental care; we've served only 12,000. There is a big difference between the two. The province recognized that there were close to 130,000 children in Ontario who did not have access to dental care, who should have access to dental care. They put a program in place. But then the program's criteria were so strict that not even 10% of them were able to gain access. For the rest of them, their parents made a little bit too much money. They couldn't go. So what happened? Well, the Toronto Star got involved, and they did freedom of access of information. This is how we found out that Healthy Smiles, which had been rolled out as a \$45-million program, was underspent. Kids could not get access to the dentist, and some of the funds were re-directed to other programs. That redirection did not make the front page of the paper, was not brought with a minister announcement. They just underspent in this program, and hundreds of thousands of kids who don't have access to dentists continue to not have access, which is a real shame.

While funding has shrunk, the need has not. Today, Ontario children who are in need of care continue to be turned away from existing dental programs simply because they do not meet what I would call the faulty criteria that were set by the ministry. I would say that the ministry's poor handling of this program is felt in every community in our province.

The stories are heartbreaking. Some of the stories were shared with us by the dentists who have come to Queen's Park on a regular basis. The petitions that have been started—there's a postcard petition, but there's also a petition that is read in this House quite regularly, and I will read it into the record because this petition comes from every part of our beautiful province. It reads as follows:

“Whereas thousands” of Ontarians “live with pain and infection because they cannot afford dental care;

“Whereas the promised \$45-million dental fund under the Poverty Reduction Strategy excluded impoverished adults;

“Whereas the programs were designed with rigid criteria so that most of the people in need do not qualify; and

“Whereas desperately needed dental care money went unspent and was diverted to other areas even though people are still suffering without access to dental care;

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

To “do all in its power to stop the dental fund being diverted to support other programs; and

To “fully utilize the commissioned funding to provide dental care to those in need.”

People from all sides of the House have read those petitions. People throughout Ontario are saying, “You have identified a pot of money. You have identified a need. Let us gain access.”

1640

I also wanted to talk a little bit about the April 2012 report by our Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Arlene King. I quote from Dr. King: “Notably lacking in all of these otherwise commendable programs and initiatives is a sense that they form part of a co-ordinated and efficient oral health care system, and even less that they are an integrated part of the overall health care system. And yet, if you consider the well-established links, described earlier, between oral health and overall health, this seems to be a failure both in planning and execution.” That was Dr. King’s top four recommendations from her report.

Dr. King goes on to provide a detailed list of consideration for review that she summarizes as follows, and again, I’m quoting from her report: “Explore opportunities for better integration and/or alignment of low-income oral health services in Ontario, including integration and/or alignment with the rest of the health care system. This relates predominantly to the client journey, including making it easier for the client to access the care that is needed, when it is needed.”

There are a number of other recommendations from Dr. King’s report. Some of them have to do with fluoridation of our drinking water; some of them have to do with conducting a review of how publicly funded oral health programs and services are monitored and evaluated: “The review should include the quality, availability and appropriateness of current data and identification of missing data in order to improve programs and services.”

What was she really saying, Mr. Speaker? She was saying the program has been announced, the goal and objectives of the program are commendable and are good, but on the ground, it has not been rolled out in a way that benefits the people that need it the most.

Recommendation 3: “Explore opportunities for better integration and/or alignment of low-income oral health services”—this relates predominantly to the journey, which I talked about. And recommendation 4: “Explore opportunities to improve access to oral health services as well as awareness of oral health services available to First Nations people in Ontario, with a focus on better integration and/or alignment of the variety of available dental programs.”

Other organizations that are experts in oral health also made recommendations. Most of them the good dentists who are here today have brought to our attention. The AOHC, which stands for the Association of Ontario Health Centres, calls for the five fragmented oral health programs to be unified into one quality program managed by the Ministry of Health: “A logical first step would be to combine the programs for low-income children: Healthy Smiles, Children In Need Of Treatment and Ontario Works/Ontario Disability Support Program dental programs for children.”

They go on to say, “The province should extend publicly funded oral health care programs to provide emergency care for low-income adults. Community health centres and aboriginal health access centres are well positioned to play a strengthened role given their experience in working with marginalized and vulnerable people.”

They go on to say that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should allocate about \$2 million a year of unspent CINOT—Children In Need Of Treatment—funds to CHCs and aboriginal health access centres that already have dental suites “to permit them to serve low-income adults without dental insurance to address their dental needs and support them to become healthy, employed, participating members of the community.”

The link is very clear: If you don’t have good oral health, the rest of your health suffers; plus, your opportunity to be gainfully employed also suffers because of your demeanour. When you don’t smile, people get a little bit worried about you. They assume things because you won’t smile, because you won’t talk in public.

Speaker, the advice does not end there. There is another report from October 2012, *Staying Ahead of the Curve: A Unified Public Oral Health Program for Ontario?* that originated at the 2012 Ontario Public Health Convention that worked with many stakeholders. This report offers much of the same advice.

“Recommendation 1: Combine the current patchwork of public oral health care programs in Ontario.” It defies logic while we still have all of those different programs with all of those different criteria that let more people down than actually help them. We still spend the money, but we don’t get the results.

“Recommendation 2: Design a unified public oral health care program in Ontario to be managed by a central government agency/ministry with a diversity of delivery models that address unique regional needs.”

This is something that the Ontario Dental Association has done very well. They have presented to me, and I guess to all of you, a paper that shows—and the graph is quite telling. You see what looks like spaghetti of a mismatch of arrows going here, there and everywhere, coming from the different programs that are available, showing us who’s available, in what circumstances, under what funding level and what steps they have to go through before they become available—and then it goes.

I can give you an example in my own riding of Children In Need Of Treatment. The good worker from

the health unit goes into the school. She has a look—they're mainly women—at the oral health of all of the kids in that school, and then she identifies some of them who are in need of treatment. They have cavities, broken teeth, and they have a whole bunch of oral health issues. Then you have to check to see if the parents can afford to bring their kids to the dentist. Are they covered? Are they not covered? All of this takes a ton of time. You identify that there's a kid with a broken tooth and a tooth in need of a filling. The parent doesn't have money to pay. Then they get a referral to a dentist, and the dentist in Sudbury sits there and looks at this and says, "For the price the ministry is paying me to do this, I don't take children being referred by CINOT."

We have spent all of that time, effort and energy—think dollars—to identify the kids, to check and do everything, but yet in Sudbury the number of dentists who take children who are referred to them through the Children In Need Of Treatment—I think we are down to two. The last time I checked, we had 118 or 122 dentists—I forget exactly—and only two of them still participate in this program. I think we can do better than that. We all agree that this kid is in need of treatment. He has been assessed. He meets the criteria. Things have to change. Things have to get better. Things have to be linked to results.

The government has agreed to provide those kids with support. They have agreed to support those kids who fall within that category for access to dental care, and it still doesn't work. We're back to square one. The kid grows up, moves up one year, the tooth is still broken because it didn't get fixed by itself, and the other teeth—well, there's been a couple of trips to the emergency room since then, and then the health unit starts to get serious with the parents, that they have to look after the health of their child.

So a program that was there to help the parents turned out to be a program that intimidates parents. While the government had set up something good to help low-income parents finally get access to dental care, it's turned on its head. The parents try desperately to convince a dentist to take them on, and it's all for naught. You wonder, why does it have to be that hard?

1650

"Recommendation 2: Design a unified public oral health care program in Ontario to be managed by a central government agency with a diversity of delivery models..."—not one-size-fits-all. You go to some of the fly-in-only First Nations communities. I represent 33 little communities in Nickel Belt. A lot of them don't have dentists at all. How do you serve those people? How do you give them equitable access? You need a variety of different delivery models that are respectful of the regional needs.

"Recommendation 3: Implement all recommendations made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) in the 2012 report Oral Health—More than Just Cavities."

The good dentists are here today. I thank them for all of the hard work that they have done. I thank them for

their patience, and I congratulate them on a big victory. They were the ones at the front of this bill, Bill 70. They were the ones who really championed this and brought us to where we are here today, with a lot of support from a lot of their members. I'm sure it has been a learning experience for a lot of them, but a learning experience that has a very happy ending.

We will pass Bill 70. We will modify—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I believe that when the member from Leeds–Grenville was speaking, it was really quiet, and now the member from Nickel Belt is speaking and we have five sidebars with only five groups of people. So I would suggest we listen; if not, take it outside. Thank you.

Continue.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So here again, congratulations.

Ça me fait extrêmement plaisir d'être ici cet après-midi pour féliciter tous les dentistes qui ont travaillé si fort pour nous amener le projet de loi 70. Je dois, en premier, féliciter un dentiste de ma communauté, le D^r Roch St-Aubin, qui faisait partie de l'association des dentistes de l'Ontario et qui était sur le comité directeur, et qui m'a gardée à jour pour ce dossier-là.

C'est un dossier qui a été travaillé depuis longtemps, mais c'est un dossier gagnant où l'on voit, dans un premier temps, qu'un problème avait été identifié. Il a été clairement identifié et les recommandations ont été faites et un rapport a été fait.

Ce rapport-là qui démontrait qu'on avait besoin d'un changement de loi a été présenté au ministère de la Santé. Faire changer les lois, ce n'est pas toujours facile. On a vu que le député de Leeds–Grenville a été capable de mettre de l'avant un projet de loi de député. Son projet de loi, la première fois, est mort au feuillet. Ça ne l'a pas découragé; il l'a représenté une deuxième fois. Lorsqu'il l'a représenté une deuxième fois, il était obligé de l'enlever et de le remodifier pour le représenter une troisième fois.

Mais pendant tout ce temps-là, le travail se faisait pour que le projet de loi devienne de plus en plus solide et de plus en plus acceptable, pour que les gens qui avaient des oppositions aient eu la chance d'être entendus.

Le processus a eu lieu. Il l'a présenté en première lecture. La plupart des projets de loi passent la première lecture assez facilement. Il l'a présenté en deuxième lecture, et lorsqu'il l'a présenté en deuxième lecture, ça a été une opportunité pour dire : « Voici pourquoi le projet de loi est important et voici certaines personnes qui voudraient être entendues. »

Donc, après la deuxième lecture, on est allé en comité. L'après-midi de comité a été chargé à bloc. Il y avait plusieurs groupes et plusieurs personnes qui ont voulu être entendus pour qu'on comprenne vraiment bien quelle est la genèse de ce projet de loi-là, pourquoi il est important, pourquoi il a changé et comment on s'assure que la protection—c'est surtout des femmes—va continuer, même avec le changement du projet de loi.

Donc, ça a eu lieu, et finalement aujourd'hui—grand moment de célébration—on en fait la troisième lecture. La troisième lecture devrait être complétée, je dirais, avant que la cloche ne sonne ce soir, et on s'attend à ce qu'il y ait un vote pas mal unanime en faveur qui va avoir lieu demain. Donc, des félicitations à tous les gens qui ont travaillé. Votre travail a porté fruit.

I want to conclude my remarks by summarizing the journey of this bill a bit. After the issue had been identified by the dental associations, as well as the college of dentists, then HPRAC did a review to see if it was feasible to change. This review, this report, was given to the Minister of Health. The Minister of Health received the report, and then a private member's bill was put forward.

The first private member's bill from the member from Leeds–Grenville died when the House prorogued. Not to be undone, he re-presented it after the House reconvened, and then had to withdraw it—which is not common, but doable—to really take into account how we make this bill stronger and how we make sure we address some of the concerns that had been heard. Not only did they have a clear objective of where they wanted to go, but they were willing to listen, and they were willing to make compromises along the line, to make sure that the protection that was very important to some of the groups that came, and some of the deputants that came and presented that wanted to maintain protection, was going to continue to be there.

This bill is a little bit different than others, in that the different colleges will have to choose to avail themselves of this bill. If they don't, then the provision that says “no treatment of spouse” will continue. For some of the 27 professions, I cannot see the day where the treatment of spouses will ever be allowed. You can think of people like psychologists, or you can think of physicians. There are some professions where I cannot see the day, but for a lot of others this bill will allow them to consider the treatment of spouses, with serious consequences if anything was to derail.

Congratulations to everybody who has worked so hard. All of those visits were worth it. Hopefully—actually, I'm pretty sure—the bill will pass, and tomorrow we will vote on it. Then we get to do a happy dance.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I too welcome members of the ODA and other health professionals, and the member from Leeds–Grenville. Welcome to this chamber. With any luck, this will be your next-to-last time here on this particular issue, but we're very happy to have you here.

I am very pleased to support this private member's legislation. The member for Leeds–Grenville has done a good job of finding common ground. I'm very pleased that all three parties are strongly in support of this legislation. This afternoon is demonstrating that, even though we all agree, we all have something we want to say about it.

As you know, this legislation, if passed, would give health regulatory colleges the ability and the authority to

choose whether to allow their members to treat their spouses. At the same time, the legislation maintains the strong protections that we now have in place for patients. The health professionals here know that we will continue to have zero tolerance for sexual abuse of patients by health professionals, but this legislation would give regulatory colleges greater flexibility in responding to the unique circumstances of their membership. It recognizes that professional colleges are the best place to determine what is appropriate for their particular profession.

It also signifies what can be achieved when members of all three parties in this House put aside our political differences and find common ground. As you have heard, this is not the first version of the proposed legislation introduced in this House by the member for Leeds–Grenville. He has been a strong advocate—where has he gone?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm right here now.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Oh, there he is. He's coming over here.

He has been a strong advocate on this issue for some time now, and, of course, Elizabeth Witmer, a former member, was also personally interested in this issue; she, too, was a strong advocate.

With each new version, this proposed legislation has improved. I was very pleased that we were able to work together, reach across the aisle and co-operate closely. I want to say thank you to the people in my ministry who have helped this member bring this bill forward. I congratulate you, member, on getting Bill 70 to third reading today.

1700

This is not the only example of what we can do when we work together. I was very pleased that all three parties joined together and we stood united in the battle against cancer by passing the Skin Cancer Prevention Act into law just two weeks ago. That important legislation will help prevent skin cancer by restricting young Ontarians from using tanning beds.

I also recently introduced Bill 117, the Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety Act, in response to Dr. Jake Thiessen's report on this spring's cancer drug underdosing incident.

I brought Bill 78 forward for second reading. If passed, this would help to protect patient privacy and facilitate the development of electronic health care in Ontario.

Bill 11, which would ensure continued transparency and accountability at Ornge, is currently before the Standing Committee on General Government.

I'm hoping and urging all members to continue with this work, to find common ground where we can agree, where we can move forward. I think that's why the people sent us here to this place.

Speaker, the proposed legislation we're debating today would amend the Regulated Health Professions Act. Currently, that act does not allow a health professional to engage in particular types of conduct, behaviour and remarks, including those of a sexual nature, with any of

their patients at any time. Effectively, this prevents all health professionals from treating their spouses.

We have heard loud and clear from dentists and others that we needed to take another look at that restriction. This legislation allows those colleges to establish a regulation that would allow for an exemption when the patient is the health professional's spouse. The legislation would, if passed, allow health professional colleges to establish that regulation.

It's important to note that the conduct in question—that is, conduct of a sexual nature—would continue to be prohibited when the member is engaged in the practice of his or her profession. In other words, every Ontarian would continue to be protected from inappropriate conduct when being treated by a health professional, even if that health professional is their spouse.

Speaker, I am strongly committed to protecting Ontario patients, and we recognize that health professionals hold a very important position of trust with their patients. That's why I have been very clear that I have zero tolerance for sexual abuse of patients by health professionals. Our existing legislation is clear on what the process is, and that process is transparent. Once a complaint of sexual abuse is made by a member of the public, it must be investigated by the appropriate health regulatory college. If a patient has been sexually abused, the health professional's licence must be revoked for a minimum of five years.

I know that Ontario's health regulatory colleges take allegations of sexual abuse just as seriously as we do. I also recognize that some health professions feel strongly that they should be able to treat their spouses. I have heard from dentists and I have heard from dentists' spouses that this is particularly important in rural, northern and isolated communities, where there might just be one dentist. In such instances, a dentist's spouse might have to travel a great distance in order to get that dental treatment.

The legislation before the House today would give regulatory colleges the choice. They have to have this debate within their college, whether it's a choice to allow their members to provide treatment to their spouses. At the same time, it ensures that all patients continue to have the same strong protections against sexual abuse by a health professional.

Again, health professionals are prohibited from certain conduct, behaviour and remarks towards their patients. That would continue to be prohibited when a health professional is engaged in the practice of treating his or her spouse. That ensures all patients remain protected. They can be confident that the vital trust they place in health professionals would not be violated.

Health professional colleges that wish to maintain their prohibition on spousal treatment can continue to do so. This legislation, if passed, would maintain the status quo for such colleges. It acknowledges that each health profession is different. It also recognizes the long-standing principle that health professions in Ontario are self-governing. Our government recognizes the import-

ance of self-regulated health professions, and we're committed to supporting them.

There are more than 20 health professional colleges in Ontario overseeing tens of thousands of front-line health care workers right across the province. Regulated health professionals work hard every day to provide the very high quality of care that all Ontarians deserve.

I know that Ontario's health professional colleges are committed, above all, to protecting patients. That is their job: to be the voice of patients. They work in the best interest of the public to ensure that their members are giving patients the best possible care. Colleges ensure that our health professionals are properly qualified. They play an important role in ensuring transparency and accountability in the health care system, and they put patient protection as their first priority.

I know that colleges will weigh any choice whether to allow their members to treat their spouses very carefully, and any decision they make will be in the best interests of the public. As I've said already, in this instance colleges are best suited to determine what is appropriate for the health professionals they regulate.

As members of this House, we too must very carefully consider any proposed changes to legislation that protects patients. There's a fine balance to be struck between providing patients with the strong protection they deserve and allowing the health professional colleges the flexibility they need. Speaker, I believe this proposed legislation gets that balance right.

I'm pleased the legislation has received support at second reading from all three parties. I know that the members of the Standing Committee on General Government gave thoughtful consideration to the many submissions and delegations they received.

Once again, I would like to congratulate the member for Leeds-Grenville on now getting this proposed legislation to third reading. I will be supporting this legislation. I urge all members of the House to join me in doing so.

I do want to conclude by saying thank you to dentists in particular. I know that there are more than dentists here, but I want to say thank you for the work you have done in supporting our programs for low-income children. The member from Nickel Belt certainly raised that we don't have it perfect yet, but we've come a long, long way.

I'm enormously proud of Healthy Smiles. It is rolling out across the province. We are building that capacity at the local level. There are many mobile dental clinics that are now reaching out to children who have not seen a dentist in their lifetime before.

Do we wish more children could be included? Of course we do. Do we look forward to the day when we're going to be able to do that? Absolutely. Do we acknowledge that we have too many programs with too many rules? Yes, we do. As I've said to the ODA before, we're committed to getting it right, because you believe and we believe that access to dental care is something that is of enormous benefit to children, not just when they're children, but as they grow up.

I want to say thank you to the ODA for being with us as we work to improve access to dental care.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: I too would like to welcome members of the ODA, midwives and speech pathologists, and also the dental hygienists and dentists who are at home, and their patients who I'm sure are sitting in their chairs—because you will have them tuned in to the parliamentary channel today.

I definitely want to acknowledge, commend and congratulate my colleague Steve Clark from Leeds–Grenville for the great work he has done shepherding this bill through the Legislature. He has worked with the Liberals, with the NDP and also with the Ministry of Health. He referenced earlier that he pulled the bill back, he made changes, they accommodated changes, so that it would be a good piece of legislation. Now the Ministry of Health is supportive, and hopefully today we can find a way to move this through.

I'd like to acknowledge the Ontario Dental Association who championed this change, and Maggie Head for her leadership on this file.

I'd like to also acknowledge Tim Hudak, our leader of the PC Party, who promised Harry Hoediono, former president of the ODA, on June 2011 that our party would work with the association to make the necessary changes to the RHPA, the Regulated Health Professions Act. As soon as we have this next vote tomorrow, that hopefully will be the change that we've been looking for.

1710

Bill 70 is a reasonable bill, as it allows individual colleges to determine if their membership feels it's proper to allow one spouse to treat another and to then make a regulation to adopt the spousal exemption.

Speaker, this in no way loosens or undermines in any slight way the need for a zero tolerance policy on sexual abuse. Each college will have the option of adopting this exception or not. It also benefits greatly rural and northern Ontarians, where there may be only one health care provider in a respective region.'

From the conversations and meetings I have had with health professionals in my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, we need to pass Bill 70. I want to recognize them and thank them for their input. They are: Dr. Pasquale Duronio, in Lion's Head; Dr. John Totton, in Owen Sound; Dr. Jane Lukasik and Dr. Sharlene Kopec, Dr. Tom Rice, Dr. Timothy Pringle, also of Owen Sound; Dr. Stephen Brown, of Chesley; Dr. Derek Grundy and his wife, Laurie Grundy, of Hanover; Dr. Andrew Loucks, of Warton; and Dr. David Rose, of Thornbury.

I've also heard from registered dental hygienists from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. I want to read some of their comments into the record.

Registered dental hygienist Kim Murray of West Grey wrote: "I've worked for 17 years as a dental hygienist in a progressive dental practice that prides ourselves with treating the high-fear patient. We have always focused on this aspect of dentistry because the dentist's wife is very

fearful. So we have this amazing dentist who gives amazing comfortable services to thousands of clients every year while his wife sits back and is unable to seek dental treatment due to these deeply ingrained fears that only he has been able to calm. This bill must be passed to give back choice to our clients. Thank you."

Another local registered dental hygienist, Michele Walker—no relation, Mr. Speaker: "It should be a patient's right to have the oral health care provider of his or her choice, not restricted by the fact that the practitioner is his or her spouse. Our regulatory body, the College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario, acts to protect the public. The CDHO has the knowledge and understanding of the provider/patient relationship and is fully capable of determining what behaviour is appropriate for our profession in the circumstance of treating a spouse, not the government of Ontario."

Janelle Shouldice, also an RDH, said: "To put it very simply, if I treat my husband in my chair, I risk losing my registration, I will be charged with a hefty fine, and the icing on the cake," I'll be registered "as a sexual offender. That's a harsh outcome. My husband has the right to choose his provider, and as a health care provider, I have the professionalism and tact to treat him as such, a client. As you know, the local dental hygienists are a tight-knit group and are thrilled that someone is finally listening to us."

Barb Snelling, also an RDH from my riding, said: "I am a dental hygienist and I am no longer able to treat my husband as it is considered sexual abuse because he is a client and also my husband. I find this to be ridiculous and would appreciate you considering supporting the bill that will change this."

Currently, Speaker, if a member of a regulated health profession provides care to their spouse, it is automatically considered sexual abuse. The rationale for this bill is to eliminate the default charge of sexual abuse within colleges that have a history of regulation as related to treatment of spouses. This is very specific here, but there are a number of other professions that may choose to adopt—I want to reinforce that it's not mandatory; they will have the ability to choose whether they wish to do this or not. It does benefit rural and northern Ontario significantly, and it does not in any way lessen the zero tolerance policy in regard to sexual abuse.

This is a prime example of three parties being supportive, three parties working together, which is what we all come here as elected representatives to do. It's a way that we can create good legislation, and it exemplifies that we can create good legislation when we work together. I look forward to the passing of Bill 70 to third reading and royal assent, and I hope for much, much more of this in the future.

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

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I rise today to speak further in support of the legislation being debated today. The minister has spoken about how this proposed legislation represents common ground for all the members in this House, and I would like to echo those comments.

I understand that the member for Leeds–Grenville has worked closely with both the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and ministry staff in bringing forward this latest version of this bill. I would like to congratulate the member for getting his proposed legislation this far, and with support of all three parties at second reading. I believe that all of that work and co-operation has resulted in a strong bill that would protect patients, while allowing health regulatory colleges to make the best decisions for patients and the health professionals that they regulate.

I think that all of us understand the unique relationship a health professional has with his or her patients. The health professional's position is one of power but also great responsibility, and the relationship is fundamentally predicated on trust and care. The principle "First do no harm" can be traced all the way back to the late fifth century BC and the founder of western medicine, the Greek physician Hippocrates. To say it has a strong pedigree would understate the matter. It has been central to medical ethics for millennia. When it is violated, that harms patients, their families and the medical profession.

Our government has been strong in its commitment to zero tolerance for sexual abuse of patients by health care professionals. That will not change. But current legislation, in protecting patients from abuse, prohibits treatment of spouses by medical professionals.

I know that some medical professionals and professional associations have been advocating for a change to existing legislation to allow regulatory colleges the flexibility to choose whether their members can treat their spouses. Some health regulatory colleges are supportive of such a change. At the same time, I recognize that other regulatory colleges prefer the status quo, and many Ontarians are justifiably concerned to see that strong patient protections against sexual abuse continue to exist.

The proposed legislation we are considering today attempts—quite successfully, I believe—to satisfy all of those concerns. It would allow health colleges to put forward a regulation that would allow their members to treat their spouses, it will maintain the status quo for colleges that would prefer not to undertake such a change and, above all, it would ensure that all patients, whether or not they are the spouse of a health professional, will receive the same strong protections against abuse.

This is a question that has been taken up in the past. In 2011, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care asked the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council, or HPRAC, for advice on whether or not alternatives to the current mandatory licence revocation should be made for spousal treatment by health professionals. The minister made it clear that the government would maintain zero tolerance for sexual abuse.

HPRAC is a body which advises the minister on questions surrounding health professions in Ontario. For example, it advises on whether some unregulated professions should be regulated, or whether some regulated professions should be unregulated. It also provides

guidance on possible amendments to the Regulated Health Professions Act, or other matters referred to it by the minister.

Between October 2011 and January 2012, HPRAC conducted a thorough review and in-depth consultations with regulatory colleges, professional associations, experts, organizations, advocates and the public. This included consultation meetings, online feedback and eight town hall sessions in communities across the province. In the end, HPRAC recommended that treatment of spouses should be amended to exempt spouses from the definition of sexual abuse, and that colleges should be permitted to change regulations or standards of practice to prohibit spousal treatment.

HPRAC carefully considered all that it learned through its consultation and review process, and kept the public interest paramount in its recommendations. However, the legislation before the House today differs from those recommendations in at least one crucial way: Under HPRAC's proposal, spousal treatment would be allowed unless a health regulatory college specifically prohibited it. The proposed legislation we are considering today, on the other hand, would maintain the status quo unless a regulatory college chose to allow it through regulation.

In other words, for health regulatory colleges that wish to maintain a prohibition on spousal treatment, this legislation would, if passed, change nothing. On the other hand, it would allow other colleges to decide to allow their members to treat their spouses. I think this is important in recognizing the autonomy of self-regulating health professions. I believe it is consistent with HPRAC's recommendations, while improving upon them.

The minister spoke to the requests by some stakeholders to allow health professionals to treat their spouses in certain situations and when the regulatory colleges deem it appropriate. This is consistent with many other jurisdictions, and it's something that I know a number of the members in this House have heard from stakeholders and individuals in their ridings.

I know that the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly also heard from a number of delegates advocating for this change, and I will touch on some of their concerns.

Dr. Rick Caldwell, president of the Ontario Dental Association, emphasized the difficulty for patients in small and isolated towns across Ontario who are forced to travel great distances for treatment because their spouse is a regulated health professional.

For example, Dr. LouAnn Visconti, an orthodontic specialist, is the only resident dental specialist in Timmins. As a result, her husband must travel three and a half hours to receive orthodontic dental care.

Dr. Bob Haig of the Ontario Chiropractic Association told the committee that, before the prohibition, family and spousal treatment was accepted as part of chiropractic medicine.

Certainly some concerns were also expressed. Nicole Pietsch of the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres

spoke passionately on behalf of victims of sexual violence. The concerns raised by the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario and the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario focused on specific provisions of the proposed legislation, which I would like to speak to now.

1720

There were some concerns about the definition of the word “spouse.” This is something that has changed in the last incarnation of this proposed legislation, so that the definition of “spouse” that is in the bill is consistent with other existing legislation. It has specific time parameters, a three-year cohabitation period, which is consistent with other Ontario statutes, such as the Family Law Act, Retail Sales Tax Act and Pension Benefits Act. This is worded in such a way as to remove subjectivity as to who may be considered a spouse. We agree that the discipline committees of the respected colleges should not be forced to determine the precise nature of a personal relationship between a health professional and a patient, and so the current definition provides the necessary objectivity.

Concerns were also raised about the provision that would protect the spouses of regulated health professionals during the provision of treatment. This is a very important part of the proposed legislation because it recognizes that spousal patients could also be victims of sexual abuse and it ensures them the right to the same strong protections that all patients in Ontario enjoy. It would also ensure that spousal patients who are the victims of sexual abuse by their health care provider would continue to have access to funding for therapy and counselling.

The legislation includes the terminology “practice of the profession,” which is an established and known terminology that is used by health regulatory colleges. We recognize that each health profession is unique, and this wording gives individual colleges the flexibility to determine what constitutes engaging in the practice of the profession in their particular professional context.

I know that the committee listened closely to what all of the delegations had to say and carefully considered the proposed legislation clause by clause. I would like to thank the members of the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly for their work on this bill, as well as all the delegates who brought their experience and expertise to the committee. It is not easy work forging legislation that respects the unique circumstances of different regulated health professions while ensuring universal and equal protections for patients. I believe that this proposed legislation manages to do so very well.

I would like to thank the member for Leeds–Grenville once again for bringing this legislation forward, and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, as well as the many people who have worked on this in her ministry, for all that they have done to help bring it to this point.

I believe that this is strong proposed legislation which respects and empowers health regulatory colleges while protecting all of Ontario’s patients. I will be pleased to support it, and I urge all members to do so as well.

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

Mr. John O’Toole: It’s indeed my pleasure to stand in support of Bill 70. The member from Leeds–Grenville, Steve Clark, my good friend and a great hockey player—I would say that he and his staff have done a marvellous job of building relationships, navigating this through the system. A private member’s bill that gets this far on an issue that’s been here before and failed is a commendation for the member from Leeds–Grenville. I can say that for sure.

Nothing is ever achieved alone, and I suspect, listening to the remarks this afternoon—I want to commend the members in the gallery for having the patience and persistence to hang in there, because you’re so close to scoring on this issue; the president of the ODA, of course, Rick Caldwell, as well as the staff people I work with, Frank Bevilacqua and Maggie Head. I want to also shout out the Minister of Health. I would say that’s another good example that they’re actually listening. Quite often, we don’t like to give any ground to the government side of the House, but if this is a two-way street where they’re giving our member’s bill, whether it’s the member for Leeds–Grenville or Ernie Hardeman, the member for Oxford, some air and some space, I think that’s the right thing to do and this place could become far more civil for all of us.

I would say, though, just in clarity, everyone has spoken and defined the choices that have been supplied and the options for the consumer and the provider under the regulated health group. It’s important to recognize, beyond that group, that I’ve had letters from, for the most part, dentists, several in my riding. I’ll name them, in fact. The ODHA as well, the hygienists: Margaret Carter, executive director for the Ontario Dental Hygienists’ Association, wrote a very compelling email, and it’s great to see other regulated health professions stepping up to ease the burden on those.

In the interests of sharing my time with the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, I’ll skip some of my remarks because they’ve all been mentioned by everyone else.

I think the bill is in line with the recommendations of the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council in its advice to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in June 2012. I have a copy of the report here, and it makes a couple of very definite recommendations about the interpretation and the role of the college. It’s very important that the college eventually, at the end of the day, has the buy-off. As a profession, we always look to the college to be the regulator and, in fact, the enforcer and disciplinarian. That’s a tough role for the colleges to assume, but that has to be done. Some colleges are dominated by certain groups, but that’s a whole different discussion.

Dental hygiene is the third-largest health care profession in the province. Without this change in policy provided in this bill, a regulated health professional treating his or her spouse would be subject to a manda-

tory revocation of their certificate of registration for a minimum of five years. That's a particularly harsh circumstance. It's something that, years ago, probably had a different connotation to it.

Breaking away, just on the personal side, I want to mention a couple of things. I should mention first of all that my brother-in-law, a very close friend of mine, Dr. Paul Goodman, was a dentist, a dental surgeon—a highly respected, very accomplished individual. He was about my age. Unfortunately, a couple of years ago, through an unfortunate accident, he succumbed and died. It's very sad. My sister has never really recovered.

But also, I would say that in my riding, I'm very familiar with a couple of retired dentists who are good friends of mine: Dr. Chuck Catran as well as Dr. Gary Kindree. They both at one time or another tried to save my crumbling teeth—and did a fairly good job, I would say.

At the end of that, the real star in my riding is Dr. Jack Cottrell. He's a dentist in my riding, in Port Perry, particularly. He was the president of the Canadian Dental Association in 2005. He's also a former president of the Ontario Dental Association and the Durham Ontario Dental Society. He received the University of Toronto Faculty of Dentistry Award of Distinction in 2011 for his volunteer commitment to Feed the Children and his dedicated leadership in dentistry organizations at the national and international levels. I must thank also thank his lovely wife, Michelle.

Dr. Cottrell has also served on the governing council of the World Dental Federation. He's only the second Canadian ever to hold that post. In fact, he is a great spokesman and marketeer, if you will, for the profession itself.

I want you to also recognize some other innovation in my riding, on a slightly different topic—but I'll skip that in the interest of sharing time favourably with other members.

I do want to mention another—I have a bill, Bill 4—to briefly advise the members of my private bill, which attempts to address matters related to health care professions and their immediate families. Bill 4 is entitled the Health Profession Corporations Statute Law Amendment Act, 2013. Currently, physicians and dentists are the only health care professionals allowed to create health profession corporations. These health profession corporations are subject to special treatment in respect to the ownership by a dentist's or a physician's family members today. My bill amends both acts—this is important—to give all regulated health professions the authority to create a health profession corporation. These have implications in terms of non-share capital and taxes which, if you wish to contact me—it's important.

I have sent it to most of the colleges for comment. Whether it's veterinarians—but most of the professions in health care have responded, and almost all favourably. Some think it's not within their particular mandate, but Bill 4 would empower all regulated health professions to have the same administrative privileges currently available to only doctors and dentists. I have received many

favourable comments from representatives of regulated health professions who have reviewed Bill 4 and have been much supportive.

I want to return to the real subject of today and the work that has been done collegially in finding consensus. This is a very important statement about this bill, Bill 70. Mr. Clark, in his background, has been shown to find consensus. I would say that this is one more example of the Tim Hudak leadership team moving forward—not to politicize this in any way—and finding consensus. We look to the government party and the third party to find that consensus. That's the only way we can move forward. It can't all be one group sucking all the air out of the room.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? Last call: Further debate? The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

1730

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very, very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm in by the nick of time. I have to get my breath. Maybe I could get some more water, too.

Well, it's a pleasure to join the third reading debate on Bill 70 this afternoon. I want to congratulate my colleague from Leeds–Grenville, Mr. Clark, for bringing forth this bill as a private member's bill to the Legislature.

I've been here for 10 years now—don't everyone applaud at once.

Applause.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Over that period of time, I've had people who were part of the different bodies of regulated professions raise the issue with me about exemptions for treating one's spouse.

I listened intently to the member from Nickel Belt earlier today. It was long, but oh, my gosh, it was interesting. She talked about how there are some professions where it is almost a certainty that they will not be looking for exemptions, because it would not be logical for an exemption to be sought or granted.

But the group that was the most active over the years, and I give them a tremendous amount of credit, was the Ontario Dental Association. They've been consistent and dogged in raising the question about whether, because of no tolerance to have any kind of relations with a patient, it automatically excluded a member of that profession's spouse. They've raised that issue with me on a consistent basis over the years, that in the mind of the average person it really didn't make sense that they would be prohibited from treating their spouse based on the act that was passed back in 1991.

So I've had this conversation going for a number of years now. Immediately, when it was raised with me, I asked myself the same question. You've got to be kidding. I mean, I wouldn't have known the first thing about the act and the HPRAC before I ever came here. Why would I? What interest would I have had? But when it was raised with me that there's a restriction because of an act, and there's no tolerance, basically a prohibition,

because of an act that was done with good reason, to protect people, that as a result of that—you know the old saying about unforeseen consequences; they were coming back home to roost. There was a need to take another look at this.

I want to congratulate Steve Clark again. I know my colleague from Nickel Belt said it hasn't been an easy process. It hasn't been an easy process, but because of the audience today—I know we have members of other health professions, other than the dental, but they've been the primary ones that we have had conversations with.

I mean, getting this through to this point has been about as much fun as a root canal. It has not been easy. It has been an arduous process. There have been fits and starts, and then, with the prorogation last year—there seemed to have been a great deal of progress. There was what we thought was an informal agreement that this was going to be part of a programming motion in the spring and—yada yada yada—here we are in the fall. But thank goodness the three parties agreed that here in the fall we would move on granting this exemption.

Bill 70, I think, speaks to it very well. As my colleague from Leeds–Grenville made very clear, too, where there are breaches, people will feel the full effect of the law. Where there are breaches, people will feel it, but we shouldn't restrict them on the basis of a law that really never made sense in the first place.

I do want to speak a little about dental itself. I know my colleague from Nickel Belt spoke extensively about the importance of dental care, and I think it's probably the most overlooked part of our health care system for very many people. Before I came here, I happened to be reading an article one time—I can't remember the magazine, but it talked about how with many significant illnesses and diseases dentistry and proper oral care would act as an early warning system in preventing greater health tragedies or death itself. This was an extensive article and I was shocked when I read it. I remember speaking to my wife about it and saying, "Holy"—no, I said, "You know, we've always been pretty good about making sure we take good care of our teeth, but it's even more important now because it's been confirmed that taking care of your teeth and good oral health are paramount to good overall health." Some people might think, "Well, why would you worry about your chest cavity from your mouth?" Your heart and your lungs. Well, it's all connected. We're one body and we have to ensure that all parts are working collectively and cooperatively.

The dental profession has been extremely good about spreading that message. I want to thank members of the ODA from my riding, who have spoken to me extensively. Originally, Dr. Bill MacPhee, who was incidentally my dentist for many years as well; Dr. Bruce Harle; but over the last number of years, Dr. Kevin Roach, who has been pushing not only this issue, but other issues of dental health as my representative on the ODA and has been dogged in ensuring that I'm getting the message loud and clear. I can assure you, Kevin, if you're

listening out there, we are getting the message loud and clear, and you're doing a great job in delivering it.

I'm just very pleased to be here today with my colleague Steve Clark and colleagues on all sides of the House, where I think we've made tremendous progress, and at the end of the day we're going to pass a bill that makes a whole lot of sense.

The only negative thing I can say is, what took us so long? But having said that, better late than never. I will be happy to vote in favour of this bill and look forward to its passage.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 70 this afternoon. Let me start by paying tribute to Mr. Clark, the member for Leeds–Grenville. I think he has done a super job in bringing this forward on a number of occasions.

I think most members around the House would agree that the underpinnings of this bill are very sound; it's something that I think we can all agree makes a lot of sense. I think it's been brought forward in a way that it has improved every step of the way along. I note that the member has worked with the ministry to ensure that the bill was improved along the way and that it met the interests of all stakeholders, because we know that what we want to do for sure is we want to be a government and we want to, I think, have parties in the House as well—all three parties in the House—that have a commitment to protecting Ontario's patients in all the health professions.

We know that these people that engage in the health professions hold a very important position of trust with those patients, and we know that those colleges and those professions themselves also have a zero tolerance for sexual abuse of patients by health professionals. But we understand that there was a need to make some changes or to make an amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, and this spousal exemption that's being proposed today, I think, makes an awful lot of sense.

I've had the same dentist for over 30 years, Dr. Paul Eisner in Oakville. When we started together, I was a young patient and he was a young dentist. Now I'm an old patient and he's an old dentist, but we still get along very well. He puts things in my mouth and tells me jokes for about 30 minutes and makes me listen to them, and somehow at the end of it all, I come out with better teeth. Of course, I write a cheque on the way out. But we've had a wonderful relationship and I appreciate that relationship.

But I think everybody has conducted themselves in a way that we should all be proud of this. This is the way that I think all three parties can work together. This comes from a member of the opposition who has worked very, very hard at ensuring that this bill meets the needs of everybody. I think it's worthy of support of all members of the House. I look forward to supporting this and urge my colleagues to support it as well. Once again, my thanks, particularly to Maggie Head from the ODA—it's good to see her back in the walls of Queen's Park

again—and all those from the ODA and from the other regulated health professions as well who worked to make sure that this act works for everybody.

1740

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, it's a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 70, the Regulated Health Professions Amendment Act. I'm also very excited to see such a great turnout—members of the Ontario Dental Association and their spouses.

I also would like to commend the member from Leeds–Grenville for his steadfast commitment to this issue. He previously introduced legislation to provide a spousal exception during the previous session. Sadly, Liberal Party interests were placed above the interests of Ontario's health care providers and Dalton McGuinty prorogued the Legislature to avoid accountability. That killed a lot of good bills. I had a good bill in there too, by the way, about red tape. Thankfully, the member from Leeds–Grenville truly cares for the interests of health care providers and he introduced Bill 70 back in May.

This issue is one that many Ontarians may not be aware of but is one that has a definite impact on the people around the province. Currently, if a member of a regulated health profession provides care to their spouse it is automatically considered sexual abuse. As a result, they're subject to a mandatory revocation of their certificate of registration for a minimum of five years—unbelievable. No one in their right mind would consider it inappropriate if a denturist were to fit their spouse for dentures or an optician fit their spouse for glasses, but under current legislation it is, by default, considered sexual abuse.

Bill 70 would inject some common sense into this issue. This amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act would leave it up to the regulatory college of a particular health profession to determine if the treatment of a spouse is appropriate or not. The regulatory councils that will be making these decisions are comprised of both members of the public and health professionals, which makes it the ideal body to decide what constitutes professional misconduct.

In June 2012, the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council advised the Ministry of Health to address the issue of treatment of spouses. They quite rightly pointed out that “spousal, health professional-patient relationships are different from non-spousal, health professional-patient relationships.”

They further noted, “Health professions’ disciplinary committees, as well as courts of law, have confirmed the difficulty in being able to consider facts or circumstances ... in the face of the mandatory revocation provisions.”

Surely, disciplinary committees or courts should be able to consider circumstances instead of being forced to suspend a health care professional for providing appropriate care to their spouse.

The passage of Bill 70, which will clean up the rules, allows our province's health professionals to treat their

spouses if their college deems it appropriate. By no means does this bill relax the rules on sexual abuse. Those who commit sexual abuse will be met with the full force of the law. It is an issue that health care providers and we, as legislators, take very seriously.

The passing of Bill 70 will help rural and northern Ontarians who often cannot find a health care provider. In many areas, there may be only one health care provider in the region for a particular profession.

In my riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex, we know this problem all too well. Many of my constituents have a tough time finding a family doctor or a dentist or an optometrist. We should be doing all that we can to ensure that all of our constituents have access to health care. As it stands today, many spouses are unable to receive care because of the outdated rules regarding spousal treatment.

By looking at this issue with a common sense approach on a case-by-case basis instead of with a blanket policy, we can make it easier for people across this province to receive health care. At the same time, clarifying the rules will allow colleges of each health profession to focus on real cases of sexual abuse in an effort to protect the public.

Speaker, passing Bill 70 is simply the right thing to do.

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

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's always a pleasure to rise in the chamber. I want to thank all members here today debating third reading of Bill 70 for actually accomplishing what we come here to do and what the people of this great province expect us to do, and that is bring forward legislation that just makes sense. When we work collaboratively, we actually do accomplish things that are going to be more progressive and bring us out of outdated legislation.

I want to also acknowledge my esteemed colleague from Leeds–Grenville, Mr. Clark, for taking the initiative on this bill. He has done a wonderful thing, working with the ODA and the various doctors and their spouses who are here today in support of Bill 70.

Coming from rural Ontario—I think the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Mr. Walker, touched on it—there are instances throughout the province, rural Ontario, Mr. Speaker, where the doctor in question is the only sheriff in town, if you will, and because of this previous legislation, has not been able to work on their spouse.

I think this is a great step forward. I think this is an initiative that, again, collaboratively, all three parties have supported. There's other legislation on the docket that actually could be brought forward as well that I think all three parties could definitely work together on. My private member's bill, Bill 98, for instance—the importation of wines, beer and spirits—would be another prime example of bringing forward legislation that actually is going to speed up our economy and be helpful when it comes to building Ontario once again.

Mr. Speaker, when I think of my personal trips to Dr. Paolo Giuliani, my dentist in Campbellford, Ontario—

home of Dooher's Bakery. I know Mr. Leal from Peterborough has been to Dooher's, I'm sure, when he traverses down into Campbellford—

Interjection.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Perfect doughnuts, great doughnuts—voted the best bakery in all of Northumberland. As you can tell, Mr. Speaker, I may have had one or two myself.

Interjections.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's true. But, Mr. Speaker, you know—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, folks, it's so loud in here I can't even hear him. Last warning: Next person that gets out of hand is gone.

Continue.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to be able to hear myself think when I'm here in the chamber.

Interjection.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thinking and speaking.

But Dr. Giuliani, who actually was just here earlier this week fitting us for our mouthguards, has grave concerns over this. Obviously he has asked for my support, and I am definitely going to be supporting Bill 70. It's a great initiative, and I know for a fact that this is, again, something that we can find some common ground on. I know that when it went to committee we ironed out a few of the bumps that needed to happen. But that's the process when you get to the committee.

So thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank Steve Clark again.

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

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew, further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, I'm done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Oh, I wondered. You were talking.

Further debate? Last call, further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House dated Thursday, October 3, 2013, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Clark has moved third reading of Bill 70, An Act to amend the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Orders of the day? Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, noting the lateness of the hour, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1751.

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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
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Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Niagara Falls	

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Laura Albanese, Steve Clark
Mike Colle, Joe Dickson
Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
Michael Prue
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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Catherine Fife, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Douglas C. Holyday, Mitzie Hunter
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Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Michael Harris
Peggy Sattler, Laurie Scott
Jeff Yurek
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Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
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Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qaadri
Jonah Schein
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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Todd Smith
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des comptes publics**

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Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, John O'Toole
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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

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sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience
intellectuelle**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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