



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 5 December 2013

Jeudi 5 décembre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 5 décembre 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Let us pray.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, for those wonderful people in Lakefield, Ontario, who may be tuned in to the Legislature this morning, I will call second reading of Bill 141, government order G141, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act.

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR JOBS
AND PROSPERITY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR L'INFRASTRUCTURE
AU SERVICE DE L'EMPLOI
ET DE LA PROSPÉRITÉ

Mr. Murray moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 141, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2013 / Projet de loi 141, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur l'infrastructure au service de l'emploi et de la prospérité.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Murray.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Every once in a while, there's a piece of legislation that comes along that is not well understood, and 10 or 15 or 20 years later, we look back on moments in Ontario's history and we realize that we've done something very significant. Many times those things that were done were controversial at the time.

I remember one of the things that, at the time, didn't get much note was when Bill Davis, in this House in 1967, introduced the act that introduced our college system. I remember the headline in the Toronto Star that year, when that was announced, was essentially something to the effect of we were creating universities for dumb people.

What has happened is our college system quietly got built through government, successfully, and I think all parties in this House contributed significantly to the expansion of it. I would say that it was one of the best economic policies in the history of Ontario. The college system gave us and continues to give us—which is why

this government nurtures that legacy and wants to pass on a healthier college system and is investing.

As Minister of Infrastructure, I'll talk a little bit about some of the investments in our college system. We continue to expand it, modernize it and, in partnerships with Bombardier, bring the classroom to the workplace, and we're looking at expanding the model.

I would say that the reason Ontario became the best production economy and the most successful production economy in the last half of the last century was disproportionately because of that single piece of legislation and the fact that when the university system could not produce a new generation of technology and vocational workers, we created the most skilled workforce in North America. We now have the most skilled workforce in the world—I know that our OSSTF teachers are here—and we have the best public education system in the English-speaking world.

But you cannot separate the economy from quality of life, the value of the people who are our great teachers, and the importance of the ambitions and imagination of our students.

I would like to think that the bill that we are introducing today is very much that consequential, because—well, the Premier has pointed out that we are driven by a number of things in our economic strategy and our job strategy, and that people and infrastructure are two important components of it. So today the government is advancing one of the foundations of its economic and job strategy, which is to really look at expanding the role of infrastructure in creating jobs and advancing our economy.

I do think that in 10 years, we will be looking at this bill as having been extraordinarily consequential to our ability to become, over the next 50 years, the most successful innovation economy in the western world in the same way that we were the most successful production economy.

So far, we have invested, as a government, about \$85 billion in infrastructure. That's in completely modernizing our hospital system. That's in building new colleges and universities; hundreds of new public schools; the largest expansion of our transit systems ever in Toronto and Ottawa; the introduction of rapid transit in communities that did not have it before, like Kitchener–Waterloo; and the expansion in Windsor of the largest parkway and soon the most important bridge crossing on the busiest trade corridor, which will develop and magnify our trade.

Mr. Speaker, our infrastructure is the foundation of our prosperity. Without this critical connectivity, without

clean water, without twinning our northern highways, which are actually our east-west trade route, none of our economic prosperity would be possible. So when we're asked, as a government, what our job strategy is and what our economic strategy is, when the opposition wanted, to use their words, to "clear the deck" so that bills could be brought forward that would dramatically increase jobs—this is one of those bills.

Is the government's job strategy successful? Well, we have about 600,000 people who are unemployed. Some of those folks are not employable in the terms that economists use, but my view is that everyone's employable. Right now, according to the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters association, we will create in Canada, within the next 24 months, 1.3 million jobs. That's not government numbers; that's private sector numbers.

In Ontario, at the current rate, in the portion in Ontario, which is one of the world's job creation leaders, that will create 800,000 jobs in Ontario that will either become available or be created between now and 2016.

Just think about that for a moment: 800,000 jobs being created in Ontario in the next two years, or jobs becoming available because people are retiring or there's capacity. That is more jobs than there are people unemployed in this province, and 2016 is not far away. So our job creation capacity of our economy is truly remarkable.

The challenge is, those are skilled jobs, and there is a mismatch. As my friend Benjamin Tal says, "We have people without jobs and jobs without people." So how do we use our education system, which this government has introduced much legislation on and advanced—but how do we use our infrastructure in two ways: to build the right kind of infrastructure for the 21st century economy so that we secure, expand and keep that rate of job creation, and how do we use our infrastructure spending to create opportunities for people to get the skills? Because right now, we are spending \$13 billion a year on infrastructure, each and every year.

Now, for 50 years, in today's dollars, Ontario never spent much more than \$3 billion or \$4 billion. As a matter of fact, we were spending at 20% or 25% of what we're spending today, so we have an infrastructure deficit to catch up on.

0910

This legislation will do a number of things. One, it will require us to have, and I want to emphasize, at least a 10-year plan, which means, quite frankly, that we would eventually like to get to a 20- and 25-year plan, which we do have. We have the Big Move, which is a 20-plus-year plan for rapid transit. We have a northern highways plan, which is quite aggressive. Now we're going to build our plans and put them into our budgets over those periods of time so there is a plan, a policy and a budget, so that it is actionable, measurable and transparent.

I don't think this is a partisan issue. My friends in opposition—I know I've had some very positive conversations with my friends in the third party. I think this is

something that unites us as progressive politicians wanting to see a higher level of public investment, and it being predictable, understandable and transparent.

This will actually require us to have a view that is evidence-based and public. Soon, through systems like iCorridor, all the data—my friend from Windsor–Tecumseh and my colleague from Ottawa–Vanier will be able to go online and look at how we're modelling a truck tunnel in Ottawa. How would that work? What would the ridership be? Should we have a toll on it for trucks? How should we finance it? That will all be transparent and will be built into future budgets.

My friend from Windsor–Tecumseh will be able to go on and see some of the challenges we've worked on together with the Windsor–Essex parkway, and how it's progressing. Is the remediation program working? How is girder replacement going? Are we on track? When are we opening new roads? What will the capacity be? What are the opportunities? What's happening with land values? How will this line up with the plaza and the new president's bridge that will give Windsor a phenomenal trade corridor? What would the ridership be? What is the mix of trucks? What are the economic opportunities? How does it integrate with land use and transportation planning? How is that parkway foundational, in very specific ways, to growing the Windsor economy? What kinds of logistics businesses? How do we mesh our land use and transportation policy?

We will actually look at: Should we build a highway extension or a subway or a GO line? We will be able to measure what the densities are, whether it will create the densities. We know that building a freeway is sometimes less expensive than building the same number of kilometres of subway, but we know that a subway moves many more people per kilometre much faster. So if you're measuring a subway compared to a freeway and you're measuring it based on how many people it will move at what cost per person at what speed, all of a sudden, sometimes the subway comes out with a much smarter result.

If you can actually measure that—as we know from the American experience in San Francisco and Milwaukee, freeways often diminish property values and reduce employment intensity, where subways and rapid transit systems increase employment intensity and land values in their surrounding areas and have an uplift in tax value. As a matter of fact, that's how the Embarcadero replacement and the Milwaukee freeway system were replaced, based on tax increment financing, another fiscal tool that this government gave to municipalities that allowed them to use the future value on their tax base created by a new infrastructure investment and borrow money against that future tax revenue to pay for it. iCorridor will actually allow us to have the data to actually allow large and small communities to use these new financial tools.

The other thing we're doing: \$13 billion creates a heck of a lot of jobs. So far, our infrastructure investments to date have created 600,000 jobs. Our next year, couple of years, spend will create over 100,000 new jobs. Remem-

ber, according to the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters association, we will have 800,000 skilled jobs. Ontario already has a job recovery that's the envy of the world. We're at about 170% job recovery from the recession, which means we have many more jobs created than we had even at our peak.

The UK's recovery is around 43%, and the UK decided to disinvest in infrastructure for a period of time and take a tax-cutting disinvestment strategy. It has resulted in the United Kingdom not having a job recovery, which is interesting, because the Conservative government did exactly what the official opposition is asking us to do: cut taxes, attack public sector pensions, and reduce the capacity and quality of government services. What happened in the UK is a pretty abject model of a complete economic failure: no job recovery and an economy that is a bit in the dumpster. We don't want to do that.

What the UK is doing now is investing \$24 billion in two subway lines alone in London. Why is the UK doing that—the British government, the Conservative government? Because they've now decided to do the exact opposite, which is to not reduce spending and to be focused most on strategic infrastructure critical to their economy for creating jobs and building the financial services sector. So the UK government has completely reversed itself and is now moving into some of its biggest spends, the biggest spend it's ever made in the British public transit system in London ever: \$24 billion is obviously a huge investment

But we've got to do a better job than that, Mr. Speaker. We can't simply spend money; we can't simply spend money smarter. We can't simply integrate land use, transportation and economic policies. We've got to do more.

We've been working with the construction trade unions and with the construction industry to produce a jobs formula, because right now, if you're Ameresco or you're Bondfield or you're the operating engineers or the Steelworkers or the Carpenters' Union or LIUNA, or any number of those unions or those businesses, you're collaborating together right now, Mr. Speaker, and investing massively. I don't know if you've ever been to the operating engineers' or the ironworkers' or LIUNA's or the carpenters'—you pick a union. They all have amazing training centres. And their completion rates—I know my friend from York South–Weston has been a huge champion of this and of the Hammer Heads program, which opens up these apprenticeship opportunities to young people; I want to thank her for being such an advocate, not just for infrastructure but also just for understanding how this transforms the lives of young people.

Those companies and those unions spend a heck of a lot of money training people to fill those skills for those 800,000 jobs we will be creating over the next 24 months. Right now, they are being created and right now, according to the private sector, they're being created.

But when they bid for our contracts, they're carrying that cost. And those companies that have unions that don't make these investments and those companies that

don't make these investments kind of get a free ride because they don't have all the additional costs of training that those companies, those entrepreneurs and union leaders do who make those investments. We're going to start recognizing that. As a matter of fact, we're going to look at how we maximize the apprenticeships, whether they're pipefitters or carpenters or engineering students or planning students.

For registered apprenticeships and for all the skilled and professional and design trades, we want to maximize the amount of jobs, because we are determined, as a government, that we cannot simply leave a new hospital in the community. We can't just leave a new parkway in Windsor. We can't just twin the highway in Kenora. Those projects have to leave hope behind. Those projects have to leave skills behind. Those projects have to leave jobs behind. They have to leave a generation of younger workers and they have to leave a generation of middle-aged workers who have lost their jobs and who are trying to get the skills to get back into the economy, or to grow an economy, to buy a house, to buy boots, to buy pants, to buy a car, to get a Metropass or a bus pass, to do all the things that rebuild our economy. We must leave skills, hopes and economic security behind when we do infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, this builds on the legacy of our college programs. It builds on the legacy of our apprenticeships, and our unions are delivering 70% completion rates, the best completion rates I know of. Our colleges are doing excellent work. Our businesses are doing excellent work. We are rebuilding Ontario road by road, brick by brick, job by job. No one else I can find has 170% job recovery. There is no other regional economy right now I can find in the world that is projecting, by its private sector, 800,000 skilled jobs. So how do we use our infrastructure spending, our college and university system and all the things that we are building to build those skilled jobs, to make sure the skills are there so those jobs are not unfilled? Because there would be nothing more embarrassing for us in Ontario than having the success of creating 800,000 jobs and then not being able to fill them. It means doing things differently.

0920

My colleague the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities has shown remarkable leadership with the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment, and the Premier and the Minister of Finance.

We have this remarkable partnership now with Bombardier at Downsview, where we're putting a subway. Why are we putting a subway there? Because our aerospace cluster is there. York University is there. We're going to put a subway there, but we're also putting a college in the workplace. They have to replace 5,000 workers. The average age of their workforce at Bombardier is 56—my age, Mr. Speaker. Maybe in this business—my friend Monte Kwinter inspires me; my friend Hazel McCallion inspires me—we have a little more longevity. But if you're an aerospace engineer, maybe you don't want to be an aerospace engineer at 94. We also have to

add 3,000 people to that workforce, because the Q400 aircraft and the new Bombardier aircraft are just taking off—literally taking off, the pun fully intended.

So integrating and using the infrastructure we build in our colleges, moving that into the workplace, putting our subway there, getting the private sector to retrain its workforce keeps those Bombardier jobs here. That is the kind of thing we know, economically, retains manufacturing jobs. Also, Bombardier is a beehive of activity because there are hundreds of small, specialized companies—in green fuels, in information, in on-board software systems—that supply that company.

As a matter of fact, the relationship between infrastructure and a high-growth economy is quite remarkable. What we know is that 5% of our businesses—just think about this, to understand how much the economy has changed: 5% of our businesses are generating 50% of our jobs. Just think about that: 5% of our businesses generating 50% of our jobs, 480,000 jobs. Some 240,000 of those jobs in the last couple of years have come from companies that are less than five years old, mostly being started by young people off platforms like the Digital Media Zone at Ryerson or VeloCity at the University of Waterloo, where students graduate not just with their degrees, but they graduate with their incorporation papers in their other hand, starting their company—because we now have financiers who make capital available to students in their undergraduate years, starting their companies. Xtreme Labs did not exist five years ago; my friend Sunil started it. The platforms they work on—they now have 1,200 employees in my constituency, 1,200 employees. Average age, 26; average income, \$80,000 a year. Five years ago, the company didn't exist. Sunil hasn't even had his 30th birthday yet. This is the new economy. These are the people—5%. They could be in Cochrane; they could be in Thunder Bay; they could be in Domtar. As my friend Thomas Friedman often writes in the *New York Times*, this is the new economy. You can plug and play anywhere. But it's challenging, because the manufacturing economy, while it is doing extraordinarily well, is not employing the people it used to. We can't quite get our head around that, about why the manufacturing economy is doing well but seems to be employing fewer people.

I want to tell you a very brief story, because I think there's a need for a higher level of economic literacy—and I'm directing this comment particularly at the official opposition, who I hope will respond to it. Because I'm confused by their economic policy—not confused in the sense that I don't know what I'm doing, but confused in that I don't understand the rationale behind it. In 1983 and 1984, in Pittsburgh, something terrible happened in 24 months. When we think of Pittsburgh, what do we think about?

Mr. John O'Toole: Steel.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Steel, right? We all think about Pittsburgh as steel, a city of 600,000 people. There were 104 steel mills in January 1983, 104 steel mills in Allegheny county. By December 1984, do you know how many steel mills there were in Pittsburgh?

Hon. Michael Chan: None.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Zero. My friend Michael Chan, the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Sport, heritage, Pan Am Games and a whole bunch of other exciting stuff, was right. But you know, what's interesting—I mean, just think about that: In less than two years, 104 of 104 steel mills closed. Because they couldn't get the iron ore? No. Because their energy prices were high, which they were? No. Essentially, the globalization of the economy made Pittsburgh a place where you could no longer make steel competitively. The emerging state capitalist countries—Brazil, China, Singapore—were all emerging with state-financed capitalism that really challenged the western European and North American economy.

So what's happening today? What's the steel industry like in Pittsburgh today, after it lost everything and for 15 years had no steel production? Would you believe that Pittsburgh today produces more steel than it ever has in its history? Just think about that: Pittsburgh today produces more steel than it ever has in its history. How many steel plants do you think there are in Pittsburgh today? Anyone want to take a guess? This is participatory debate, if you want to join in. There are two. Those two steel mills look more like boutique hotels. They don't have big, ugly smokestacks. They make more steel than the 104 steel mills used to make in the early 1980s. When those 104 steel mills closed, 143,000 people lost their jobs. So if you're an MPP from Windsor or from Hamilton or for an industrial community, or Sault Ste. Marie, go to Pittsburgh. If you're one of those politicians thinking that the road back to economic recovery and jobs can be done by manufacturing alone, go to Pittsburgh, because you know how many people are employed making more steel than Pittsburgh ever made in even the highest, dirtiest days of its steel industry? Do you know how many people make steel in Pittsburgh, Mr. Speaker? Anyone want to take a guess?

Mr. John O'Toole: Seventy-five?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You're very close; it's 300. Is that important? Yes. Because steel is still the biggest source of GDP and economic growth for Pittsburgh. As Mayor Tom Murphy, who's a dear friend of mine and who just retired from politics down there—a good Democrat—said, "Steel is our most important export. It is incredible for our GDP. It is essential to my city, which is now only 300,000 people, but it is not a big job creator anymore. And the tool and die and the spinoffs—critically important." But he says, "We no longer look to steel to be our big employer, because if we still," as he put it, "if we needed 143,000 people to make that much steel, we still wouldn't have a steel industry."

And the challenge—when General Electric came back with its appliance industry to Wisconsin—it used to employ 40,000 people and now employs 4,000—they were incredibly disappointed. They produce more appliances in Wisconsin now than ever before but they do it with less than 10%.

My family, as you know, are miners in Sudbury. That's where most of my folks are. My uncles all went

down in the mines. When I was a kid in Sudbury, 10,000 people worked at what is now Vale Inco. Today, 200 go underground and 2,000 people work at Inco there. Most of them work on computers; they don't go down. All my uncles died in their 50s of respiratory illnesses.

This new industrial resource economy is highly robotic—highly. So why are we so much more successful than almost every state and every other province? I want to go back to those 5% of companies, because the manufacturing recovery has recovered those other jobs. The other half are service industries. They're public sector jobs. They're our teachers. There are manufacturing—15,000 more jobs since the recession in the auto sector. But you go to UOIT—and to my friend the MPP from Durham: great school. It's one of the good things your party did when it was in power. You go to UOIT and you learn automotive robotics and software, Mr. Speaker, and then you go and work at General Motors. You do not drop out of high school in grade 10 to get a job on the GM line, because those thousands of jobs that many of our friends who are now 45 and 50 and for whom those jobs were there aren't there. Go and talk to General Motors.

Do you remember the bailout, Mr. Speaker? This government made an investment in private sector infrastructure. We bailed out Chrysler and GM. And what did they do?

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Well, you didn't learn anything, then, my friend from Durham, because what did they do with their money?

Mr. John O'Toole: They didn't pay off their pension deficit, that's for sure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: What did they do with their money?

Mr. John O'Toole: They basically—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister, I would ask you to speak through the Speaker and not get into dialogue.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm provoking my friend.

What they did with their money, Mr. Speaker, was quite interesting. They modernized their plants. Why did Ford not need a bailout? Because Ford had already modernized its infrastructure. Ford did and survived the 2008 recession because it modernized its industrial infrastructure.

It's interesting now, because the challenge for Arcelor-Mittal, which now has a plant in Brazil that actually generates energy—as you know, ArcelorMittal in Hamilton is our largest industrial steel user.

So to do that, we have to think about energy infrastructure in a new way. We have to build in an innovation economy, and those high-growth companies mostly being run by new Canadians, disproportionately, South Asian new Canadians and middle-aged women in their forties, fifties and sixties who got tired of the glass ceiling and the bureaucracies of the large private sector companies, who quit, created their own companies and sell their services back to those companies at twice the pay—

running their own company and busting the patriarchy of male-dominated hierarchies. Bravo. Women are some of our biggest entrepreneurs, creating a lot of those jobs.

0930

So how do we ensure that those jobs are not just concentrated—as they are in too many countries—in the big cities? How do we make sure that Oshawa diversifies? How do we make sure that Cornwall, Dryden, Kapuskasing, Chatham and Echo Bay—because if you can plug and play in this new easily distributed community, you need all kinds of infrastructure. You need water and sewer systems that demonstrate Zenon technology from Hamilton and demonstrate Trojan's technology from London, that you can go into our water treatment plants and see the very best of Canadian technology at work.

One of the things this bill does is it builds the kind of cultural infrastructure to give Sudbury the quality of life that it needs to maintain a culturally diverse and exciting community, so that Sudbury doesn't have just great roads and sewers and great infrastructure and good highways, but we have excellent cultural infrastructure. We're going to hire architects and designers to design our roads so that when there's a new bridge in Kenora, it's a spectacular new bridge. We're going to get a spectacular new bridge in Windsor to go with the spectacular new parkway. We're now going to involve designers and architects in that, because that's important.

But, Mr. Speaker, I kind of love this House. I think it's a huge privilege to be a parliamentarian, and, from all three parties, I have lots of friends in this House, and I really enjoy them. Many of them are here today. We were talking about Herb Epp and about how wonderful it is when we actually just get to share ideas. I've often said my favourite hours in this House are Thursday afternoons, because we all get to be friends. Party labels fall away, and we can actually talk about bills that each of us have passions for.

I hope that you will see this bill as a non-partisan piece; I hope that every member will feel comfortable bringing their ideas to that. As we go to committee with this, I think there's a good platform. I think this bill is a good bill; I think it can be a better bill.

We have the Thunder Bay Consolidated Courthouse. Just go and see: That is one of the greenest buildings. It's an amazing piece of infrastructure.

We put a law school into Thunder Bay so that now legal work is going to happen in the north. Northerners don't have to come south when we open up the Ring of Fire, when we do the twinning of the highways. All that legal work and expertise in resource management can now be trained there.

Fanshawe College's Centre for Digital and Performing Arts provides one of the most sophisticated digital platforms in the world in London—Fanshawe. I know the member there is a champion of it, and the previous member. This is really exciting stuff. People in London, which has a great arts and cultural scene, are now going to be able to take that digital into the virtual economy. Again, it will help accelerate—we want those 5% of businesses to be 10%, and we want them all across Ontario.

The Niagara Health System's new St. Catharines hospital site is creating a cluster to support an aging population and keep seniors working well.

The Union shed revitalization, where we brought architects and engineers—which will now be a requirement on those major projects, not just serendipitous luck—go and see it. It is a marvel. The busiest transportation hub in North America, soon to be connected with the Union Pearson Express, soon to have our major transit hub down there for buses and GO: This is going to be one of the great welcoming portals. When you arrive at Union Station now, you're going to know that you're in a fabulous province. This is our biggest gateway to the entire transportation network that connects the entire province. It is spectacularly beautiful.

I want to just close up, Mr. Speaker, with—I have a little more I want to say about this. I'm sorry. I worked hard for this bill. You're not cutting me off. Because I want to talk about something that, from when I lived in Toronto in the 1970s and 1980s to today, I've always been in awe of, and it's three gentlemen who, if I could, I would dedicate this bill to. They're three Ontarians who I think were geniuses, and they came from three different professions: R.C. Harris who, 100 years ago, actually in late 1912, became the public works commissioner in the city of Toronto. You'll know the R.C. Harris water treatment plant. If you haven't seen it, when they have Doors Open, go and see it. It's actually open to the public and you can see all the technology, because when they built it after the Great War, they wanted to showcase the technology there. We haven't done that since 1945 when we opened that plant.

Every single new type of water technology—you should be able to go in. We should bring people from China, from Brazil, from Abu Dhabi, so they can see our best technologies. We are the world leaders. We have our agency WaterTAP, which uses infrastructure investments to provoke new investment. We make better water membranes, ultraviolet light treatment. We are the world's leaders in clean water technologies, but we don't have a place to showcase it. You can go to Singapore and see Ontario trilliums all over the new water plant, because their entire integrated water-sewer treatment plant is done with Canadian technology; we use Singapore to sell our Canadian technology and companies into Asian markets. We need to do the same here.

This bill will put that kind of innovation both in our procurement policies and that. But R.C. Harris did that in 1945. We didn't do it since. This year is the 100th anniversary—the 100th anniversary—of a referendum that finally passed after several tries to build what I think is the most powerful symbol of what this bill will do and why this bill is the equivalent of Bill Davis's college bill. It is the infrastructure equivalent. The Prince Edward Viaduct—does anyone know where the Prince Edward Viaduct is? We don't often call it that; it was actually renamed afterward. It is known as the Bloor viaduct, if you like that. It was R.C. Harris's dream.

He had been public works commissioner in the city for less than 12 months, the referendum passes, and he

decides to do something that's never been done before. He says, "We're now going to start requiring architects to be involved in building public works." So he puts out an RFP, and Edmund Burke—not the philosopher, but the great Canadian architect who built what we now call the Bay, the old Simpsons store, which introduced curtain walls for the first time in Canada; a very innovative guy—got hired; an engineer. I want to say to the engineers who feel slighted—I think some of them do, because we didn't put engineers in big headlines in this—we love engineers. You're written into more pieces of legislation than any other profession, save doctors. So to my friends at PEO, know that you are being celebrated in this Legislature.

There was a guy named Thomas Taylor, another great Ontarian. The two of them came together to build what they wanted to be the definitive 20th-century project. They were concerned about creating value and making it beautiful. So they put together the idea of putting in a subway platform. Remember, this is 1913. There were no subways in Toronto; there weren't any subways in Canada. This was the kind of vision that John A. Macdonald had when he built a railroad across wild prairies, through mountains to a fishing village, to build a nation on it. This was the kind of vision that built this country.

It wasn't until 1966 that the subway tracks finally got laid on that platform that had been waiting 50 years for the train to arrive. That kind of vision, of integrated transportation planning, thinking about the best way to move people along the Danforth—eventually it was going to be rapid transit, so let's plan for it and build the infrastructure anticipating it. Let's plan our roads with our subway and public transit system. That's what this bill does. Let's actually get architects and designers so that we're planning to design and engineer the very best and bring professions together to create value. Let's integrate land use planning and look at value, because the entire expansion of Toronto on the other side of the Don Valley only happened after that. The tax base of Toronto started growing exponentially as a result of that piece of infrastructure. Because it was so well planned, it created a whole new amount of land available at low cost for massive expansion into Riverdale and some of the most beautiful neighbourhoods, Greektown, and a cultural dynasty that is part of the brand and part of our quality of life.

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You know, Mr. Speaker, there are going to be people who will say, "This is ridiculous. If you put architects there, you're going to drive up costs." When I was mayor of a city to the west of this province, we introduced something very similar. We started requiring a value-based rather than a cost-management approach. The tax base of Winnipeg was starting to grow by 5% per year. The vacancy rate in downtown Winnipeg in the historic centre was over 60%. At the end of this and a series of fiscal reform policies, the vacancy rate was about 8%. The tax base had grown exponentially. The mill rate in that city dropped by 11%. Taxes were being cut by 2% per year,

and the actual amount of money the government had was growing rapidly, because we were building the tax base based on infrastructure investments, and we were able to reduce the tax burden.

So this may not sound like fiscal policy, but we really do believe—as do the Conservatives in the UK, who have reversed themselves and are now investing in this—that infrastructure creates jobs, improves our quality of life and eliminates the \$6 billion to \$11 billion that we're paying for in lost economic productivity from congestion. And properly planned—based on evidence, transparent and public—it will actually expand our tax base growth for both our municipalities and provinces.

I know it's hard to imagine in Toronto that you could actually see 2% annual tax cuts. If you ran for mayor today and said, "I'm going to promise to cut taxes by 2%," they would think you were some right-wing loony-tune of some sort. But that has actually happened in cities that have actually done that. If you look at London first and the partnerships in London, these infrastructure investments are contributing to higher property values and increased density.

We have half the construction cranes right now in North America hard at work in the GTHA and other parts of Ontario. So we now have to build the infrastructure to keep up with the 49 towers that are going up. That means that if we're not actually doing that, we will have worse congestion.

Toronto is such a successful region. It's going to grow between now and 2031 from six million to nine million people; that's a 50% increase. In the last 10 years, Toronto and Ontario have been so successful that we have added 32 million square feet of office space to the greater Toronto area alone. To give you an idea of the scale of that, Calgary only has 32 million square feet of office space. If you think Alberta's doing well, well, this province has added the equivalent amount of the entire commercial office space in Calgary—added that—to the Toronto economy in the last 10 years alone.

We are growing and booming, and to keep that job creation and that investment growing, we have to spread it across. Not all boats are rising equally. Our attention is in Windsor, in Thunder Bay, in Cornwall, in Ottawa and in small, rural communities with our rural infrastructure programs, which are critical because we can't simply have a recovery in one part of the economy.

I will wrap up with that. I look forward to an engaged debate and the ideas of our friends in the opposition parties. I thank you for your patience, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the privilege of being able to introduce the debate on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to respond to the Minister of Infrastructure this morning in his leadoff remarks on Bill 141. Later on, through you, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to seek unanimous consent to stand down our critic's lead, Mr. Klees's lead, this morning with the privilege and at the leisure of the House. I'll seek that later.

But many of the comments the minister said this morning are quite visionary and I would say very thoughtful and provocative—he oftentimes is provocative. Really, when talking with our critic—we caucused this bill this week—we could see light in this and vision, and much of it would appear to have been almost stolen from some of our white papers, Paths to Prosperity. I'm not trying to create conflict here in any way, but imitation is the finest form of being flattered. Mr. Klees mentioned that, and I probably will use that in my remarks a little later on.

There was quite an interesting article this morning, as well, about the minister. It says, and I'm just reporting here right out of the media: "Glen Murray's High-Occupancy Toll Cookies ... chocolate congestion." It's quite an interesting article about cramming a lot into a little space, crammed full of goodness.

I think in the response when he mentions the job recovery plan—it's a response to the wonderful ideas they've had on Infrastructure Ontario. I might want to challenge a bit of that, but I appreciate his remarks on giving a shout-out to UOIT. UOIT is, of course, the university that was founded when we were in government. I think it was the right thing to do, to transform the auto economy of the Durham region into something quite different. I'll have something to say about that, because you didn't get the job done on the nuclear part.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was rather interesting to listen to what the member had to say. He talked about what infrastructure could do and what infrastructure should do for economies, for communities, for families, but none of that is in Bill 141.

Bill 141 is kind of an easy read—even a pretty light read, I would add. It continues this wrong-headed philosophy that P3s—private-public partnerships—are the way to go. I would tell you that for most of the hospitals that were built under this system, it has not brought anything good. All it does is that the government, our taxes, pay a humongous premium for them to assume risk, but those big conglomerates don't assume any risk whatsoever. They pass it on to the little guys who live in Ontario. The multinationals get the 30% to 40% premium for assuming risk, but they don't take any of the risk. The system is set up so that they will subcontract and subcontract, and it's the little guy at the end that takes all the risk. If, God forbid, it flops in a major way, it's still the taxpayers who are on the hook.

This is still a philosophy that is supported by this bill. If you look at the opportunities in the north for growing our communities through infrastructure projects, most of those projects are still bundled in a way that, rather than building a bridge in Nickel Belt, you have to build 10 bridges through the north. Nobody in Nickel Belt is able to bid on those jobs, but this is what Bill 141 will continue to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. I would

like to compliment him, first of all, for introducing this bill and also for his speech.

I believe that this bill has a lot of key components that will be very important for the future of Ontario—first of all, the guiding principles it will have to take into consideration. Those include the demographics, the economic trends, advancing the use of new technologies, as the minister mentioned. There is also protecting the environment and considering the impacts of severe weather. I think, for example, of the flooding we had in Toronto and Mississauga on July 8 and the difference a bill such as this could have made to all the infrastructure, all the homes that were damaged during that flooding. It will consider also the life cycle cost of the project, which is very important, especially for our municipalities, and maximizing the tax base growth.

It will also consider skills training and apprenticeship. I believe that's a very important piece of the bill, because it would employ apprentices in the construction and maintenance of the projects. As the minister mentioned, I've been a great supporter of the Hammer Heads program that has been created by the Central Ontario Building Trades. For those who don't know, this is a skills and employment program within the construction industry that offers apprenticeship career opportunities to youth from underserved neighbourhoods in our communities. I represent some of those neighbourhoods. This is making a great difference in the lives of kids who would not have had this opportunity if it were not for programs such as Hammer Heads.

There are also community benefits agreements.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rod Jackson: I'd like to thank the minister for his comments. They're certainly well taken. We certainly do have a lot of infrastructure issues throughout Ontario and indeed throughout the country, I think. It's recognized that many municipalities, especially my own—I know that in Barrie there's a huge infrastructure deficit that needs to be addressed, and in a sustainable way, too.

0950

I know that as a city councillor in Barrie, we struggled quite often with making sure our infrastructure kept up with the growth of that city. As many of you in this House know, the city of Barrie has grown very rapidly and had some very extreme challenges with its infrastructure, and has done some very unique things, actually, where infrastructure is concerned, as far as prioritizing what infrastructure needs to be fixed in order of importance, not necessarily in order of its visual state.

Also, we have a lot of issues with transportation locally, whether it's the 400 and interchanges that need to be addressed—and are being addressed, albeit I think a little too slowly in many cases—but also with local transportation infrastructure with our bus routes and even our GO train, which has had increased service over the years. Actually, we're quite happy to see some increased summer service that I think shows that there is the capacity in the city for GO to expand further in the future and get more people off the road.

The one thing, though, that I would stress and hope is addressed in a wholesome way eventually—right now, it's kind of addressed in nebulous ways, if I can put it that way—is sustainable funding for municipalities. A lot of the time, it's really difficult for municipalities to have a long-term plan for their infrastructure because they really don't know what's coming from year to year or how the funding is going to happen. It changes from time to time, from year to year, and it really puts cities like Barrie in a very difficult position as far as creating their budgets, where they do have a significant infrastructure deficit going forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister, you have two minutes.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thanks very much to all my colleagues who did that.

Yes, the employment piece is extremely important. Helmets to Hardhats and those programs are particularly critical.

My friend from Nickel Belt raises that point: We are not assuming that everything is going to be AFP. As a matter of fact, we are now evaluating projects in the north. In the north, if you're doing large highways, which involve multiple components, sometimes AFP makes sense, other times it doesn't. So we're going through this lens, and this bill I think will allow us to have a more sophisticated and critical look at AFPs, about where they work and where they don't. I think we don't want to take an ideological position for or against them but look at practical evidence. So I take your point and will assure you that those concerns are registered.

I want to also thank my friend from Durham. I think I agree with him on the training to do that. My mother always said to me that if you don't worry about who gets credit for things, a lot more gets done, so I'm quite happy to share the ideas and the credit on that.

My friend from Barrie makes a very good point, because it's actually interesting. Mayor Lehman and the council that he was part of I think have done a very good job. They've increased their transit capacity by 30%, working with us and the province. We've enhanced GO services, as the member for Barrie pointed out, and I know he's been a champion of that. That's important. Some 30% of people who live in Barrie work in Barrie. Mayor Lehman and I are trying to integrate transportation and land use and economic planning because the best way to reduce infrastructure costs is proximity, not connectivity. So the more people who live and work and play in Barrie—if we could get that up to 60% and increase Barrie's economic base, that's a lot better investment than widening the 400 highway wider and wider until it looks like the 401. So part of the strategy is to actually have proximity and complete communities where people can live, work and play, and don't need to commute at all, which is why planning is so important.

Mr. Speaker, and to all my colleagues, thank you. I hope there will be a spirit of non-partisanship in improving this bill, and I look forward to their ideas and their partnerships.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. John O'Toole: First, Speaker, I'd like to seek unanimous consent to stand down the one-hour lead by our critic on this file, Mr. Klees.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Durham has requested unanimous consent to stand down their lead. Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm privileged to be here this morning and to respond to the minister in two minutes but also have a little longer to dwell on it.

I should say this: that in the spirit of co-operation—and he had a couple of zingers during his remarks. So I'll start with the zingers and finish off on a more harmonious note. The one is, I think the word “sustainability” is used frequently. Now, my interpretation of sustainability, and the member from Barrie mentioned it as well, is that sustainability, in its simplest form, is enough for everyone forever. That's what sustainability is: enough for everyone forever. This means we have to change the rules of how things are shared, and if you look at Ontario or Canada, in the context of the world, with 32 million or whatever people—cities in China are larger. If you look at the western hemisphere, we're all pretty well off really, to the greatest extent, even South America, Central America, Mexico's an emergent economy, Brazil etc.—the US struggles—Ontario and Canada.

And there are less than a billion people in the western hemisphere. There are more people in India than all of the western hemisphere. We all have two cellphones, two cars, a home, a cottage—I'm generalizing, of course. We're pretty well off. We use a lot more energy per capita; we use a lot more everything per capita. There may be some reasons, weather-wise and all that kind of stuff—that's the good way to put things into context in a globalized sense.

When you look at books talking in the visionary terms that Minister Murray speaks of, it's important to put the context around these things, how we share the resources of the world, because there's a finite amount of stuff. If you look at Friedman's book on globalization, really, there are three themes in it: the world is hot—global warming; flat—digitalization; and crowded—seven billion people with not enough to eat, and 20% of them don't have enough every day. So that's the context.

When we look at ourselves, we look within the sectors of the economy: We look at the public sector, the private sector and the business sector. This is my second zinger, and it is meant in humorous terms, because you'd say it if you were here: In Ontario, my experience has been over the last 10 years—how do you create a small business? You start with a large one and keep taxing it and hacking away at it until it no longer exists.

Basically, I worked for 31 years with General Motors, and prior to that, I worked with IBM. I saw the whole industry change, and he's right. He's saying that whether it's Pittsburgh or even, for that matter, Oshawa—when I was there, I at one time was a computer guy and then I

was in personnel, labour relations, and then in salary and bonus administration, and then eventually manager of an area of a plant. At that time, I think there were 22,000 employees. Now we're looking forward to the 2016 agreement, when we end up with this agreement of the 2008 bailout, and whether or not General Motors will be in Canada. In fact, some of the information that I hear now is that the new Camaro and some of the newer vehicles could be in Mexico or South America and even Michigan, because Michigan now is fighting the consequences of a fractured Detroit economy.

Some of those factors are part of that globalization issue—where is it cheaper to make stuff?—which is an unfortunate challenge. Even if I look at the great success stories of Canada in the recent past, BlackBerry—Research In Motion—I remember when the teachers' pension fund had a huge chunk of that, plus I remember they had a big chunk of Nortel, and if they're not quickly and nimbly moving out of those technology sectors that are disappearing, where are we in this kind of sustainable economy inventing the future?

Now, when I look at how work is created today—and you said it—it's plug and play. I agree 100%. I have five children. Three of them work in Hong Kong, England and the Isle of Man. That's the future. When I look at these pages—the world is digitally connected. The best place to do banking and commerce—my son-in-law is a securities lawyer—is London. The time zones all work, whether you're working with Brazil, Hong Kong or Russia. That's the central place where they can connect 24/7, because of the Greenwich mean time, I think. That's what he has told me, anyway, and actually his three major clients are Russia, Brazil and India. I'm not sure who does what, but he works from home. It's all online. He's doing a couple of things, building contracts with various players, and also the financing rules.

But that's the new economy we're really talking about, which raises the question, relevant to Bill 141, of what kind of infrastructure we need. We need the digital infrastructure, and rural Ontario is struggling now with connectivity.

Even now, in my riding, for instance, the smart meter—it's not a slam on Minister Chiarelli, but in my riding we've gone universally with the smart meters, which aren't smart, by the way. They're time-of-use meters. With a smart meter—I have one—I can phone my cottage and turn on the hot tub. They're connected to the circuit.

1000

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Oh, you have a hot tub at your cottage.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, I'm not kidding. You can turn on stuff from your phone. Just phone a number, put in a code, and it turns it on. That's a smart meter.

This time-of-use meter was the way they doubled the price, but also they're doing the billing at the time of consumption, which is important. What they're trying to do is flatten out the demand curve. The demand curve in electricity is very high in the mornings, flattens out to

around 15,000 megawatts, and goes very high in the evening. They're trying to make it around 18,000 megawatts so that they don't need to have all these peaking plants; just run it all flatline on nuclear, I hope.

The reason I say this: In the rural parts of Ontario, where they don't have good connectivity and we're using a smart meter and the signal is not too strong, what time did they actually use the electrons? They're getting a blended bill. They don't know whether it's blended at the five-cent rate or the 10-cent rate. I have written to the minister on it. It's not a matter of finger-pointing; it's the matter that one size does not fit all.

When you're looking at infrastructure and you're looking in Toronto and the GTA congestion, it's tragic and it's a drag on the economy. We all get that. But there are other solutions that needed to be put. And I would say that, a good example—and I'm in London frequently. Hong Kong has a marvellous transit system. If you want to get to the best jewellery stores, the best restaurants, you have to take the subway. The subway is all developed this way. The subway is the third dimension of development. We've got on-the-ground, we've got up-in-the-air and now we've got under-the-ground. It's three-dimensional development. Underground in Hong Kong is incredible.

Here's another example of where we went wrong. The Presto card, which should be examined by the public accounts committee, under Metrolinx, I suppose, is wildly overbudget and completely uninteractive. I understand it was quite a sluggish mess to get the TTC to sign on to it in the first place about the smart card. I have a Presto card. I do use transit. I come to work on the GO train. Here's the issue: Over there, they have a cash card. You can buy a coffee, a newspaper, take a taxi, take the ferry and go on the subway, all with the same card. You can load that card at Mac's Milk. All the receipts somehow get transferred to my bill and somebody that was charged gets paid for providing the service, whether it's the paper or the bus or the taxi. It's all handled seamlessly. Now we've got the Presto card, which is non-interactive. Do you understand? You have to line up in some queue, or the system is down so you can't load it.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It has that capacity.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's not. Anyway, we could go off-line. I use it and I'm frustrated with it, because sometimes I want to charge the card. I've got it set up now that it automatically flips \$50 a week into the card, so I don't have to line up anymore. But when the system goes down and stuff like that—and I do have the app on my phone, which was developed by Ryerson.

I know that the new economy is here. I just wonder, out loud here—this isn't in any white paper, but I'm talking to a visionary, and I mean that quite sincerely—I would wonder why anyone in law or banking would be coming to Toronto to work. Why?

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, why? The future—the minister knows this. What major companies are doing today—and I know this personally. Rather than having the big

headquarters where they're paying \$50,000 in taxes, plus the utilities and all the stuff, they call it "hotelling." They rent a floor in a hotel. They write it all off. There's no capital tied up. It's all operating. Mondays, they have the advertising group. Accounts payable are on Tuesday; accounts receivable on Wednesday. The rest of them are plugged and played, have a card with a smart card in it, and they can log on to secure networks and do whatever it is, marketing or planning or product development or whatever they're doing, and no capital or real estate are tied up. They come together for socializing reasons, really, and team-building, as opposed to working in compact quarters, being frustrated for two hours of commuting time saying, "What is going on here?"

Today we have the OSSTF here, which is wonderful. My wife is a retired teacher. My daughter is a high school vice-principal in England—the one I mentioned—and was educated here, of course, at Western and at Lakehead University. So I'm just saying that how we deliver education is going to change profoundly. It isn't about the answer today—Columbus sailed the ocean blue; it's not about that. It's learning how to get the information. Where is the data? Google it or how—it's totally different.

I'm over 70, so it's totally different. When I was hired by IBM, it was all unit record. There was no digital format. It was all mechanical. Binary was the system that—everything was a switch: yes or no. It still works that way today. We just don't see the background behind some of the algorithms that drive the things that happen in front of us on the screen. But everything's going to be changed by it. As I said, why would somebody working at a high level in banking or finance—think about it—be coming to a cubicle in Toronto, spending two hours getting there, two hours getting home, and maybe the system could be down or whatever? So I think that will be done differently.

I think Hansard here could easily be transcribed by voice recognition, and it probably is. They're working on it in Ottawa. I know that. My son's a federal member and tells me this is what they're doing. Other parts of the country do it differently.

Every single thing we do will be renewed. I think some of the futurists talked about it being the third wave or the fourth wave or whatever, but I think we are moving there, and we need to build the infrastructure that's required.

Now, I look at transit. Transit's important. Anyone who talks against it is not thinking about it. How we implement it is what's wrong. To get the gas money provincially—not federally—you had to actually have buses. So everybody's got all these buses running around with nobody in them most of the time. In my riding, now we've got double-decker buses on the—what do they call it?—the Pulse system, and the minister's here. In some respects, it works.

Now, if you're going to run something in the public sector seven days a week, 24 hours a day, every job takes five people. That's the numeracy around 24/7 jobs. For

every job, it takes five people. Let's take if we're going to implement 24/7 fire protection in every community in Ontario—completely unsustainable in the current way we do it, because the response legislation and regulations say there has to be five people on the truck to make it work right. Now, how are they going to pay for that in Norwood or Hastings where they have no industry? Their tax base is pretty much residential tax.

I just moved about three years ago. My taxes were \$7,500. I was living in the country. I had a well and septic. I paid for it. I didn't pay for the pipe coming up to my house. My taxes were \$7,500. Holy smokes. I said, "The way it's going—well, it's only going up by the cost of a coffee a day." Well, it turns out a coffee is five bucks a day; times 300 days—do the numbers. So it's only going up by the price of a coffee a day.

That's overly simplistic, because if you look at the math behind that, I figured my tax is going to be \$10,000 within six years. Here's what I figured: It was soon going to cost me \$1,000 a month to own my own house. That's not paying heat and hydro and all that kind of stuff—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The hot tub.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, that's why I have a smart meter: You can turn it off.

I only say that as examples of trying to do things the way we've done them is probably the wrong solution.

Now, I'm going to put a couple things more on track here. There's a couple of very interesting reports. I know the minister's big on Roger Martin's book. It's worth a read. He's, I think, the dean of the Rotman school of business, Martin Prosperity Institute at Rotman's. This has pretty informative graphs, where we are on GDP per capita.

I would say the Canada-EU free trade agreement is very important. I think there will be sectors that will have to be restructured or—we don't want people to be out of work, that's for sure. I'm not sure what the jobs would be.

Remember how I started this: Enough for everyone forever. That's sustainability. It's important that we understand that. You can't have some people making \$100,000, and then a big gap, and then people making \$20,000. What's that about? They can't even afford the taxes on their house, the transit, the electricity—that's the biggest single complaint we get today. In fact, that's one of the reports I want to make reference to. It's important for all members to get it. We all got it; read it.

The other one is a report for a call to action by the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. I will get into something a little bit more substantive here. These are all generalizations, much in respect to responding to the creativity of the minister himself. He did give a shout-out to UOIT, University of Ontario Institute of Technology. That university was set up with a different governing structure originally. It has since gone back.

I want to shout out—Tim McTiernan is the president of the university: a great person, a wonderfully respected academic and a very thoughtful person. He was dean of innovation at the University of Toronto before he came—

a very appropriate partner and leader in the community. We look to the academic institutions to be the visionaries for building these new economies we keep referring to. That's short term, by the way, to the pages here.

I worked for a company for 30 years. That's all finished. I'm sorry. When that collapsed, so did the whole idea of pensions, when companies don't want the liability. So today, the jobs of the future will be—and there's been books written: *People Without Jobs*, *Jobs Without People*, Miner's book—a very important book, too.

What I find interesting there is that most of the jobs—companies themselves, BlackBerry, Research In Motion, whatever, won't last beyond 10 years. The technology will supersede them. The investor will yank out the value part, sell it off to a larger company, mergers and conglomerates. That's how it's working today. So the jobs will be contract, bonused and tenured somehow.

I guess it's depressing to some extent, but rather than making \$50,000 a year for 10 years, you'll probably make \$500,000 in two years, and you'll really be at the high point of your life, much like athletes today. They get \$10 million, and then they're done work at 30, 33 or something. And I don't even agree with that. It comes back to what I said before, the division of how the tax rules work so that everyone gets to share in it. But I think people, in the execution of their dream and their talents—whether it's music, art, electricity, whatever it is, their real reward is the pride of doing it, like a reward of some sort. Hopefully, it's money and food and things like that. Then, I guess, you look at these rules that I'm talking about, employment and how people are rewarded and how they transfer from various parts of the world to do what it is they do.

I think when you look around in the culture we live in, it's happening without us really having a plan in place because of the diversity. People are demanding different types of food. There are different types of entertainment, different types of religions and events that are new and exciting to them and maybe reminding them of where they came from, and I think that's all great. It enriches our lives as long as we're comfortable with ourselves. I think that's important.

I talked a bit about the Pittsburgh scenario. That's a case where technology can actually change how we do things, and that's an important lesson. We can do more with less. So, when we look at organizations where people say, "I'm going to be here for 30 years. There's a vertical ascent in my pay and benefits, and the last three years qualify me for some kind of factor in my pension. Maybe my productivity's actually going this way," you've got to look at some of these changes. People who are really firing on all cylinders should be rewarded, and I think the best way to do it is bonusing, because it doesn't affect these other legacy entitlements. Bonusing for somebody who's really making an effort, whether it's for the music class, the art class or the football team, I'm all in favour of.

Now it doesn't fit into these—you've got 15 years and here's where you are on the grid, and this is what you

should get, and forget all the other achievements. I think that's poor, and it doesn't incent innovation. Some people may want to take the creativity of their life and apply it to their community, in volunteerism, or in their family. I think how we do things has to change, and some of our entitlements have to change along with it.

I talked, for instance, about the 5% creating 60% of the jobs. He's right on that because, really, a lot of these small businesses are flexible and focused. I met some of the people who have been lobbying this week with the environmental group on Bill 91—very innovative people, inventing filters and other kinds of products that deal with environmental issues or just the air we breathe. They'll make probably a fair amount of money over a short period of time, and they do create jobs. They create training in those jobs by passing on what they're bringing to a product that may exist to improve it and make it better, and the people who may be there for a short period of time may pick up some of those skills or knowledge to be innovators themselves.

I think the one small part that I wanted to get to—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

WEARING OF BUTTONS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Mr. Speaker, I believe you'll find that we have unanimous consent today that all members be permitted to wear these red buttons to remember the victims of violence against women.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The minister has requested unanimous consent. Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to introduce Bonnie Cameron, a teacher at West Hill, and Krista McCormick, an ed assistant. They're in the members' west gallery—great members from the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to introduce a friend of mine with the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation. Martha Marucci has joined us in the west gallery as well. Martha, welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Would you please help me welcome two individuals here who are with the OSSTF: David Mathers from Kingston, and John Fenik from Perth. They're in the east gallery. John is also the mayor of Perth.

While I'm on my feet, on behalf of Bill Mauro, the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan, I would like to

introduce the following OSSTF members from north-western Ontario who are in the members' gallery as well. We have with us Sue Smith, Pat Gibbs, Duane Roen, Paul Caccamo, Maria Gavin, Buzz Grebenc, Carlos Santander-Maturan, Stephen Wilson and Joshua Spencer. Let's welcome them.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to welcome two high school teachers from Centennial Secondary School in Belleville, members of the OSSTF, Keith Sled and Jason Bremner, to the Legislature today.

It's also a pleasure to welcome the family of one of our page captains today, Morgan Beatty, from Tweed, in Prince Edward-Hastings. She has her mother, Leslie Beatty, here as well as her brother, Isaac Beatty, and her grandparents Peter and Donna Sullivan. Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I would like to welcome the family of page Jonathan Yapeter. They're here in the east members' gallery. The parents are Janny Simarno and Yimmy Yapeter.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I would like to introduce Jared Hunt, who teaches at Widdifield Secondary School in North Bay; Glen Hodgson, who teaches at Parry Sound High School; and Kerri Renaud, who is a child development counsellor at Chippewa Secondary School in North Bay. Welcome.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to welcome all of our OSSTF representatives today, who are here to talk about the future of education in the province of Ontario. We welcome them, thank them for their ongoing dialogue with members of the assembly and look forward to talking with them in our respective offices today.

Hon. Mario Sergio: I'm delighted to welcome to Queen's Park the parents of page Ana Chu Wong: her mom, Huang Xing Bo, and her dad, Da Cai Cao. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It gives me great privilege to stand here and introduce the family of page captain Payton Smith, the daughter of my good friend Todd Smith, the member for Prince Edward-Hastings: her mother, Tawnya Smith, sister Reagan Smith, and her grandparents Dennis and Carol Hubble, as well as cousin Alex Calderon. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'd also like to welcome all of the OSSTF members. Thank you for a great breakfast. In particular, I would like to recognize the OSSTF members from Mississauga: Brian Grandy, Mike Bettiol, Mary Arseneau and Katherine Petrick. Welcome.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to introduce Sherry Zarins and Andrea Stevens-Lavigne from the lung association, and three constituents of mine: Judy Legg, Sandra Gibbons and Rose Gibbons. Welcome to the Legislature.

M^{me} France Gélina: J'ai de la grande visite aujourd'hui. C'est M^{me} Ginette Lefebvre qui est venue me voir, de mon comté. Elle fait partie de la Fédération des enseignantes-enseignants des écoles secondaires de l'Ontario. Je lui souhaite la bienvenue ainsi qu'à tous ses collègues.

Hon. Jeff Leal: In the members' east gallery today, we have OSSTF members from the wonderful riding of Peterborough: Gary Fenn, Dave Warda and Janie Kelly.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to welcome OSSTF members from Sarnia–Lambton, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and London: Steven Lynch, Blair Middleton and Hendrikus Bervoets.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I'd like to welcome Ghozal Amin, the sister of my executive assistant, who is here in the east members' gallery.

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to welcome Glen Hodgson here today from the Near North District School Board, an OSSTF rep and teacher from Parry Sound.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome Sherry Freund, Diane Flewwelling and Rob Gascho from OSSTF K-W.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm pleased to welcome the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance here today, with executive director Rylan Kinnon, Thomas Pritchard and Allison Williams from Queen's, President Amir Eftekarpour and Patrick Whelan from Western, Adam Garcia from the University of Waterloo, Roland Erman from Brock University and Chris Fernlund from Trent University in Oshawa.

Mr. John O'Toole: I also would like to welcome and thank the teachers from Durham, members of OSSTF. I spoke with a couple, especially Karen Littlewood, who's from the riding of Durham.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to welcome my dear friend Alexander Brown, who is here today with the OSSTF teachers. I know there are teachers from Hamilton here also, but I haven't seen them in the House yet, and I'm expecting my dear seatmate behind me here to welcome them.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I too want to welcome all the reps from OSSTF, of course, but I'd also like to specifically welcome the students from West Hill Collegiate Institute in Scarborough, my alma mater. We have Kasi James-Aikins, Des-Ree Brown, Robert Ehmke and their teacher, Mike Stevens. These students won an opportunity to have lunch with myself and MPP Hunter from Scarborough East. These students correctly identified the year of my graduation from West Hill Collegiate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would like to welcome representatives from my riding with the OSSTF, Jeffrey Barber and Jared Hunter, who are joining us today.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to extend a warm welcome to the two OSSTF members I met in the London area. Thank you to Blair Middleton and Hendrikus Bervoets for coming to meet with me today.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It gives me great pleasure to welcome Greg Vezina and Kathy Vezina, who are here in the Legislature on behalf of the Mississauga Waterfront Festival to support children's programs. Thank you for being here at Queen's Park.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I want to welcome today two members from OSSTF that I met this morning from my riding: Del Jones, and from Alexandria in north Glenarry, Francinna Collard.

Mr. Paul Miller: I also have members of the OSSTF here: Anthony Marco from Hamilton, Chantal Mancini and Lyla Miklos.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'd like to welcome Paul Elliott, the president of OSSTF, and all the executive members of OSSTF and all the staff members of OSSTF who are here today, and all the education workers from all over the province.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, I'm actually correcting my record. It is Jared Hunt who is here with Jeffrey Barber today.

1040

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would like us to join together in welcoming, from the District School Board of Niagara and the Niagara Peninsula OSSTF, Daniel Peat, Lindsay Chase and John-Paul Cote.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure to introduce a hard-working volunteer and community activist from my riding of Richmond Hill, Gazal Amin, sitting in the members' gallery over there.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you, and good morning, all.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, good morning. On Monday you released a 33% to 50% rate hike on Ontario families and small businesses. When I asked you two days ago what the impact would be from the gas plant scandal in Mississauga and Oakville, you said it hadn't been included yet. Then, after question period you had to retract that statement and correct your record.

What is clear is that this government doesn't know what its energy policy actually means to the people across this province. That's why, earlier today, I put forward a substantial motion asking your government to go back one year to provide us all documents with respect to the gas plant cancellation and its impact on the ratepayer base as it is seen in the long-term energy plan.

The question is simple: Will you co-operate with the committee to ensure that those documents are in our hands within six weeks from today?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sit down, please.

The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the member for Nepean–Carleton is on another wish hunt—W-I-S-H. She's wishing that her imagination comes true. The information that was provided in committee and provided to the Auditor General was quite clear, and she chooses to misconstrue it. "Misconstrue" is not unparliamentary, Mr. Speaker, because I actually looked it up in the dictionary. The word "misconstrue" means "to fail to understand the true or actual meaning." And there are a number of syn-

onyms. The others synonyms are “to misapprehend, to misconstrue, to misinterpret, to mis-know, to misperceive, to misread, to miss, or a mistake.” I would choose the word “mistake,” because the chair of the OPA was at committee. He showed the calculations on the costs, and they actually amount to \$1 to \$2 per year over 20 years, Mr. Speaker. She doesn’t want to admit it. She chooses to misconstrue it and she wants to obfuscate the truth.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I’ll ask the minister to withdraw.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: “Obfuscate the truth”? Yes, I withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is very clear that the minister still doesn’t understand the implications of his long-term energy act and its cost on the rate base in this province. He doesn’t seem to understand that it is a job killer. He doesn’t understand that he actually has to respond to this assembly. That is why we put forward a very sensible, substantive motion to prove to the ratepayers of Ontario that that government stole \$1 billion of their money and misspent it and lied to them.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sit down, please. Order.

I would ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Sometimes the best defence is a good offence, Mr. Speaker, and we’re seeing a tremendous offence here from the critic. What she’s trying to not talk about is the comment of her leader from a couple of days ago. When the Leader of the Opposition was asked if he could promise lower electricity rates, he said, “The answer is no on that.” So I would like to know what your policy is on rates. How high will you let rates go? He’s very, very clearly on the record. And it wasn’t only the Leader of the Opposition—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Member for Simcoe–Grey, come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —it was the leader of the third party who said the same thing.

Mr. Speaker, in the next supplementary I’m going to provide some other useful information for the public.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Listen, the problem is credibility. There’s a massive gap between what this minister says and actual fact. He’s the only Minister of Energy in the province’s history who instead—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

All of you are making it most difficult. I have to hear the question, and I will try to hear the answer. We’re not doing very good for a Thursday.

Question.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks, Speaker. It is very hard to try and speak over the hollers of the Liberal Party because of their credibility—the credibility that they have lost. They have mismanaged \$1.1 billion of people’s money in this province. They chose—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask you to withdraw, again.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

Minister, you don’t know your own energy plan. You don’t know where the \$1.1 billion went. You don’t know where the 300,000 jobs went. You’ve made a mess of this file.

Will you commit to the committee to work with them to ensure we get the facts, not constant contradictions from you and all of your bureaucrats? Will you commit to that today so I have that information in my hands in the next six weeks, yes or no?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

Hon. James J. Bradley: No teacher-bashing today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of the Environment, come to order.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Is this quiet enough?

Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, let’s look at some facts. According to the National Energy Board—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

I can stand here all morning.

Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, according to the National Energy Board, these are the price increases that are projected over the next 20 years for five of the larger provinces, and these are 20-year projections: Alberta, 3.7% per year; BC, 3% per year. That’s 60% over 20 years. In Manitoba, it’s 3.2%; Quebec, 3%. Again, that’s 60% over 20 years. In Saskatchewan, it’s 3.3%. Our long-term energy plan, over 20 years, projects the cost increases to be 2.8%, Mr. Speaker. We’re better than all of those other provinces for the next 20 years.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Acting Premier. Acting Premier, it seems your government is particularly good at writing press releases, but very lacking in following through on what they promise. When you proclaimed, “Thousands of Jobs Coming to Northern Ontario,” from a press release issued on May 9, 2012, with regard to the Ring of Fire, your government failed to deliver. It is clear now that there was no concrete plan to back up this empty promise.

Only weeks ago, you rushed to announce that a development corporation had been established. I don’t

disagree with the concept, although you've been talking about the Ring of Fire for years in throne speeches, budgets and economic updates. So Acting Premier, if you're really serious about creating jobs, shouldn't your government have created this development corporation four years ago?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question because it speaks about something critical to the province of Ontario and, for that matter, to all of Canada. The Ring of Fire and the development of the chromite deposits, one of the largest in the world, is critical to the livelihood of every Canadian, not just Ontarians. We have taken actions, and we have put forward the development corporation as well as put forward a number of stakeholders, partnering with aboriginal and First Nations communities as well as the Métis Nation to ensure that we have access to these chromite deposits. A number of proponents are interested, and we'll continue to work with them. We need all forms of government on board to make this happen. It's one of the reasons the Premier is now in Ottawa.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Final supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Acting Premier, well, so far you've failed miserably on the Ring of Fire.

Acting Premier, your lack of answers on the development corporation is troubling, so it does appear to be yet another empty press release.

And before you go looking for money from the federal government, don't you think you should have a plan of your own? A transportation link for the Ring of Fire is critical to the success of the project and for the First Nation communities in the area. Now that Cliffs has pulled the plug on the Ring of Fire, are you talking with other miners in the region, including Noront, who has their proposed east-west connection?

1050

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, as noted, the province of Ontario has been taking leadership on the issues around developing the Ring of Fire for some years now. We have recognized the importance of this development for all of Canada.

We must make note: The member opposite feels it's not necessary to engage the federal government on this critically important issue. They should be at the table from the start, and they have not—in fact, I find that it's all but passing strange that infrastructure projects on a national level are made in British Columbia—they're made in the Northwest Transmission Line of British Columbia—they're made in the lower Churchill hydro-electric project in Labrador, they're made in Alberta, and they haven't been made in Ontario.

It is critical that we get all orders of government on board. Ontario has been the only level of government that's taken that leadership. We will continue to do so, and it's why so many other proponents are still interested in making that development happen.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Again to the Acting Premier: I didn't say you shouldn't engage the federal government; I said you should have a plan before you engage the—

Interjections.

Mr. Norm Miller: We know the Premier is in Ottawa today meeting with the Prime Minister. We know you like to blame the federal government for your failures, but it's your government that is sending all the wrong signals. Mining companies are suing your government. In fact, one is currently in court for over \$100 million for not fulfilling your duties.

Acting Premier, thousands of potential jobs are at stake. We have cleared the decks here in this Legislature. You have had plenty of time to work on this. When are you going to get your act together and show us your jobs plan for the Ring of Fire?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sit down, please.

Acting Premier?

Hon. Charles Sousa: They have cleared the deck—they've completely cleared themselves of any plan whatsoever.

Over the course of what they've discussed has been a very regressive system. I say to the member, what happened to the progressive nature of the Conservative Party on that side of the House? You have not put forward a positive plan to support jobs in our province.

We will continue to invest in the skills of our people to promote the Ring of Fire. We'll continue to invest in infrastructure projects to enable projects like the Ring of Fire to come to fruition. We're investing while you're suggesting we should make cuts all across the board.

In fact, we know, when we speak to other stakeholders and so forth, they make note of the fact that Ontario is an attractive place to invest in because of the investments that we're making in our future and because of the way we're stimulating economic growth and attracting that investment to Ontario, including the Ring of Fire.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. People in Ontario haven't seen a raise in years, but electricity bills are going up by 40% to pay for growing private power deals. People are telling us that they think the Premier just doesn't get it. Can the Acting Premier explain to people why the Liberal government is more interested in their own political power than in getting power bills under control?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, it's necessary to invest in transmission, it's necessary to invest in our electricity integrity, and it's something that has been neglected and was neglected for many years.

Fortunately, our government has now built well over 20 new power plants in this province. We will continue to invest in infrastructure to support that integrity in our electricity system, to maintain our competitiveness in the future. That requires a mix of all products.

The member opposite makes claims about the pricing. That's exactly why we need to have a long-term solution, provided by the Minister of Energy, to support that competitiveness in the future, which is now as competitive as any of the Great Lakes states and other provinces—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Liberal power schemes have padded the profit margins of private interests and left people and businesses in this province with the bill. Whether it's the \$150 million that people are paying to US hedge funds for the Mississauga gas plant cancellation or the hundreds of millions wasted on the Oakville gas plant, the fact is that private power interests are watching the cheques roll in while people are worried about the bills rolling in.

Can the Acting Premier explain why the Liberal government doesn't seem to care that people are worried about making ends meet?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we've taken a number of steps to support consumers by providing the clean energy benefit. We've taken steps to provide clean energy in this province as a result. The member opposite has yet to show us their plan.

In fact, they have denied any support for nuclear. They are opposed to refurbishment of 50% of our base supply as it stands now. They haven't supported the green energy initiatives to provide for another 30,000 more jobs, not to mention cleaner energy, and they have yet to decide how it is they want to promote and provide for that integrity, because we need to invest in infrastructure and distribution.

They have also opposed those initiatives. Those are critical for our long-term competitiveness and to ensure that both consumers and industry have reliability of power in our province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Minister of Energy said that it's just "a fact of life" that the bills keep going up. The fact of life is that people can't afford the bills that keep going up. Every month when people open their power bill, they're feeling squeezed, and no matter what they do the bills keep getting bigger and bigger. Does the Liberal government not get how important this is to people, or do they simply not care?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The NDP are supporting and promoting the elimination of private investment in our province; that's essential for Ontario and for our competitiveness, and that would create thousands of jobs. They want instead to create an energy superbureaucracy that doesn't encourage investment in Ontario.

In fact, it's Ontario's hybrid system, a mix of both publicly owned and private investments, that help drive our economy and create tens of thousands of jobs for Ontarians. We must always consider the implications of creating jobs in our province. That's what this is about.

Maintaining competitiveness and reliability is essential, not just for consumers, but for industry. In fact, I'll

quote here from the Canadian Automotive Partnership Council: "The highest priority for large industrial consumers is access to reliable electricity infrastructure"—something Ontario didn't have during the brownout era of Mike Harris as well.

ENERGY CONTRACTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Acting Premier. Every time the Liberals had a chance to get the hydro bills under control, they chose to help out private power companies instead. After 90 minutes at the gas plants committee, the Premier couldn't explain why she signed an arbitration agreement that the Auditor General said gave the upper hand to TransCanada. When the Premier had a chance to get a better deal for Ontarians, she chose to be a good Liberal, and not rock the boat.

Does the Liberal government even care that the Premier helped TransCanada get the upper hand over Ontario families?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We have three priorities, and they're equal priorities, in managing the energy system: one is reliability, two is clean, and three is affordable. We spent \$31 billion over 10 years making it reliable, from deficit to surplus, and making it clean, from dirty coal to clean energy.

There are pressures on prices as a result of that \$31 billion of investment, but what we have done to transition is to create some support for the people of Ontario by creating the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit, a 10% discount; the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit, saving qualifying individuals up to \$963 per year, with a maximum of \$1,000 for qualifying seniors; the Northern Ontario Energy Credit; the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program; and the saveONenergy Home Assistance Program.

That party voted for some of these supports for the people of Ontario. They should be ashamed of themselves.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Talking points simply don't help people pay the bills. With this government, instead of asking whether there's a business case for nuclear refurbishments worth millions and millions of dollars—billions, in fact—the government instead has a long-term energy plan that makes it clear that they're blindly charging ahead no matter what the cost is going to be.

Does the Acting Premier even care? Is he even interested in how much this is going to cost Ontarians?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I answered this question yesterday, to her critic. She wants us to tell the public what it's going to cost for the first stage of refurbishment before we've entered into the procurement. We're going to tell all the bidders what our estimate of the cost is—that will totally destroy the competition on the price. It's totally irresponsible. The question is premised on an irresponsible idea to tell the world what the cost is going to be before the procurement. We won't do it that way.

1100

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberal power plan should be called the Liberal political power plan. When the Liberals realized that they could get a good deal on the Oakville plant but it would have to be in the news, or they could spend hundreds of millions more and get it done on the QT, what did they choose? They chose the expensive route that helped them politically. When the Premier wants to make splashy announcements to help their friends in private nuclear—who just happened to throw a \$100,000 fundraiser for them—all of a sudden, Ontario is plunging into a nuclear refurbishment without even knowing what the final price tag is going to be.

Will the Acting Premier admit that the long-term energy plan is in fact just a Liberal political power plan?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Refurbishment is going to generate 25,000 jobs, both from Bruce, which is a private company, and from OPG, which is a public company. We have a hybrid system, and it works extremely well.

But the reality is that the NDP want to create an energy superbureaucracy instead of encouraging competitive investment in the economy in Ontario. The fact is that Ontario has a hybrid system, a mix of both publicly owned generation and private investments, that drives our economy.

Does the leader of the third party know the job creation structure from refurbishment? No. As I asked you on the Thunder Bay question, do you have any evidence? You don't have any evidence and you don't have any research to back up your questions. Please come forward with a plan. Tell us what your plan is.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is for my colleague the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, you have said over and over again that a major part of the job of the Ontario College of Trades is consumer protection. If that is so, can you explain to me why College of Trades enforcement cops would be investigating a complaint on who is responsible to unload pipe off a truck at a construction site?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I appreciate the question from the member opposite, and I also understand the fact that—look, he never supported the College of Trades when we brought it in, and I expect that it's going to be hard to convince him to support it now.

But every time an enforcement officer goes out there to ensure that our tradespeople's professions are being respected, preserved from that underground economy, we can't have this member coming at us every single time.

We know that you don't support the consumer protection that the College of Trades is bringing to ensure that consumers, when they hire somebody to do a job that requires skilled trades, know that that person is qualified.

We know that you don't support the skilled trades sector taking a self-governance approach and governing

themselves. For some reason, you don't think skilled tradespeople are as qualified as the other 44 regulatory bodies across the province. So we know where the member is coming from. We know that at every turn he's going to try to discredit the College of Trades.

They're doing a good job. They're out there doing the job they're supposed to be doing to ensure that we have a vibrant skilled trades sector—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Well, that was quite an answer.

So, Minister, I have a letter here from LIUNA Local 1089 to Bob Onyschuk, director of regulation enforcement, in which he explains that two Ontario College of Trades enforcement officials have nothing better to do than investigate a complaint by UA Local 663 about LIUNA on “whose job it is to unload pipe on the construction site.” Is this for real? Are we kidding here?

Every day, another horror story comes to my office about the Ontario College of Trades. This nonsense does not protect the public or protect the trades in any way, shape or form. It is simply a waste of taxpayers' money, and the membership money is nothing but a bloody tax grab.

How long are you going to stand by and put up with this nonsense? It is out of control, and a moratorium should be placed on further action until after we abolish it, when you have the courage to call an election.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sit down, please.

The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: My question is, how long is the member going to rail against an organization that is cracking down on the underground economy? How long is the member going to rail against an organization that has reduced ratios between apprentices and journey-persons by 14, when his government, when they were in power, did zero reductions in ratios? They're proving their worth, Mr. Speaker.

How long is this member going to rail against the fact that skilled trade workers in this sector have the right, the opportunity and the wisdom to govern themselves a heck of a lot better than that sector was governed when his party was in power? This party continues to attack organized labour. We see it in their right-to-work approach. They're going to reduce wages for everyday, ordinary skills people and all Ontarians, and union jobs.

We take a different approach. We're going to continue to rebuild our economy. We're continuing to support skilled trade workers and we'll continue to support unionized workers who are working really hard—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. New question.

CHRIS MAZZA

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre des Finances.

In December 2011, the Minister of Health asked the Ministry of Finance to conduct a forensic audit at Ornge. We know that this audit found serious financial irregularity and a significant discrepancy in terms of Dr. Mazza's reported and actual pay. The Minister of Health decided not to read the report. Did the Minister of Finance take the time to read the forensic audit of Ornge?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I applaud the Minister of Health for taking the initiative to order this forensic audit the moment she was aware of some of the discretions that were occurring. She immediately did so. She brought forward the forensic audit. Finance went in there, as well as some of the officials, to do the controls, and found some things. And that was sent to the OPP. Those initiatives are under way and we will certainly make every effort to provide as much information as possible to the OPP to enable them with that investigation to go forward. That is what has been taking place.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

M^{me} France G  linas: I'll take it that means that he did not read the report. Yet he is responsible for managing the financial affairs of our province. The minister is also responsible for the sunshine list, and his ministry's audit found that Dr. Mazza's salary was actually three times higher than what was reported on the sunshine list. The serious financial irregularity at Ornge continues to astound us all and it casts a doubt on the integrity of all financial disclosures.

Can the minister tell us why, like the Minister of Health, he did not want to know just how much money Dr. Mazza was making, why he was not interested in learning from the financial wrongdoing of Ornge and why he is not interested in making sure that it never happens again?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, that's the furthest thing from the truth. The moment we found out what was happening at Ornge, the moment that agency went rogue, in effect, we went in and we clamped down. We took corrective action. The Minister of Health completely removed the board. We removed Dr. Mazza from his role and we provided proper oversight.

Subsequently to that, we've actually implemented greater measures of transparency and accountability and oversight on all agencies, and we'll continue to do that. We must make clear that the issue before us was unique, and his actions are the reason why the OPP and the police are investigating. We will continue to be as open and as transparent and provide the proper oversight on all the broader public sector to ensure these initiatives and these issues never happen again.

TUITION FEES

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. As a former University of Toronto Scarborough campus student and a proud representative of Scarborough-Guildwood, a riding that neighbours the UTSC campus, I know that flat tuition

fees are a huge issue for students. I've heard about this from many of my constituents.

I also know from personal experience, Speaker, that not every student takes a full course load. Many take fewer courses to account for a part-time job or other personal circumstances. Yet many students across the province taking as little as two thirds of a course load are currently charged the same tuition as a student taking a full course load. This is an issue that student leaders have been raising for some time and is an essential issue of fairness for our students and their families. We must do everything we can to make post-secondary education more accessible and affordable for them.

1110

Speaker, through you to the minister, what is the government doing about this ongoing issue of flat tuition fees?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for her question but, most of all, for her inspired choice of schools. I'm a UTSC grad myself.

I agree that fairness for students should be top priority for this government. I've often said, and we've often said, that we must see our post-secondary system through the eyes of our students. That's exactly why we announced today that we're moving forward with our commitment to tackle flat fees for undergraduate students.

This new policy will ensure that university students across the province taking less than an 80% course load will be charged on a per-credit basis. This will be fairer to students who, for whatever personal reason, choose to take less than 80% of a course load but are charged for that full course load.

At the same time, universities that adopted a flat-fee approach will need some time to adjust, because there's a revenue impact for them. So we're going to give them about three years to phase this in.

I want to thank the student leaders who are here today. I want to thank student leaders who have brought this issue to our attention. We're pleased to respond on their behalf.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you to the minister. It's important to hear that this government is taking the initiative to tackle flat-fee tuition billing in Ontario. This will make a difference in the lives of students in my riding and help make post-secondary education more affordable, making it possible for more young people to pursue post-secondary goals, like the students here from my riding and from West Hill Collegiate.

But, Speaker, flat fees are not the only issue facing our post-secondary students when they pay their tuition fees each year. Many students are relying on financial assistance, and they face fee deferrals or late charges when their tuition fees are due, prior to receiving their OSAP funding.

Speaker, this just isn't fair to those students receiving financial assistance. Students are being hit with late charges when they have no control on when their OSAP

is received. Can the minister outline any actions he plans to take to address this unfairness?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm pleased to report that we announced earlier today as well that we're removing this unnecessary burden to students across the province. In fact, we're making significant improvements to the process in which students pay for their tuition.

Our new policies will ensure that all students will be able to pay tuition in per-term installments, without paying deferral fees or interest charges. Tuition deposits will be capped and applied against tuition fees, not on top of fees owed. Students' tuition fees will not be due before the beginning of August, and students receiving financial aid—and this is one of the important pieces—will not be charged late fees and will not be expected to pay tuition until their OSAP assistance arrives.

Mr. Speaker, we've listened carefully to students, and, again, I want to acknowledge the voices that we've heard of our student leaders who are here today and across the province. We've heard their voices. We've continued to respond to their concerns, and we're very, very pleased and we should be proud of the input that they've had in public policy in this province.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Todd Smith: My question is for the energy minister this morning. The monthly hydro bill at Sigma Stretch Film in Belleville in January 2011—that's about two and a half years ago—was \$143,000. Today, the monthly hydro bill is \$325,000. It's a company that employs 123 people in my riding. By the time, Minister, your 42% rate increase kicks in, the monthly hydro bill at Sigma is going to be \$461,000 a month. That's an increase all thanks to the Liberal energy plan. Last month, your government gave Sigma a \$237,000 grant, which will cover about half a month's hydro bill by 2017.

Minister, the management at Sigma admits it's less expensive to do business in New Jersey than it is in Ontario. When is your government going to stop picking the pockets of Ontario businesses? Admit that you've screwed up our electricity system so badly that we can't recover—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Sit down, please.

Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to deal with some facts. Ontario's industrial rates compare favourably with other jurisdictions despite—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Member for Northumberland—Quinte West, you're warned.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli:—what the Progressive Conservatives claim. Industrial rates in northern Ontario are among the lowest in Canada and lower than 44 American states. Industrial rates in southern Ontario are lower than in Alberta, Michigan, New Jersey and California—you

mentioned New Jersey—and align with states like New York, Virginia and Tennessee.

Mr. Speaker—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, you're warned.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli:—as an example, for an industrial consumer with a demand of five megawatts per month, our 2010 LTEP, long-term energy plan, had projected that, in 2014, they will be paying \$109 per megawatt hour. Under this current plan, the industrial consumer will pay \$87 per megawatt hour in 2014. That is a significant reduction.

They don't know the facts. They don't know the file. They are spinning the public, and these are the true facts that—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli:—an independent third party, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Minister, the Liberal wind turbines continue to spin, but nobody in Ontario is buying that Liberal spin. Nobody in Ontario is buying that.

Last week, you climbed up on your high horse and told the Ontario people that it was their responsibility to understand why your government has turned the lowest hydro rates in North America into the highest in all of North America. For months, Hydro One—and I've written you a letter on this—has been forcing Upper Canada Minerals—that's an employer of almost 30 people in the Madoc and Bancroft area in centre and northern Hastings—to use what they call “dirty” power, made up of your intermittent power sources, your wind and solar. It's causing fluctuations in their power rates, and it's doing damage to their very expensive equipment and slowing down productivity. The problems occurring at Upper Canada Minerals show that your rhetoric about improving the hydro grid is nothing but a Liberal illusion.

Minister, after driving up rates and now having problems with the grid, when are you going to finally admit that you failed? Why don't you stand up today and resign?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Stop the clock.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Todd's offering you some good advice over there.

Hon. James J. Bradley: We need Konrad Yakabuski in here.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of the Environment and the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, come to order. When I stand, you're supposed to stay quiet.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The members from Northumberland–Quinte West and Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, maybe because of the noise you haven’t heard me. You’ve both been warned.

Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I really want to refer this to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, and I appreciate the referral.

Mr. Speaker, I can’t believe what I’m hearing from the member from Prince Edward–Hastings. He knows that, last month, I had the proud opportunity to visit Sigma Stretch Film announcing a new investment from the Eastern Ontario Development Fund—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister of Rural Affairs, come to order.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: —he was there at the company with me for the announcement. In fact, it wasn’t the first investment, it was the second investment that this government has made.

I can tell you that among manufacturers in the province that I’ve visited, this is one of the most successful, promising companies. He doesn’t have to take my word for it. He simply needs to talk to the company—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Prince Edward–Hastings, you asked the question.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: —in just about 10 years, they’ve gone from a company of eight employees up to now, I think, they’re at about 120—

Interjections.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: They’re doing fantastic. The export market is growing. It’s a beautiful example of advanced manufacturing.

I don’t know where he gets his information, but he’s definitely not talking to the same company that I visited just a few weeks ago.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Sit down, please.

New question. The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister for Rural Affairs, I’ve asked you to come to order more than once.

Member for Timmins–James Bay.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Across northern Ontario, people are hopping mad in regard to what they’re going to see their hydro bills increase by with the announcement you made on

Monday in your long-term energy plan. It is not good news for citizens to hear that their hydro rates over the next three years are going to go up by 33%, and we’re getting a lot of response.

I’ve got this particular person, Andrea Heward from North Bay, who writes, “I am a homeowner, I work full-time, and I am disabled.... Electricity is very important in my day-to-day living.... I have an electric wheelchair that has to be plugged in on a daily and nightly basis ... so I can go to work the next day without having to worry about the battery. I am paying \$3,600 a year in hydro minimum, I only make \$32,000 per year, which means I am paying more than 10% of my annual household income in hydro.”

1120

She can’t afford to pay her hydro bill, Minister, and you’re raising the rates. How do you see that as being fair to Mrs. Heward in North Bay?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, we have made very significant investments in the system in order that it be reliable and it be clean, and that put pressure on rates.

As a result of that pressure, we took some transitional steps. That includes the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit, which takes 10% off the bottom line on the bills. The Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit saves qualifying individuals up to \$963 per year—it probably applies to that person—with a maximum of \$1,097 per year for qualifying seniors. The Northern Ontario Energy Credit saves families up to \$210 per year and individuals up to \$137 per year. In addition, we have the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program and the saveONenergy Home Assistance Program.

These are cumulative, Mr. Speaker. That particular electricity consumer can access all of these programs, and I assume most of them will apply to her.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, I think this consumer knows very well how to apply, and that’s including that she’s having to pay her hydro bill.

I have another email here from Donald Bates from Thunder Bay, who says, “I have been living at my current address in Thunder Bay, Ontario for the past 10 years. I have over the past 10 years purchased new appliances all” of which are “energy-efficient and have installed ... energy-efficient lights. Each year, my energy consumption has been” going down.

However, for years now, he has been preached to by government to conserve, “yet the more I conserve, the more I” pay.

So I say to you again, Minister, people across the north are hopping mad that no matter what they do, no matter how they try to prepare themselves, no matter how much they try to conserve, their hydro rates have gone up, and now they’re going to go up another 33%. How do you square that off as being fair for people who need hydro on a day-to-day basis for their life?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, the announcement of the long-term energy plan several days ago provided the

opportunity for a lot of people to express their opinions on the plan. One of the questions that was asked of both the leader of the third party and the Leader of the Opposition was, "Could you promise to lower electricity rates?" The answer from both of them was, "No." So I'd like to know what the plan is. Mr. Speaker, they have no plan.

The reality is that when you compare the rates for a 20-year period that have been revealed by the National Energy Board, Alberta's 20-year projection is 3.7%; British Columbia, 3%. That's 60% over the 20 years, Mr. Speaker. Ontario's, under this long-term energy plan, over 20 years, is a 2.8% average increase. That's an improvement over our plans in 2010. It's progress. Plus, we have all those other support programs for members of the public.

EDUCATION

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Ma question est pour la ministre de l'Éducation, l'honorable Liz Sandals.

For those of us who value quality, publicly funded education, including so many of Ontario's teachers who are here with us today, it was reassuring to witness earlier this week the passage of Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, which passed second reading after 14 hours of debate.

As one of the earliest educational philosophers, Plato, said rather a long time ago, one of the measures of a society is the care it devotes to its youth. In that spirit, the Wynne government has worked tirelessly and perseveringly to rebuild our commitment and relationships with our partners in the education communities. We all aspire to move forward with a common purpose to improve student achievement and ultimately build a more prosperous and just society.

Can the minister please inform this chamber: What are the next steps for moving this important piece of legislation through the parliamentary process?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member from Etobicoke North for raising this important question. I, too, was extremely pleased to have Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, pass second reading this week.

This is an important step forward in how we work with our partners in education, some of whom are joining us here today. I know that many of my colleague MPPs will be meeting with representatives from the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation today to talk about how we can all work together to build on the progress we have made in student achievement over the past 10 years.

Part of this is ensuring that we provide the education sector with a clear process, with defined roles for the parties as we approach the next round of collective bargaining. The next step is to send Bill 122 to committee for public hearings and clause-by-clause examination and then hopefully back to the Legislature for third reading. I look forward to support from members so that we can get this important new collective bargaining scheme in place.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: First of all, on behalf of all the students and parents of my own riding of Etobicoke North, I'd like to commend the minister for her stewardship of this important file.

In face-to-face meetings today, we'll hear from our partners in education communities not only about Bill 122, but, of course, other ideas, measures and initiatives to strengthen education in Ontario. Our government remains focused, as the minister has declared repeatedly, on student achievement.

Ontario is already recognized around the world as having one of the best publicly funded education systems in the English-speaking world. Yet, as always, there is more work to be done. We continue to strive for the best for our students.

Speaker, would the minister please inform this chamber, what are the next measures she will adopt to further fortify education in Ontario?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Today is an excellent opportunity to hear directly from our partners at OSSTF about their vision for the future of our education system here in Ontario. I've had the pleasure over these last few months of travelling all around the province to hear directly from Ontarians about what they think the future of education looks like to them.

Education workers from all over the province have been part of that and have been very active participants in the consultations. They've been there in person. They've provided digital and written feedback. What we've heard is that we need to broaden our approach, our understanding of what student success means, and we need to provide engaging learning opportunities that develop the skills needed to actively contribute to the 21st century economy and society.

We look forward to releasing this new vision earlier in the new year, but as the member said, we have a lot to be proud of in creating with our partners a great education system. Now we need the opportunity to make it an excellent system.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Acting Premier. The Liberal government made a short-sighted decision to close the slots at the Fort Erie Race Track. Of course, we know this decision was enabled by the NDP when they abstained from the vote on the 2012 budget.

The Fort Erie Race Track has put together a festival plan, like the government's transition panel told them to. The festival will celebrate the Chinese New Year, the Year of the Horse. They submitted their plan to the Premier, the OLG and the media last week.

Minister, this proposal is time-sensitive. If you don't want to answer them, will you tell us today what your plan is?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I appreciate the question from the member from Perth-Wellington. Of course, as you know,

our government put together a five-year plan in place, \$400 million under the direction of three former very distinguished cabinet ministers in the province of Ontario: the honourable John Snobelen, the honourable Elmer Buchanan and honourable John Wilkinson. We depended on their good guidance.

I fear for the opposition. There's the five-point plan, the three-point plan and their half-baked plan, but we have a five-year plan of \$400 million.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you what we're doing for Fort Erie. I'm encouraged that Fort Erie is continuing discussions to develop a festival-type race meet. Assistance is available to track operators to develop plans that include new ideas, new partnerships and new sources of revenue. I understand that the Fort Erie Live Racing Consortium has indicated that they will be applying for funding assistance from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food to hire an outside consultant to help them develop a solid race plan.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Obviously, nothing is the answer; that's the answer.

Minister, your plan for horse racing has destroyed this proud industry. It hurt families at a time when they can least afford it. They're short on time. They need an answer by the second week of January, to coincide with the Chinese New Year.

1130

We have a plan to save the horse racing industry, including the Fort Erie Race Track. It's a plan that will strengthen partnerships and create jobs rather than destroy communities. Minister, what action will you take to save the Fort Erie Race Track?

Hon. Jeff Leal: To paraphrase a former Prime Minister of Canada, "Don Drummond if necessary, but not necessarily Don Drummond." So when you look at the Drummond report, the Drummond report said the SARP program was not accountable, not transparent and poor public policy. Mr. Speaker, don't take my word for it; take the word of a former colleague of theirs, the honourable John Snobelen, who said the SARP program wasn't accountable, not transparent, poor public policy and needed to be replaced. We've replaced that with a five-year, \$400-million program, and I take no lessons from the opposition with their half-baked plan.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. This government has left the horse racing industry in Fort Erie in critical condition. It left it with only one option to stay alive after it cancelled its main revenue source through the Slots at Racetracks Program cancellation. That option was to come up with a plan for a seasonal festival. Well, the Fort Erie Race Track has actually submitted a detailed Year of the Horse Festival plan to the government. They need to know by the end of the year, however, if they're going to get funding so that

they can actually go ahead with the planning of this festival. My question is a simple one, Speaker: When will the government respond to this proposal?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Acting Premier.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Minister of Rural Affairs, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'm so excited to answer that question that I got up a little early, before my colleague the Minister of Finance.

As I just responded to the member from Perth-Wellington, we are in the process right now. We're encouraging the wonderful people of Fort Erie, in their discussions, to develop a festival-type race meet. Assistance is available to track operators to develop plans that include new ideas, new partnerships and new sources of revenue. I understand that the Fort Erie Live Racing Consortium has indicated that it will be applying for funding assistance from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food to hire an outside consultant to help them develop a solid plan.

But I want to know from the third party, why did they stall the appointment of the honourable Elmer Buchanan, a former very distinguished agriculture minister from 1990 to 1995, a great advocate, a member of the NDP with great distinction? When they got his appointment in front of committee, they turned him down, threw him under the bus, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my question is not about well-connected insiders; it's about the people of Fort Erie and their specialty track meet. Supporting the Fort Erie Race Track's Year of the Horse Festival plan is the bare minimum first step to keep this racetrack open in the short term.

For the long-term viability of the racetrack's future is in fact the Slots at Racetracks Program being reinstated. Obviously, that's something that they're not interested in doing. But the Fort Erie track urgently needs an answer on this proposal. The Year of the Horse in the Chinese calendar starts in late January, with the Chinese New Year. Will this government announce its support for this proposal by the end of this month so that they can actually get to planning the Year of the Horse Festival meet at the Fort Erie Race Track?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I find it rather unusual that anybody in the third party will insult a former distinguished member of this Parliament, the honourable Elmer Buchanan, a gentleman who was considered one of the finest agriculture ministers in the province of Ontario. When they had the opportunity, they threw him under the bus. Shame, shame, shame.

But let me tell you what we're doing for Fort Erie. We're working with Fort Erie Live Racing Consortium. We have asked them to submit a plan. We were providing them with financial support to get that plan in.

And, you know, when you talk about contradictions with the NDP, why did they accept \$18,500 from Bruce Power at one of their fundraising events?

PARALEGALS

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Attorney General.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

The member from Ottawa—Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Speaker. Mr. Speaker, through you to the Attorney General, I know that our government's decision in 2003 to regulate paralegals has been extremely successful. I'm pleased to know that nearly 5,000 paralegals are licensed and insured in Ontario, providing consumers throughout the province with more choice and improved access to justice.

I know that Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada that regulates paralegals. Mr. Speaker, could the Attorney General please tell this House about the changes to the regulation of the paralegal industry, specifically the amendments to the rules of the Small Claims Court?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, I'd like to congratulate the member for his advocacy on behalf of paralegals in Ontario. He's quite correct that our government's commitment to strengthen the paralegal profession has been ongoing since 2003. As a matter of fact, as he mentioned, there are 5,000 paralegals in the province now; when the program first started in 2003, there were only 2,200.

The reason for that is that people need legal representation before administrative tribunals and before those bodies that paralegals can appear in front of. That's why it's so important to pass the new law that we're bringing forward, in a bill that's currently before the House, that would amend the Law Society Act to increase the number of licensed paralegals on the board of governors of the law society—namely convocation—from two to five, to get greater representation.

It would also amend the Solicitors Act to confirm that licensed paralegals can represent a person in a legal proceeding and receive payment for these services. I'll continue with this in my supplementary.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I thank the Attorney General for that answer. I'm happy to hear of our government's commitment to improving access to justice through the good work of paralegals. I know these changes have taken place through extensive consultations, but are also a demonstration of our government taking action on recommendations that have been made and set out by the Law Society of Upper Canada.

In addition to the great work that has been done with amending rules of the Small Claims Court, could the Attorney General please comment on the work that has been done by our government to recognize the importance of paralegals in the court system?

Hon. John Gerretsen: The rule changes that are taking place within the Small Claims Court make it easier and more convenient for people to submit claims, as well

as defenses to claims that may have been issued against them. It's an online service that's available to everyone, including, obviously, paralegals.

But what is truly, truly important is that this bill gets passed by December 31 of this year, which is less than a month away right now. The reason for that is that there's an election cycle for both benchers and paralegal benchers that will take place in March of next year. That election cycle only takes place every four years, and if we don't take the opportunity—and I know all members in the House agree on this bill, so why don't we get on with it and pass the bill, so that the elections can take place and the paralegals will not have to wait another four years before their representation will increase from two to five.

The people of Ontario have a right to proper legal representation, whether it's through paralegals or through lawyers. Access to justice is the main issue facing the justice system today.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the deputy minister. Minister, Esbriet is a medication used for the treatment of mild to moderate forms of idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, referred to as IPF. It was approved by the Ministry of Health in Ottawa in 2012 based on scientific evidence, and yet these studies concluded that 30,000 Canadian citizens are suffering with IPF.

The Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation estimates that 5,000 patients in Ontario or in Canada will die this year, patients like Bryon Miles from Northumberland, Barb Skinner from Wellington—Halton Hills, Virginia Koury from my riding of Durham and Hugh Detzler from Huron—Bruce. Your government and the Ministry of Health have let these families down and left them suffering with IPF.

Minister, governments in Europe and the UK publicly fund access to Esbriet to improve their lives. The EAP process is not working. Will you help or look into relieving the patients who are suffering with IPF in Ontario?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): You said that you asked the question of the deputy minister. I want to make sure it's the Deputy Premier.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Deputy?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Yes, I think we understood, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Acting.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I recognize that Ontarians want to have access to new and effective drug therapies as quickly as possible. Our Ontario drug program offers, as you may know, more than 3,800 drugs now. New drugs approved for use by Health Canada are first reviewed by the Canadian Drug Expert Committee.

With regard to Esbriet, the Canadian Drug Expert Committee recommended that Esbriet should not be funded because of inconsistent results. It is then up to

each province to decide whether they want to fund the drug, as the member is now asking.

We've established a process for approving drugs: an expert advisory committee that makes a recommendation based on the best available evidence.

All brand name drugs that come forward for review are now also considered through the Pan-Canadian Pricing Alliance. Given the concerns raised by the Canadian Drug Expert Committee, participating provinces and territories have decided not to engage in negotiations through the pan-Canadian process at this time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: I don't thank you for the answer because I don't think you're actually listening. These are families that are suffering with IPF and you're not listening. Your EAP process does not work.

A medical specialist in Toronto, Dr. Binnie, strongly states that Esbriet should be publicly funded in Ontario, as it is in other jurisdictions.

Why are you denying the patients in Ontario access to a drug that is strongly recommended by experts? Your process is nothing but a block to access to health care in Ontario, and I'm asking you today to look at those studies and fund this for the people of Ontario.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It's critical to appreciate the concerns that we all, in this House, share for families and those who are suffering. It is why we want to make sure that the proper drugs are being administered and are being approved by the experts who are providing it.

Mr. Speaker, to the member's question, I am told that the Ministry of Health is gladly and appropriately reviewing any new evidence that's available to manufacturing this said drug for submission. So we are taking the actions and the proper steps necessary to protect those families and ensure that everyone receives the proper care at the right time.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the minister responsible for women's issues. Every six days, a woman in Canada is murdered by her current or former partner. Ontario shelters like Cornerstone are turning away more and more women and children every year because of a lack of funding. In the first five months of this year alone at Cornerstone, a record number of 72 abused women have been turned away, to potentially lethal results.

My question also is about Toronto's victim services, the only agency that provides immediate assistance to domestic violence victims. Their funding per victim has dropped from \$286 in 1990 to \$31 in 2010.

Today, in acknowledging the 24th anniversary of the Montreal massacre, this government will voice its concern, but how many more women have to die before this government acts?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I know that the member opposite brings up a very important issue and one that's important to all of us in this House, not only to myself, as

the minister, but to our government as well. I will be rising later this afternoon in recognition of December 6, the national day of remembrance, where we remember that day and what it means to us.

We know that domestic violence is a serious issue, and we've done quite a bit on this side of the House over the last number of years. We introduced the Domestic Violence Action Plan. We've trained more than 28,000 front-line workers, and in fact, there are thousands who go through our shelter system every year. Do we need to do more? I think we can all agree, Speaker, that we do. This is a very critical issue, one that we all think is a priority and one that we will continue to work on.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The time for question period has expired. There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1144 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I had the pleasure today of meeting with some local teachers and administrative folks from my riding, and today I'd like to welcome them—they're on their way in: Jeff Denys from Central Huron, Mary Jane Karkheck, Bonnie Cameron of the Bluewater board, and Krista McCormack from Flesherton.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I have the pleasure of introducing the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario. I don't know if that's the gentleman up there or not.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm guessing, based on who else is in the chamber, that, yes, it is.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Sorry?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Just introduce them. They'll show up.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you—Denise Magi, the vice-president; Keith Deviney, president; and other MEAO board of director members.

We also have, from a different association, Adrianna Tetley and Leah Stephenson from the Association of Ontario Health Centres. I will speak to both of them in short order.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MYALGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm very pleased to rise today to recognize the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario—MEAO for short—on their Community Engagement Day.

There are approximately 570,000 people in Ontario living with a chronic complex environmentally linked illness. One of these illnesses is myalgic encephalomyelitis, or chronic fatigue syndrome. Other conditions include fibromyalgia, environmental sensitivities and multiple chemical sensitivities.

The MEAO is with us today at Queen's Park to release the findings of a new study involving integrated care for Ontarians suffering from environmentally linked conditions.

I would like to congratulate the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario for hosting this Community Engagement Day and for educating us as MPPs on environmentally linked illnesses.

I'd also like to thank the association for being a comprehensive place of information, support, awareness and education for Ontarians living with myalgic encephalomyelitis and associated illnesses.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good afternoon. I have two short statements to make. First, let me tell you about a friend of mine in my riding of Windsor–Tecumseh. Al Nelman just turned 89. He's a race walker. In 2011, in Utah, he was the only 5K race walker in the 85-to-89 age group. He finished the race in 43 minutes and 31 seconds. Last year, he went back and bested his previous record, winning gold with a time of 42:23. Earlier this year, at the young age of 88, he and three others were invited to the USA National Senior Games. He won with a time of 41:52. Then he went back to Utah, where he won gold again with 42:33.

Al Nelman is a World War II veteran, and I'm very proud have him as a friend.

Now, Speaker, turning the page: A new study was released today by the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario. The acronym goes MEAO, I understand.

We in the NDP are always interested in new and effective ways to keep people healthy and in building a more sustainable health care system.

I join my caucus health critic, France Gélinas, in recognizing that, over the past 10 years, there have been dramatic increases in environmental illnesses. They now rank third among chronic diseases. Unfortunately, the current health care system often fails to recognize these chronic diseases and does not provide the supports that people need. There are 570,000 people in Ontario who live with chronic, complex, environmentally linked illnesses, and we will be very interested as the new study suggests ways to improve care and support for people living with environmentally linked illnesses.

MYALGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS

Mr. Joe Dickson: Two of my colleagues are addressing the same issue, so I guess we've got it covered by all parties here. That's appropriate, because it's a very significant issue.

I'm pleased to again sponsor the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario, which is a registered Ontario charity. MEAO is a support organization offering information, support, awareness and education for people living with myalgic encephalomyelitis, sometimes known

as chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia and environmental sensitivities or multiple chemical sensitivities. So it's very, very broad. We have over some 550,000 Ontarians living with ME, FM and MCS, which are three chronic, complex, environmentally linked illnesses.

MEAO has partnered with the Association of Ontario Health Centres, AOHC, and that is significant. They have developed a new proposal for an Ontario centre of excellence in environmental health, and they have also produced a patients' study, which has already been mentioned by my colleagues. It is entitled Recognition, Inclusion and Equity—The Time Is Now. The study's objectives are to see, in the very near future, a vastly improved system of health care.

I should mention, Mr. Speaker, that members are welcome to go down to the dining room at 4 o'clock. They're there for several hours; we all need to see them.

AGGREGATE RECYCLING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Today I rise with regret because of the terrible waste that happened this morning here at the Legislature. Ironically, this waste occurred at the expense of increasing recycling in Ontario.

You see, this past Monday, the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs decided not to consider Bill 56, the Aggregate Recycling Promotion Act. When the PC committee members put forward a motion to consider the bill, the Liberals and the NDP teamed up to defeat the motion and opt to do nothing instead—absolutely nothing.

We could have had public hearings on Bill 56 this morning and clause-by-clause consideration next week. Instead, what has happened is that the NDP and the Liberals decided to shelve Bill 56 this past Monday. Instead, the committee chose to do absolutely nothing this morning or next week. I must admit I was somewhat shocked by the news.

Bill 56 received unanimous support here in this chamber and was a recommendation in the final ARA review. Moreover, it received widespread support outside of this chamber, where many businesses, municipalities and residents have called for the bill's adoption.

So I stand today to ask my colleagues in the NDP and the Liberal government to please put aside the politics and ask your respective members in the committee to take up Bill 56 for consideration. Let's get it done. Let's get this bill passed. Let's promote aggregate recycling in Ontario.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm honoured to rise today to shed light on the ongoing and emerging crisis of violence against women and the corresponding need for shelter and support.

Tomorrow is December 6, the 24th anniversary of the massacre in Montreal. Women and men across this country will remember and mourn the loss of 14 women

that day. We will mourn their loss, and we will remember that there is much work to be done to end violence against women. We should also wonder why it is taking so long to find solutions and why such apathy exists around the issue of gender-based violence. It is insidious.

This province needs a plan for affordable and safe housing, especially for women who are seeking refuge, the most significant being housing. With no place to go, women who are trying to escape a violent home or violence on the streets are forced into dangerous situations, as are their children. They feel trapped.

Families have also fallen victim to the lack of affordable housing. We all know that municipalities are not able to sustain a housing strategy in isolation. They need the province and the federal government to come to the table. In Waterloo region, we're fortunate to have Mary's Place. In 2012, they were at 151% average occupancy; in 2013, 152%. The average age of children who are in that shelter is seven years of age. Lack of housing, financial crisis, and family and relationship breakdown were the three main reasons that their need was so strong.

1310

Waterloo region is a caring and compassionate community which has rallied behind housing, but they can't do it alone. We need a provincial strategy around housing so that women have a safe place to go, and their children need to be supported throughout this process as well.

PEEL HIV/AIDS NETWORK

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: This past weekend, I had the opportunity to attend a World AIDS Day celebration hosted by the Peel HIV/Aids Network, known as PHAN, in my beautiful riding of Mississauga–Brampton South. Over the past two decades, this worthy organization has been serving those affected by HIV through their support, education, advocacy and volunteerism.

World AIDS Day was an occasion to spread awareness about HIV, to reflect on the progress made in finding a cure for this deadly disease, and to affirm our community's commitment by showing our support for those living with HIV and commemorating those we have lost.

Our government provides funding for more than 90 programs and services across the province that deliver HIV prevention, education and support to those affected by HIV and to those who are at risk.

On behalf of the residents of Mississauga–Brampton South, I would like to congratulate PHAN on their 20th anniversary and for their excellent community service.

HOCKEY TOURNAMENT

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It gives me great pleasure to rise this afternoon. I'd like to say that this past weekend, the Cobourg Community Hockey League hosted the Cobourg Silver Stick tournament. They sent three divisional rep teams to the tournament. In the regional qualifier that was held, the champions of that tournament were invited

to participate in the international Silver Stick finals against other regional champions across Ontario and the United States. I was at the puck-dropping ceremony Friday evening. I'd like to thank Peter Lorenz and Gary Oliver, the organizers of that tournament.

To the point, Mr. Speaker: The peewee hockey team, coached by Mark Diminie, won the Silver Stick tournament and will be representing Cobourg in the international tournament coming up.

They also advanced this group to their third straight international final. Two seasons ago, this team won the Newmarket international final for the atom team, and last year, the major atom team made it to the championship game against Oakville at the Sarnia international tournament.

I'd like to thank and congratulate coach Mark Diminie and the players on a game well done.

EDUCATION WORKERS

Ms. Soo Wong: Children in Ontario and their families know that education is a foundation for the future. The key to a good education is strong teachers and support staff in our schools.

Education workers are on the front line every day, and, through their dedication, we know that our students are given the best opportunities to learn and to succeed. Our classrooms are safe and innovative, and they provide students with the support and opportunities they need to learn and to grow.

I'm pleased to recognize and welcome the many educators who are visiting Queen's Park today. I know that many of my colleagues attended their breakfast event this morning, and today, throughout the day, OSSTF representatives are meeting with their local MPPs.

It is important that we continue to build on our relationship with our education partners and Ontarians so that we can take our education system from great to excellent.

Ontario is recognized as having some of the best public schools in the English-speaking world. Since 2003, our government has made major investments in our education system by making sure classroom sizes are smaller and test scores are improving. We support our students with special needs, there are fewer students dropping out from our high schools, and more students are entering post-secondary education than ever before.

These accomplishments are only made possible through our relationship with our education partners. Mr. Speaker, I again want to welcome our education partners who are here at Queen's Park today and thank each one of them for what they do to support and nurture our students across Ontario.

TRACEY McDONAGH SIMPSON

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to stand today to recognize a very special person I consider a friend, from the Lucknow area: Tracey McDonagh Simpson. On

November 16, the Lucknow Kinsmen and Kinettes joined together to have a wonderful 40th-anniversary celebration where, together, they donated \$42,000 to multiple sclerosis. Over and above that, they took a moment to recognize, pay tribute and even roast this person, Tracey McDonagh, whose contribution to the community and dedication as a volunteer is to be admired. It sets a benchmark for all of us. She always has a ready smile and a willingness to roll up her sleeves to get the job done, no matter what it is.

Tracey was bestowed a lifetime Knette membership that evening in recognition of her efforts and ability to engage people to get involved and, ultimately, become a Knette member. The members that she attracted to this rural organization are just amazing. She has a contagious enthusiasm that clearly cannot be missed when you meet her.

When Tracey was asked why, in front of her husband, her kids, her children, and her community—Tracey is a person who is never lost for words, and she actually got choked up a little bit, but her words were heartfelt when she said, “I just love my community.” Those words echoed through the hall, and I have to tell you that the community loves Tracey—except for her oatmeal muffins, but that’s a story for another day.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HEALTH STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT (HEALTHY DECISIONS MADE EASY), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT DES LOIS RELATIVES À LA SANTÉ (DÉCISIONS SANTÉ SIMPLIFIÉES)

M^{me} Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 149, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act and the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to improve the health of Ontarians / Projet de loi 149, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé et la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée en vue d'améliorer la santé des Ontariens et des Ontariennes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Shall the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A short statement from the member.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. This is a pretty simple bill. What I did is, I took the calorie labelling bill where, when you go to McDonald’s you see a Big Mac, 499 or 450 calories, and I took the smoke-free amendment act, which bans flavoured tobacco, and put them both together in a bill that I call Healthy Decisions Made Easy.

It is a bill that is aimed towards health promotion, and what it does is it puts two big pillars of health promotion together, the first one having to do with quitting smoking and the second one having to do with nutrition. Those are

two of the pillars of health promotion that have been put into this easy little bill.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. tonight, Thursday, December 5, 2013.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy has moved government notice of motion number 30. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a bunch of noes.

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1319 to 1324.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy has moved government notice of motion number 30. All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Hunter, Mitzie	Moridi, Reza
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	Murray, Glen R.
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Piruzza, Teresa
Chan, Michael	Kwintar, Monte	Qaadri, Shafiq
Damerla, Dipika	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Del Duca, Steven	MacCharles, Tracy	Sergio, Mario
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	Wong, Soo
Dickson, Joe	Meilleur, Madeleine	
Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John	

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Horwath, Andrea	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Pettapiece, Randy
Bisson, Gilles	Leone, Rob	Prue, Michael
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLaren, Jack	Schein, Jonah
DiNovo, Cheri	MacLeod, Lisa	Singh, Jagmeet
Elliott, Christine	Marchese, Rosario	Smith, Todd
Fedeli, Victor	McDonell, Jim	Tabuns, Peter
Fife, Catherine	McKenna, Jane	Taylor, Monique
Forster, Cindy	Miller, Paul	Thompson, Lisa M.
Gélinas, France	Milligan, Rob E.	Vanthof, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Hatfield, Percy	Nicholls, Rick	Yakabuski, John
Holyday, Douglas C.	O'Toole, John	Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 28; the nays are 39.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

VISITOR

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order: the member from Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I know I missed introduction of guests, but I wanted to introduce a lovely young lady, seven years old. Her name is Trudy Flashford. She's here today with her mother, Sharon. This is the first time she's ever been in the Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Motions? The member for Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 133, An Act to amend the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act; Bill 71, An Act to protect child performers in the live entertainment industry and the recorded entertainment industry; and Bill 99, An Act to proclaim Terry Fox Day.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Simcoe–Grey seeks unanimous consent to move a motion.

Agreed? I think I heard a no.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Mr. Speaker, 24 years ago tomorrow marks a dark day in Canadian history. On December 6, 1989, a gunman walked into École Polytechnique de Montréal and killed 14 female engineering students.

I remember the shock that followed the day of that news. I can't imagine losing a family member to such senseless violence. My thoughts and prayers go out to all the families that have been impacted.

1330

The Montreal massacre was not an attack against students or engineers. It was an attack against women, and it has become a defining moment for action on violence against women. The National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women serves as both a moving recognition of the women lost to gender-based violence and a rallying cry for further work to end this violence.

In November, women across the province called for an end to violence as part of Woman Abuse Prevention Month. Violence against women shatters many lives and has no place in Ontario.

Today, we recognize all women killed by male violence and recommit ourselves to take action to prevent violence against girls and women. It's a stark reminder of one terrible fact: Women are at risk of violence because they're women. This violence is manifested through many forms. Whether it's the sexual exploitation of women and girls, the assault and control of women by their partners or the high number of missing and murdered aboriginal women across Canada, gender inequality in all its forms is at the root of violence against girls and women.

In the ongoing effort to end this violence, I'm happy to say that some progress has been made since December 6, 1989. Our collective response to this issue is improving. Our province has a strong network of supports and services, including women's shelters, counselling services and partner assault programs, and I want to thank all the staff and volunteers who make a difference in the lives of women and children every day. Thanks to our partners in the community, the women and men engaged in ending violence against women, we are making a difference.

Working with the Ministry of Community and Social Services, we've almost doubled our funding for community support services for victims of domestic abuse. This funding helped serve close to 12,000 women and 8,000 children in emergency shelters last year.

I recently reaffirmed our investment in employment training to help abused women get the support they need to rebuild their lives. We started this program because we know employment training helps create a better future toward economic security. Close to 2,000 women have learned relevant and practical skills that are needed to succeed in today's fast-changing labour market through this program. So even on a day filled with mourning and sadness, we should feel proud of the work we have done.

But this task is by no means complete. As a mother, an advocate, a friend and as minister responsible for women's issues, I have met too many women who have suffered from abuse. I'm always motivated by their determination to rebuild their lives and keep their children safe. The tragedy of December 6 reminds us that we must not let our vigilance wane. We must continue to educate boys and girls and men and women about healthy, equal relationships. We must continue to change attitudes and behaviour so that violence against women and girls doesn't begin in the first place.

Earlier today, we received unanimous consent to wear these buttons to remember women whose lives have been cut short by violence and to recommit ourselves to taking action on violence against women and girls in all its egregious forms.

I'd like us to take a moment to remember and acknowledge the 14 lives lived and tragically lost 24 years ago: Geneviève Bergeron, age 21; Hélène Colgan, age 23; Nathalie Croteau, age 23; Barbara Daigneault, age 22; Anne-Marie Edward, age 21; Maud Haviernick, age 29; Barbara Klucznik Widajewicz, age 31; Maryse Laganière, age 25; Maryse Leclair, age 23; Anne-Marie Lemay, age 27; Sonia Pelletier, age 23; Michèle Richard, age 21; Annie St-Arneault, age 23; and Annie Turcotte, age 21.

Let us all ensure that these young women will remain forever in our memory and in our hearts. December 6 is a day we must not forget, but it's also a day that should provide everyone here with the inspiration, determination and renewed commitment to end violence against women whenever and wherever it occurs.

If I may, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask that we take a moment of silence for these women and all others that have been affected by violence.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll do that after the responses.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Afterwards? Okay. And then end the silence with a commitment to work for change together.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: It is my honour to stand on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the Progressive Conservative Party today to speak on the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

Exactly 24 years ago tomorrow, on December 6, 1989, 14 young women were killed at École Polytechnique in Montreal. These smart young women were engineering students. They were full of promise, preparing for interesting, challenging careers. Like previous generations of women, they were poised to make a difference in what had previously been a male-dominant profession. Tragically, these 14 young women were killed because they were women.

What has come to be called the Montreal Massacre is the event we are all called upon to remember today. December 6 is again to be commemorated as the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. It is an occasion to remember the women murdered, and it is important for all of us to recommit to ensuring that their deaths were not in vain.

As we mourn the loss of the students at École Polytechnique, it is important for us to be mindful that many women and girls have been murdered or abused since then. We know that the majority of men do not use or condone violence, but most of the violence in Canada is committed by men. Statistics Canada reports that women are three times more likely than men to be killed, sexually assaulted or threatened with a weapon by a male partner.

Violence against women continues to be part of our present. We need to continue to work for an end to violence against women and girls as part of our commitment to women's equality.

The White Ribbon Campaign is a movement to promote the involvement of men and boys in violence prevention on various fronts. The White Ribbon Campaign pledge is a Canadian example of individual men making a signed commitment not to commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls. I'm proud to say that hundreds of thousands of men have participated in making this commitment over the years.

Emerging research has demonstrated that there are specific gateways to prevention that have shown promise in fostering healthy and respectful relationships. According to this research, men's emotional well-being is improved when they spend more time caring for their children. Greater involvement in fathering is associated with reduced family conflict and violence, and increases the chance that children will grow up in a safe environment.

Canada is at the forefront of advanced parental leave policies that include both mothers and fathers. In 2006, only 20% of fathers applied for and received paid

parental leave benefits, but uptake is slowly rising. In 2010, the number increased to 30%.

Another gateway is through peer modelling and support designed to change cultural norms that perpetuate violence. Numerous educators emphasize the importance of working together in an all-male group to understand the impact of men's socialization and their understanding of masculinity in order to stop the violence.

School-based initiatives are a focal point for work in this area. These include the promotion of safe environments free of sexual harassment, sexual assault, homophobia, and other forms of bullying and violence. An important objective is to create environments where traditional views of masculine behaviour, such as strength, can be re-envisioned by young men to include social responsibility, respect for women and girls, and leadership in violence prevention.

Another successful program, pioneered by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, focuses on reducing dating violence and risky sexual behaviours among youth. The program also promotes emotional health and wellness through the development of healthy relationships with friends, partners and family.

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We all have a responsibility to work towards positive change in societal norms that perpetuate violence against women. These government and community programs should inspire and engage all of us, as policy-makers and community members, to participate in the critical work of creating a society where domestic violence is no longer viewed as an inevitable social ill. Together, we must take action to build a healthier society, to foster resilience and prevent domestic violence before it occurs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll never forget the day that she came running into our church. She was a respected member of our congregation. Many of you know I'm a United Church minister as well as a member of provincial Parliament. It was in the middle of the day. The church was a busy, humming place, lots of programming going on in various rooms. She was terrified. She was looking for a place to hide, and shortly after she came in and hid in my office, her husband came in trying to find her. He went around the church, banging on every door, yelling at everybody. He wasn't drunk. He was upper-middle-class. And for a second, we all got, in that congregation, what that poor woman lived with every day of her life.

I listened to the minister read out the names. It's always profoundly moving, 24 years later, about the massacre at École Polytechnique. But the simple reality is that each year more than 100,000 women and children stay in shelters for abused women. On any given day, that's 3,000 women, along with their 2,500 children, and the situation for them is becoming ever more dangerous over the last 10 years.

I'll give you some examples.

Cornerstone Family Violence Prevention Centre is in Northumberland county. I met with them just recently. In 2006-07, they turned away four women. Now, remember, when they turn away women from the shelter, they are turning them away to a perhaps lethal outcome. We know that women are most at risk when they are leaving their household with their children, so when they turn them away, they turn them away to danger.

They turned away four in 2006-07; the next year, 30; the next year, 43 were turned away; the next year, 32 were turned away; the next year, 53 were turned away; the next year, 60 were turned away; the next year after that, 61; and this year, 2013-14, in the first five months alone, they have turned away 72 women.

Let me tell you about what's happening in Toronto at Victim Services, which is the only service, front-line agency, that provides support services for victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse immediately. They go out with the police to the scene and immediately, on the site, provide assistance. They work seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

Their funding per victim has dropped from \$286 in 1990 to \$31 in 2010. Chief Blair and the police do fundraisers every year for them, and that doesn't even begin to make up for the shortfall. They, by the way, do not get any money from the Ontario Sexual Violence Action Plan. They are the only agency that, on the spot after an incident, is there to help children and women.

So I have to ask, what will it take? Will it take the death of a child or a woman, or both, before this government acts to remedy what is a crisis situation?

I have to tell you that in meeting with front-line agencies and workers, all of them reported crisis situations. There were at that point in Oshawa, when I met with them, probably 30 agencies represented. Not one of them was happy with current conditions. All of them had flat-lined funding. All of them were promised something sometime, "The cheque's in the mail," but the cheque wasn't arriving. Meanwhile, these women and children are being turned away and there's nowhere else for them to go.

Now, 24 years ago, we had a wakeup call as a community. I had a wakeup call in my own congregation when this woman, who will go unnamed, came running in looking for assistance. Wakeup calls, I suspect, happen in the lives of many women, even in this chamber. Certainly many women in our communities have had wakeup calls about what violence truly means. When we think about how every six days a woman dies, if it were any other group, Mr. Speaker, it would be a national calamity. But it's women and it's children. And it's getting worse.

So I say, enough talk. I've said this for eight years in this place. Action: We need action. Cornerstone needs action. Victim Services needs action. Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, the women and children in our constituencies: All of them need action. They need it today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will now observe a moment of silence, as requested by the minister.

The House observed a moment's silence.

PETITIONS

JURY DUTY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. Actually, this would be a good idea for a private member's bill. But it reads as follows:

"Whereas completing jury duty presents many challenges to seniors (travel, health, financial);

"Where service as a juror may cause significant harm for those dependent on the individual selected for jury duty;

"Whereas the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Saskatchewan as well as the Yukon territory all provide opportunities for jury duty exemption for persons over the age of 65;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario allow individuals over the age of 65; those in sole care of children under the age of seven that are not in full-day school; or those in sole care of individuals with health or mental health illness requiring constant care the option of being exempt from jury duty with the option for individuals with permanent health conditions to be exempted permanently"—upon request—"from being a juror."

I'm pleased to sign and support this very practical suggestion, and present it to Niam, one of the pages.

LONG-TERM CARE

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

"Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect and substandard care for our seniors in long-term-care homes; and

"Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently don't complain because they fear repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are being left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

"Whereas Ontario is one of only two provinces in Canada where the Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes. We need accountability, transparency and consistency in our long-term-care home system;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to expand the Ombudsman's mandate to include Ontario's long-term-care homes in order to protect our most vulnerable seniors."

I fully support this petition, Mr. Speaker, will affix my name to it, and ask page Marina to bring it to the clerk.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly signed by a group of

individuals from all over the city of Toronto, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas there are over 8,000 children and youth living under the care of the crown and of children’s aid societies in Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ontario Legislature hosted the ‘Our Voice, Our Turn: Youth Leaving Care Hearings’ in the fall of 2011; and

“Whereas these hearings made it clear that more must be done to support these young people and to raise awareness; and

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“Whereas by proclaiming May 14 of each year as ‘Children and Youth in Care Day,’ the province would raise awareness and recognize the unique challenges faced by children and youth living in care; and

“Whereas Ontario’s children’s aid societies, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, and members of the community, including children and youth living in care, want to officially celebrate ‘Children and Youth in Care Day’ on May 14, 2014; and

“Whereas Bill 53, known as the ‘Children and Youth in Care Day Act,’ proposed by MPP Soo Wong, passed with unanimous support on May 9, 2013, but has since been delayed from being called for third reading;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario call Bill 53 for third reading immediately; and

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact Bill 53, the Children and Youth in Care Day Act, before May 2014.”

I’m pleased to sign and support this petition, and send it down with page Spencer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Durham.

Interjection: Oshawa.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Oshawa.

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That was a terrible mistake. I apologize.

GREENBELT

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Greenbelt Act was passed by the Ontario Legislature in 2005, affecting property rights in Ontario; and

“Whereas the right to own, use, enjoy and the opportunity to earn a living from private property is the basis of freedom and democracy; and

“Whereas the greenbelt restricts property owners in the use, enjoyment and ability to earn a living from their private property; and

“Whereas property owners are not being compensated for any loss of these rights;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the greenbelt plan area at the 10-year re-evaluation in 2015 to allow additional development when requested by the community and supported by the local municipality.”

I affix my name in full support.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario regarding temporary job agency reform.

“Whereas many Ontarians employed through temporary employment (help) agencies tend to face unlawful wage deductions, unsafe workplace conditions, with no benefits or severance;

“Whereas a 2012 study conducted by the United Way and McMaster University, entitled *It’s More Than Poverty: Employment Precarity and Household Well-being*, found that 40% of workers in Ontario are in employment relationships that share characteristics of precarious or non-permanent employment;

“Whereas the same 2012 study suggests that as precarious employment increases, Ontario’s workers face increased stress on households, limits on community participation, and increased instances of poverty;

“Whereas the instances of employment standards violations continues to disproportionately impact employees of temporary help agencies, perpetuating issues of precarious employment and poverty for those employed through these agencies;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly undertake legislative reforms to address the inequities created for employees as a consequence of precarious employment through temporary job agencies and safeguard the rights of vulnerable workers, guarantee employee safety, and ensure that all workers in Ontario can be safe.”

I agree with this petition, and I’ll hand it to page Sarah.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Joe Dickson: I’d like to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of Ajax and Pickering residents.

“Whereas the regions of York and Durham are at the final stages of completing an EA for the YD-WPCP (York Durham water pollution control plant’s) outfall; and

“Whereas the regions of York and Durham have chosen as the final solution an alternative which will not address the quantity of total phosphorus (TP) nor soluble reactive phosphorus (SRP) being deposited into Lake Ontario; and

“Whereas Lake Ontario has been identified as the most stressed lake of the Great Lakes in the July/August 2013 issue of *Canadian Geographic*; and

“Whereas the town of Ajax and PACT POW (Pickering Ajax Citizens Together—Protecting our Water) have documented the excessive algae blooms on the Ajax waterfront with photos and complaints to the region of Durham; and

“Whereas SRP, and indirectly TP, contribute to the growth of algae in Lake Ontario;

“Therefore we undersign this petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and ask that the government of Ontario require the regions of York and Durham to implement an alternative that will reduce the amount of phosphorus (both TP and SRP) being deposited into Lake Ontario from the YD-WPCP,” which of course is the York Durham water pollution control plant outfall.

I will sign my name and pass it to Spencer.

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE

Mrs. Julia Munro: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas more than 850,000 Ontarians live with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or COPD (more than 70,000 in Central LHIN) and these numbers are climbing quickly; and

“Whereas COPD is one of the most costly chronic diseases in Ontario, currently responsible for 24% of emergency department visits and 24% of hospitalizations in this province; and

“Whereas respiratory rehabilitation is a Health Quality Ontario endorsed, evidence-based intervention that improves quality of life for people with COPD and other lung diseases while saving health care dollars; and

“Whereas due to lack of dedicated funding for lung health programs the respiratory rehabilitation program at Southlake Regional Health Centre—the only such program in Central LHIN—was recently cancelled;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to urge Central LHIN—and all LHINs—to develop evidence-based plans to address COPD and other lung diseases that coordinate resources and care across all levels of the health care system; and further,

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to immediately work with stakeholders to develop a province-wide action plan for lung health to improve prevention, early diagnosis and patient outcomes, while maximizing the return on health care investment.”

Thank you. I have affixed my signature to this and given it to page Cynthia.

DENTAL CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario.

“Whereas thousands and thousands of adults 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;”

They ... “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario” 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” people “in need.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Morgan to bring it to the Clerk.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I have a petition from members of my community of Scarborough–Guildwood.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are significant challenges facing young people entering the job market;

“Whereas small businesses can play an important role in creating job opportunities, especially for youth; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario has introduced measures to encourage job creation;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly support Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act.”

I will sign this petition and give it to page Amy.

ASTHMA

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I have a petition of mine, “Ryan’s Fight: Asthma Awareness.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas on October 9, 2012, 12-year-old Ryan Gibbons unnecessarily died of an asthma attack at school;

“Whereas one in five students in Ontario schools has asthma; and

“Whereas asthma is a disease that can be controlled; and

“Whereas it is the responsibility of Ontario schools to ensure asthma-safe environments;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Education to take measures to protect pupils with asthma by ensuring all school boards put in place asthma-management plans based on province-wide standards.”

I have over 1,000 names signed here. Today, we’ll take care of that business. I affix my signature to it.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I have a petition from members of my community in Bramalea–Gore–Malton. It's a petition to raise the minimum wage.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's minimum wage has been frozen at \$10.25 an hour since 2010, and some workers earn ... less due to current exemptions in the Employment Standards Act; and

"Whereas full-time minimum wage workers are living at nearly 20% below the poverty line as measured by" Ontario's "low-income measure...; and

"Whereas minimum wage should, as a matter of principle, bring people working 35 hours per week above the poverty line; and

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"Whereas an immediate increase in the minimum wage to \$14 per hour would bring workers' wages 10% above the LIM poverty line; and

"Whereas raising the minimum wage will benefit workers, local businesses and the economy by putting money in workers' pockets to spend in their local community;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately increase the minimum wage to \$14 per hour for all workers and thereafter increase it annually by no less than the cost of living."

I affix my name to the petition and I hand it to page Michaela to hand forward.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a pleasure to read the following petition into the record.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario, through the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, levies the Ontario provincial fee on the sale of break-open tickets by charitable and non-profit organizations in the province; and

"Whereas local hospital auxiliaries/associations across the province, who are members of the Hospital Auxiliaries Association of Ontario, use break-open tickets to raise funds to support local health care equipment needs in more than 100 communities across the province; and

"Whereas, in September 2010, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario announced a series of changes to the Ontario provincial fee which included a reduction of the fee for certain organizations and the complete elimination of the fee for other organizations, depending on where the break-open tickets are sold; and

"Whereas the September 2010 changes to the Ontario provincial fee unfairly treat certain charitable and non-profit organizations (local hospital auxiliaries) by not providing for the complete elimination of the fee which would otherwise be used by these organizations to

increase their support for local health care equipment needs and other community needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to eliminate the Ontario provincial fee on break-open tickets for all charitable and non-profit organizations in Ontario and allow all organizations using this fundraising tool to invest more funds in local community projects, including local health care equipment needs, for the benefit of Ontarians."

I agree with this petition and affix my name, and I'll give it to page Yong Da to take to the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Unfortunately, that concludes the time we have for petitions.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

PROTECTION OF MINORS IN AMATEUR SPORTS ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PROTECTION DES MINEURS PARTICIPANT À DES SPORTS AMATEURS

Mr. Ouellette moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 104, An Act to provide protection for minors participating in amateur sports / Projet de loi 104, Loi visant à protéger les mineurs qui participent à des sports amateurs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Thanks, all, for being here again today.

I'm going to give a bit of a history on what the intention of this bill is. It's the fifth time that I've had the opportunity to debate it.

One of the things that I've been blessed with—or cursed with, because you always remember the good and the bad things—is memory. I can recall, when I was in grade 6, that we had a new principal brought into the school at that time. My father, who was a police officer at the time, turned to me and he said, "Listen, I just want you to stay away from that individual. I don't want you to go near that individual. I don't want you alone in any way, shape, or form."

I said—you know, you're in grade 6—"Why, Dad?"

Like I said, Dad was a cop, and when he went into cop mode, you backed off. He said, "Because I said so!"

Two years later, I recall, I was in grade 8, and I asked him, "Dad, why did you tell me, when I was in grade 6, to stay away from that new principal at the school?"

He said, "The reason was because I had arrested him for sexually molesting a 14-year-old boy in Continental Massage in downtown Oshawa." There was no way to recognize the individual or discipline them or ensure that

it never happened again by removing them from that occupation.

At that time, when I was in grade 8, I said, "Listen, that's wrong. And if I ever get a chance to do anything about it, that's exactly what I'm going to do."

When I first came here, the very first bill that I tried to work with when we were in power was dealing with individuals in this fashion in that profession, and trying to ensure that those individuals are not affiliated or associated with children and youth in any way, shape or form, to make sure that the kids don't have—and I have to say that nothing ever happened to me in the school, and it hasn't happened to me, to my life, in this particular case, nor do I know individuals. But I can tell you, that particular principal went to jail 20 years after I left that school for the things that he did with kids, and it wasn't stopped at that time.

What I've tried to do is, I've tried to bring forward a bill. I thought it had finally all taken place when the Minister of Education—it was Janet Ecker at the time—brought forward a bill that dealt with this particular issue.

Life was fine until I started coaching hockey. Our boys came along, and I started coaching kids' hockey. While we were out there, out playing rep hockey in Oshawa, a little NHL "novice A" hockey, one of the parents came to me and said, "Coach, you see that referee out there? They shouldn't be there with kids." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I can't tell you, but I'm telling you right now, that person should not be out there with those kids." "Well, why?" "I can't tell you." "Why can't you tell me?" "Because of my job." "Where do you work?" "I can't tell you that. But I'm telling you right now, that individual should not be out with those kids in any way, shape or form."

So, as an elected official, you make contacts; you do your due diligence and try to do the background checks. Lo and behold, I found out through my sources that the individual had multiple convictions involved with kids.

So I started a process. I went to the referees' association, and I said to the association, "Look, you've got an individual who shouldn't be out there with kids at all." Because for those who know, I believe it's at 12 years old that you can start reffing hockey, as long as you have a senior official out there with you. It would mean that this individual, this convicted pedophile, would be in the same room as a 12-year-old, and those are the sorts of things that I tried to stop way back when I first started the legislation process.

Well, I went to the association. They were all excited and upset. So I asked for a meeting about a month later, and I said, "What's going on? I see that person out there on the ice still." They said, "Jerry, you don't know what you're talking about." I said, "We've checked up on this person." They read his application and they said, "Do you realize he's a police officer?" And I looked at them and I said, "Do you realize he's been convicted of impersonating a police officer?"

Well, this individual has since been deported out of Canada and no longer participates. But when this took

place, I met with Hockey Canada, and I met with the great people here at the Legislature to try to bring forward legislation that will address this issue. I explained to Hockey Canada that this was what was taking place, that anybody affiliated with kids, which included the coaches, managers and trainers, as well as the referees—because, quite frankly, I always try to instill in the kids that I coach that if the referee tells you to do something, you respect that individual and you follow the guidelines. So if one of the referees had said, "Hey, you, kid. Come here. I want to talk to you," that kid would have taken the direction of the coach and followed that individual.

Hockey Canada then came forward with a program that required background checks for all referees. But when we did the research for this, we found out that—and it was great, the legislative research here. We asked them to start looking around, and they suggested, "Why don't we look at other sports as well?" So we start looking out in all the sports in the province of Ontario, and, lo and behold, we find out that there is no consistency for background checks in any sport. Hockey, because of what's happened with Sheldon Kennedy and a number of other individuals, has a great program province-wide and Canada-wide to ensure that there are background checks, but there's no consistency in any of the other sports in Ontario. So we brought forward a bill and looked at the possibilities of what may happen and the implications of having background checks.

Since April 2012, when I debated this, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you—here are some of the headlines. September of this year: "Toronto Police Charge Former Softball, Hockey Coach with Child Sexual Assault." April 2012: "Swim Coach Charged in Alleged Sex Assault of a Minor." "Lacrosse Coach Charged with Sex Assault to Appear in Court." "Former Hockey Coach"—and the list goes on and on and on, and it's happening on a regular basis.

What I'm trying to bring forward and trying to have the Legislature do is have what's called a vulnerable persons check. Essentially, what happens is the individuals would make application through a police department, and there has been some controversy which I'll try to address in regard to this, whereby a vulnerable persons check would be asked for for individuals.

Now, I'm going to answer some of the questions, because I know the member from Trinity-Spadina, the last time we debated this, had a number of questions on this.

What somebody would do is they would go in—and most of the volunteers participate as a hockey coach, a lacrosse coach and in other aspects as well. So they would ask for multiple copies. They would ask for four copies, for example, and then would be able to submit one of those copies—and they pay a one-time fee—to each sport that they participate in. That way, it reduces some of the costs and burden on the individuals and the background check for the entire process.

But what this does is it checks individuals to make sure that we're not having convicted or charged individ-

uals, who have been charged with dealing drugs, for example, out with kids who might be responsive, receptive—or individuals who have a number of drinking and driving charges. Do we want those kids driving, quite frankly—last weekend was a tournament in Chicago and last month was in Philly and those things. Do you want that sort of individual?

All this does is establish a parameter by which the leagues can determine if this individual should be one that they want coaching or participating with their kids. So it gives the league the opportunity to review and take a look and do due diligence for the organization.

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The member from Trinity–Spadina as well had asked questions about the limitation of scope in regard to this, because it's dealing with amateur sport only.

SportOntario would decide exactly what sports are considered amateur sports. We're not talking about kids playing road hockey; we're talking about organized ones that would receive funding from the province through SportOntario, like lacrosse, basketball, baseball, softball, hockey and all those sorts of sports that have organized aspects to them.

You have to start somewhere. What this does is kind of set the groundwork for other individuals or other volunteers in other parts of society to be able to have that infrastructure in place in order to move forward with it.

I can tell you that there was a lot of concern with the cost of it, but when you look realistically—I think I paid \$25 last year. Our league has accepted it for a number of years now with hockey, so I pay that one-time fee that, quite frankly, most coaches charge back to the team and the team ends up paying it. So it costs maybe a dollar a player, sort of thing, in order to cover the cost for the background check. I can recall that some organizations were all upset: “If we move forward with this, we're going to lose all kinds of volunteers.” My first response was, “Is that the sort of volunteer you want in your organization? Why wouldn't they want these background checks?” We want to make sure that the kids are protected in the best way we possibly can.

Quite frankly, these background checks only talk about past behaviour. Those are the individuals who were caught. But it sets a precedent out there whereby individuals who are looking at these areas—I mentioned a couple here. Sometimes these predatory aspects—what I'm being told is that they will develop relationships for a number of years before they actually act on these sorts of things. We want to make sure it sets a precedent and enough of a deterrent for individuals that, “Hey, this is an area we need you to stay away from and not participate in this activity in any way, shape, or form.”

Also, I know that one of the members here spoke about Volunteer Canada and the 10-step screening that took place. Essentially, the police check is step 7, which is a very key one.

Of the other ones, the first is assessment and then position assignment. So they go into an organization: “What do you need for positions?” That's the assessment

to determine—for example, in hockey, for which I'm an on-ice instructor now, we have coaches, trainers, managers and on-ice assistants—and then, position assignment. So you go through a process: “Okay, we need this many coaches and this many trainers and this many assistant coaches,” as well as recruitment: “Where are we going to get them from?” That's the application process, and then you go through an interview process, which deals with references.

The seventh part is the police checks, and then there is orientation and training.

I can tell you that the law, although we've had it pass second reading four times now—hopefully it will pass again and we can get it to committee. As a result of bringing this bill forward, we've had a significant amount of interest generated from a large number of organizations. For example, Ontario Lacrosse contacted me and asked me to speak as one of the keynote speakers at their luncheon to explain this process, because they wanted to move forward but didn't know how. They didn't know how to do it and where to start.

It was quite simple. All it was, was individuals who have applications. They go and do a police background check—there are companies that provide this service out there so a league can go and get a reduced rate en masse for all its people participating in it with the kids. They can go, and then the league reviews them. They open the sealed envelope and decide, “Yes, this is a person we want involved with our kids; no, this is a person we don't want,” and they don't need to disclose any information in any way, shape or form. They just say, “Thank you very much. We have chosen somebody else to coach this particular team that you've applied for.” That way, these organizations have the ability to check and say, “No, this is a one-time issue that happened 25, 30, 40 years ago. It's not something to worry about.”

Lacrosse Ontario actually said they were moving forward with it, even if it didn't pass. The same thing happened with the Canadian Ski Patrol. They said they really appreciated it and thought it was a good thing, and they were going to talk to other organizations.

The design of it: We found, when we did the research, that there were organizations in the province of Ontario that already provided this service and had guidelines for how long it was good for. All we're doing is—you find out how long in Ontario it's going to be, how long it's going to take place, and we'll move forward with that.

All I can say is that we want to do the best we can to make sure our kids are protected in any way, shape, or form possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek on a point of order.

Mr. Paul Miller: I don't believe we have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'll ask the table to check to see if a quorum is present.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Further debate.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm pleased to speak to this bill and thank the member from Oshawa for bringing this issue to the Legislature again, for the fifth time: five attempts to bring greater safety and security to our youth. It's unbelievable to me, Speaker—actually it's unconscionable—that legislation to protect youth in sports has not become law yet. I want to be sure that the provisions in the bill provide the best protection of our youth who just want to enjoy a solid sports experience. Of course, some want to move on up through the ranks of provincial, national, international, Pan/Parapan Am and Olympic status.

Also, Speaker, I'll be sharing a couple of minutes with the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

In the explanatory note, it sets out who will be subject of the police report. I think it's a good list. Referees, other officials, trainers and coaches must all agree to have a police force release a copy of their criminal record to the organizer of the sports activity. But it doesn't talk about the facility staff having a police check. As we know, one of the most horrendous perpetrators of abuse to young children was an usher at a facility here in Toronto, someone who used his position to coerce these young, bright-eyed hopeful youth into a downward spiral of abuse. In the definitions to the act, it doesn't include provincial legislation that identifies child care providers, family or not, who have a record of abuse, and I wonder if this also should be included.

The act states that the minister may appoint any person to be an investigator. That person can look into the compliance with the act. This causes me some concern also. I would want to know that the investigator is governed by the rules or laws that ensure very careful application of the investigator's duties and confidentiality. I would also want to be sure that the investigator did not overstep the authority of their position and seek other personal, confidential information.

It also provides authority to seize and detain information, but it doesn't seem to provide rules for how that information is held and who has access to it. It's also doesn't clarify how an investigator would obtain a warrant issued under section 158 of the Provincial Offences Act. I also want to know, Speaker, to whom an investigator reports her or his findings and what action stems from that report.

Although I understand the intent of the "no liability" sections of the bill, I do have some concerns about them and look forward to full discussion when this bill comes before the standing committee for public hearings and debate. I anticipate participating in the process of writing the regulations that will clarify all of these questions.

It is clear to me, Speaker, that many sports organizations already have policies and practices in place that address the intent of this bill. But implementing an across-the-board system that will ensure equal practices across this province makes good sense. The bill's intent is to make the system clear and to remove any chance of any problem being created or anything falling through the cracks. Organizations will be clear about the protec-

tion of minors, and this does not start, nor should it end, with a mandatory criminal record check.

The government must be committed to listening to the variety of concerns that sports organizations have and be willing to act on these, and the standing committee process will provide this platform. I'll encourage the subcommittee members to expand the time allocated for deputations at the standing committee so that as many organizations as possible can bring forward their concerns and their recommendations to make the bill even more complete and as strong as possible.

We have already received the comments and concerns of Sport4Ontario in their submission on the 2009 version of this bill, and they make a good point. It's not just in sports that child abuse occurs. There are often people in walks of life that could cause harm to a child. But this bill is a start, addressing a sector where sexual abuse of children has caught the headlines in the last few years. It's been in the hockey sector where athletes have taken the courageous step of going public with their abuse, and their courage has brought attention to this sector.

Sport 4 Ontario speaks of police record checks, saying "There is no question of the merit of the screening process and its direct impact on reducing risk within the environment. Screening is a necessary step not only to protect minors, but also to protect the organization itself from fraudulent activities that may affect its ability to meet stated objectives."

They note that the police checks are not a new initiative within the non-profit sector and that, "For organizations that serve the vulnerable population and that rely on volunteers to satisfy their objectives, there is no room for complacency.

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Sport4Ontario also delineates other concerns. Effective screening, as prescribed by Volunteer Canada, is a 10-step process. It takes into consideration the position of the volunteer and the level of risk to people and assets. It requires applications, interviews and reference checks, and requires orientation, training, supervision and evaluation of volunteers.

A criminal record check is but one of 10 steps, and although it may help an organization to make a sound decision, on its own it does not provide effective screening. Criminal record checks cannot provide an accurate assessment of someone's suitability or provide a complete criminal history. A criminal record check from the local police detachment may only capture criminal convictions within that particular jurisdiction. If a person moves from town to town and leaves a trail of convictions, they may not be disclosed. Bill 104 does not require a criminal record check that includes a CPIC—Canadian Police Information Centre—check that would capture criminal convictions across the country. Criminal record checks do not capture dropped charges or investigations of criminal behaviour.

A question that Sport4Ontario also raised is, how does an organization deal with a positive police check? Should the police check information come directly to the

organization? Is it then in the position of informing the prospective volunteer? Perhaps consideration should be made of setting out a system such that the police would contact the prospective volunteer directly about a positive police check. This would allow a person to look into the results of the police check, ensure the accuracy and then perhaps reconsider applying to volunteer. This would take the sports organization out of any possible conflict situation.

Sport4Ontario addresses this issue by stating that:

“There are instances when a volunteer may present with a previous conviction from their early adulthood, or with a conviction that is not related to the position they seek to obtain, and has no bearing on their ability to serve as an effective volunteer.

“That they simply provide a criminal record check serves to comply with the legislation.

The legislation does not”—I repeat, does not—“explore the types of offences for which a person might be eliminated from consideration which would create an unbalanced approach throughout the system.”

A young person who had perhaps partied, had a few drinks and made the horrible decision to drive might very well have a criminal record, but a DUI may not have an impact on the type of volunteer position they are seeking, and it may have been decades since they acted foolishly as a young person. Their experience may also serve as a good lesson to the youth with whom they would volunteer. So some latitude may be sought, and a positive police check not something that would prevent them from being accepted as a volunteer.

As I raised earlier, I have deep concerns about the protection of confidential information should a police report provide negative results. How is this information retained, who has access to it and what is the system for destruction of the information? I don't know, but it is appropriate to give the police check report directly to the prospective volunteer to deal with.

There really must be a proper system in place for every organization to use for the receipt and retention, as well as the sharing, of information on police check reports. Having said that, I also wonder, should consideration be given to getting information on people charged with an offence that would cause concern about abuse?

And I wonder what criteria the minister should use for the appointment of these investigators. The minister can appoint investigators who have rather broad powers of entering private dwellings and searching, so I want to be very certain about who these people are, what criteria have been used for appointing any one of them. That, along with other concerns, will be raised during the standing committee process.

I want to assure the member of my support for this bill, and that I look forward to fine-tuning and perhaps even writing amendments to make it even stronger and clearer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I welcome the member from Oshawa for having introduced this bill—for the

fifth time, I understand—the Protection of Minors in Amateur Sport Act. I really do want to acknowledge his persistence, his patience and his commitment. Five times on this certainly is an indication of how important this is to him and how passionate he is about it. As a fellow resident of this member in Durham region, I've come to learn a little bit about him, in that he is very dedicated to the world of amateur sport. I thank him for the work he does in Durham and the region beyond. I think I did speak at least once to this bill before—I'm not sure, but at least once—because it sounds very consistent with what was brought forward before. I wish him luck in bringing this further to the next step.

Just to summarize the bill as I understand it: It would require that any amateur sports program in which a person under the age of 18 may participate will be required to obtain a copy of a criminal record from a police force for every person who acts in a position in that program. That would include people like referees, trainers, coaches and other officials.

As a mom with two kids still in the school system, and with one of them very active in sports, I think this is a bill I can generally support in principle. There are some questions I have. I think there are some issues that need to be addressed in committee. Following the member from the third party from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, I think there's a lot of knowledge in this House from members, such as the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, that can really help see this go where it needs to go. He obviously has a lot of expertise in this area, given his life before Queen's Park or maybe it's his life after hours. I'm not sure if he's still involved in refereeing and coaching and things like that.

I do want to talk just a little bit, Speaker, if I may, about amateur sports in Ontario, where we're at as a government on this right now, and what kind of protections that are in place right now and what kind of investments are already there. In 2013-14, about 58 provincial sports and multi-sport organizations will receive over \$7.6 million in funding. The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, which provides that funding, is committed to ensuring a safe sport environment for all Ontarians, particularly our most vulnerable populations, such as our children and youth. In fact, as a condition of base funding, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport requires the provincial and multi-sport organizations to implement board-approved risk management policies that include, but are not limited to, things like an anti-doping policy; a code of conduct for boards, athletes, officials and volunteers; conflict-of-interest guidelines to the board and the operational staff; a discipline policy with appeals procedure; and a harassment policy.

Our government also recognizes the significant role that officials and volunteers play in sports. They ensure that the rules are followed and applied in a fair and ethical manner, allowing young people to participate in and have the opportunity to have what we all want them to have, which is an enjoyable experience, of course.

However, there are some questions and some points, I think, to be raised around this bill. The first one is, who

exactly does it apply to? I think the bill mentions those in amateur sports, of course, such as the ones I mentioned before: trainers, coaches, referees. But people under 18, of course, participate in a variety of activities, everything from horseback riding to dance—which my daughter participates in—and other things. We want to be clear about who exactly is covered in this bill. We have to be clear about the people around the sports who are supporting it: parents, community volunteers. Some of these things are for more informal activities, like weekend pickup games and things like that. Are they captured in this bill? I'm not sure.

We also want to make sure that we're not running into any unintended legal consequences or employment issues with respect to the criminal record side of this. There are privacy concerns, perhaps. The bill requires two organizations to get and keep a copy of the criminal record, but they can become stale and could be considered, perhaps, prejudicial to an individual, depending on what the record says, and if an individual obtains a pardon for their record of conviction, that should be destroyed. This could be problematic for amateur sport. We don't want to have situations where an organization might hold copies of those prior records without knowledge of a subsequent pardon, for example. So those are some of the concerns.

1430

The bill is quite specific in some areas, but there are a couple of areas I've mentioned that I think are worth examining further. It is something that I know the member is very passionate about, and I think I sense a lot of will around the Legislature to move this forward in a constructive way. Again, I thank the member from Oshawa for his commitment and his persistence. Let's see where this goes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's indeed an honour to stand in support of my colleague from Oshawa, Mr. Ouellette. He has a great reputation in his participation. And on this bill, specifically, it's the fifth time around.

I'll also say, at a personal level, I know how engaged he is. He has two sons, both very talented boys. In fact, the first one was born just after he was elected here in 1995. Both Josh and Garrett are—I know them; I've met them. I've actually played golf with Garrett. He's a huge guy who can hit the ball 100 miles. But I know his father has been engaged. In fact, we were just chatting that he would be engaged probably in a tournament this weekend.

I think everyone here realizes that it's not just hearsay. He has been persistent on it, and just in preparation, I looked into this. There's a national research group. It's called Justplay, a firm that logs critical incidents in youth sports. It has recently conducted research for hockey, soccer, football and baseball leagues. Its findings indicate that coaches are the significant cause of abusive contact and conduct in youth sports. Justplay has recorded 9,300 incidents in just over 23,800 hockey games in three Ontario leagues alone. That's the number of incidents,

and that's 39% of all games that have a serious instance of abuse.

Now, academic studies aren't the only story. It's from personal experience with coaches and all of us as parents. I certainly am a parent with five children. Over that time, I was drawn in, like many parents, to be supportive of their child and look out for them and, to some extent, become engaged voluntarily, often as a manager or a coach. In my case, I was quite competitive and quite reasonably athletic, I would say. Just looking into that, I coached in certainly hockey—I played at a fairly good level there—but also soccer, swimming and skiing. In fact, I am a ski instructor to this day. It has really graduated as you're with young people.

Here's really an admission in public. When Jerry first started talking about this—I never would be in any way physical with children, but I am fairly competitive. I know that when I was a soccer coach I used to yell my head off, which isn't proper behaviour. I think that those kinds of clinics that I went to when I was first in soccer, because I really didn't know much about the game and they were always looking for coaches—everyone should be mindful today with the stress. Even these studies that I referred to indicated that this causes elevated distress levels and anxiety, even from physical and aggressive abuse. It causes lower performance, so you're really not helping by yelling at the kids. Now, I'd say hopefully I was not too bad with my children. I think my children are fine, and I'm very proud of them, but I'm sure I was a pretty assertive parent; there's no question about it.

But the government of Ontario needs to create a framework in which critical incidents in amateur sports—and other activities, as he was talking about, other people who are in contact with children—and we can expand that beyond sport—need to prevent.

Certainly I support the intent here; it's that there's a criminal background check. That's just the beginning. Education is certainly a component of this. I commend the member from Oshawa for persistently bringing it forward. I would encourage all members to support it in the spirit of the season, as well as the real protection of children at the heart of this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It's a pleasure to rise and add my voice to the debate.

I want to first and foremost recognize the member from Oshawa and the fact that he has done some great work here. This is, I believe, the fifth time that the member has tabled this bill.

I was also struck by his story. I don't know if any of the youth who are in the assembly were listening, but the member from Oshawa was basically eight years old. He was in school when he was faced with an issue and he made a promise to his dad that if ever he was in a position to make a law that would help future youth in a similar situation, he said he would do it. Lo and behold, the member from Oshawa made his way as an elected official and is now in the Legislative Assembly, and he

put forward a bill to protect young people. I was quite impressed by that story. So maybe if you have an idea, as a young person, that maybe in the future you'll become an elected official—maybe an MPP or a city councillor or an MP—and the ideas you have now you can help implement when you get elected. Even still, if you have a great idea, send it our way and we'll try to get it implemented sooner than that.

I also want to talk about some of the considerations of the bill. I think it's very important, first and foremost, that we protect our youth, that we do whatever we can to make sure that young people playing in sports—engaging in activities that we want to encourage—are protected, that their environment is safe, and that we do whatever we can to make sure there's a framework across the province so it's not just in some areas that there's good strong protection but it's actually across the province.

We know that there are many organizations already that have safety checks in place. They have criminal checks and other things of that nature. But the problem is that there isn't a provincial framework that makes sure that across the entire province there is consistency with respect to the way we monitor those who are dealing with young people. I think that's one of the issues that the member is trying to address.

One of the areas that I want to touch on before I finish up—the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek brought it up—is that we have to be careful about who we preclude or stop from having access to our youth. The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek brought up a great example and I want to build on that: There are some cases where people who have a criminal record might actually act as a great role model. I can tell you a brief story of a good friend of mine who actually had quite a serious youth record for an assault, an assault with a weapon; he spent some time in jail. He was in a bad group of friends. He was in a horrible circumstance, and he actually made his way out of that bad circumstance. He ended up getting a university degree and went on to become a lawyer. He now acts as a great role model and tells youth about healthy choices, appropriate choices, and how they can avoid getting into some of the trouble that he got into. He's a great lawyer, a great youth advocate, but he did have a criminal record. Now he's been pardoned, but it goes to show that there can be people with great assets who can help and contribute to our society who may have faced some difficulties.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It's my pleasure to rise in this House to speak to Bill 104. I'd like to also join in thanking the member for bringing this forward, given the importance of safety for children in our province, but also fostering an environment in which they can learn and grow and participate in in amateur sports. I think that, certainly, the persistence of the member in championing this bill is to be commended.

Amateur sport plays a significant role in our communities across the province, and it especially prepares

young people for life. I think that's something that we've all seen in terms of amateur sports across the province.

It's an especially important time, with the Pan Am/Parapan Am Games coming in 2015. We know that sports will be an inspired topic right across Ontario and it will invite many young people to join in and to participate in their communities. This celebration of sport and culture is really an important way to motivate young people to participate in their communities, and building a culture of sport and recreation makes our communities healthy and strong places. It allows our young people to experience extremely important life skills and values that help them throughout their lives, such as teamwork. It inspires a sense of achievement and provides a sense of discipline, as well as structure, to a young person in their formative years.

1440

I certainly recall that one of my fondest memories was watching my niece, who lives in Whitby, playing soccer when she was three years old. It was just a wonderful moment. All of the children were on the field, and what was amazing to me was how structured they were in playing this game at that young age—and all of the coaches and referees who were there, surrounded by families that were looking on. I was so proud of my niece because I could see a budding athlete just then at the age of three.

Speaker, the bill is an important aspect of ensuring our children's safety. It looks at amateur sports programs so people under the age of 18 have added protection by having a copy of a criminal record from a police force for every person who is acting in a position within that program that deals with children under the age of 18. It ensures that the organizers have really thought through and paid attention to the backgrounds of their volunteers, especially in key positions such as referees, other officials, trainers and coaches. A person is not allowed to hold any of those positions without consenting to have a police force release a copy of his or her criminal record to the organizer. This is a very important factor, I think, in attracting people to our amateur sports system.

I do want to point out that the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport is committed to ensuring safe sport environments for all Ontarians, particularly our most vulnerable populations, such as Ontario's children and youth, who perhaps don't yet have a voice. It's to ensure that we provide a system that protects them. That is why we support programs and services that protect children and youth when competing in sports and recreation activities throughout this province.

I just want to reiterate that we want to have the safest systems possible for Ontario's children participating in activities in their communities. We also want to ensure that this bill receives the attention it duly deserves, ensuring that we don't have any unintended consequences, such as, how is the record-keeping going to be treated? Does it respect our province's human rights laws as well as its privacy laws? Those are still important aspects that need to be thought through to strengthen this bill.

I want to commend once again the member from Oshawa for really championing this bill and championing a very important value that we all share in Ontario, which is sportsmanship; and ensuring that our children are participating in a safe way, really getting the benefit that we all desire from their being part of these sports and recreational activities; and that we have a system in place that protects their rights.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: It is my pleasure to rise this afternoon in support of Bill 104, An Act to provide protection for minors participating in amateur sports. As the former critic for children and youth and a mother of five, I would like to commend my colleague from Oshawa for his thoughtfulness in drafting this legislation and for his persistence in bringing it forward once again.

Bill 104 proposes to establish mandatory criminal background checks for all those who would volunteer with sports organizations which serve those under the age of 18. No one would be permitted to hold the positions of referee, trainer, coach or other amateur sports official without first consenting to have the police force release a copy of his or her criminal record to the organizer.

Many organizations have policies regulating background checks, which is a reassuring thing. But the fact remains that there are currently no provincial minimum standards or guidelines. At the present time, there exist no legislative requirements for mandatory criminal background checks for volunteers engaged in organized amateur sports that serve youth under the age of 18. You don't have to be an overprotective parent to understand that this leaves open a significant loophole.

In light of the fact that earlier this week we celebrated International Volunteer Day, it's important to underline that the vast majority of individuals who give of their time and expertise to make amateur sports available to our young people are doing so with the best of intentions. They serve their community and their neighbourhoods and stand as a great example of what it means to be an engaged citizen.

But, of course, we accept that people are for the most part good and yet we take precautions. There's an old proverb made famous by the Great Communicator: "Trust, but verify." I think that's somewhat the spirit of Bill 104, though obviously the trust follows verification.

Bill 104 requires convicted offenders to submit a vulnerable persons police check with the associations in which they are volunteering to ensure whether they should be working with kids. The amateur sports organizer must obtain the copy of the criminal record or the written response no earlier than four years before the day on which the given athletic program begins and no later than 90 days after the day on which the given athletic program begins.

In 2012, I brought forward a piece of youth-oriented private member's legislation, Bill 81, the Inherited Heart Rhythm Disorders Awareness Act. Like Bill 104, it aimed to strengthen protections around young athletes.

My bill was intended to raise awareness of the warning signs of sudden cardiac arrest in children and youth. Spotting those signs, such as fainting, palpitations and shortness of breath during physical activity, and acting appropriately has the potential to help identify sudden cardiac arrest and save a young life.

Similarly, Bill 104 aims to identify warning signs before the unthinkable occurs. This is a valuable tool for amateur sports organizations and will reinforce protections that many already have put in place. Our communities and our children would be better for it, and I am pleased to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: It is a distinct pleasure to be able to stand and speak to this bill, Bill 104, to provide protection for minors participating in amateur sports.

I myself am the father of two young children who are very involved in amateur sports. My son plays rep baseball and hockey, and my daughter the same. They have coaches who do an amazing job, for starters. They have kind of grown with them through their years in amateur sports, in baseball and hockey, and they've grown to actually love their coaches.

The relationship that children forge with their coaches, and vice versa, is a really important one. They learn a lot of lessons from their coaches and mentors in many cases. They build that trust with them. The fact that on the odd occasion, a very heinous occasion, some adults and coaches take advantage of these situations of trust with these children, in some cases over a period of years, and commit some despicable acts on them, I think we all can agree, is absolutely reprehensible.

When I was a city councillor in Barrie, we had this issue come up locally, and as a council debated quite a bit what local council could do to try to mitigate the damage that could be done by some of these people. Luckily in Barrie, there haven't been any very big cases or nasty situations like this that have happened, but we know them all that have happened nationally, that have gotten national exposure with coaches who have taken advantage of young children, and they're pretty heinous. I think in one case there was actually a Barrie Colt who went on to the NHL and ended up in jail himself for some acts that he committed as a result of having been abused for years and years by his coach. So we need to do more.

Going back to when I was a city councillor, we actually decided as a city council to defer all costs associated with getting a criminal record check at the Barrie police department. Now, anyone who went to get a criminal record check, whether it was for volunteering at their local school, at their child's school, or whether it was going to be a coach for baseball or hockey—I know myself, I coached little league baseball before I had this job; I don't have the time to do it anymore. I had to get a criminal record check, and it cost \$25 at that time. It's not a lot of money and it's well worth it, but at the same time, there are certainly people out there who don't have

the money to do it. So that was one way we were able to make sure that happened and make it easier for people to get those record checks and encourage more people to get involved in children's sports and volunteer in their communities.

1450

But this bill takes it to a whole new level, where now organizations are going to have mandatory criminal background checks for volunteers engaged with amateur sports. I think this is a really big step. It is a shame, I think, as was mentioned earlier, that this is something we're still debating, that this is something that still comes up. It seems to be something that we should just do. It's one of these really simple things we can do to protect our children, and to be debating it here is a bit of a sad story, that the member from Oshawa—I was going to say Durham—has had to bring this forward so many times. And luckily, he's not here to take advantage of that situation.

Interjection: Strike that, Speaker.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Yes.

But it is true that there is a desperate need for this. We need to do everything we can. One child who has been abused by anybody is too many, but one who is being abused by someone we put in the trust of a coach, and anyone who is in a position of trust with our children, is really even more reprehensible than you can imagine.

So whatever we can do to protect our children and make sure that those who are with them on an ongoing basis get criminal record checks, I think we need to do that. Anyone who wants to coach and be around kids shouldn't have a problem with it either, if they don't have anything to hide.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I thank the member for Simcoe Centre for those remarks.

The member for Oshawa has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I very much appreciate the opportunity.

For the ref from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, the Minister of Consumer Services, the ski instructor from Durham, the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton, the members from Scarborough–Guildwood, Burlington and Barrie who spoke today, I'm going to try to get some answers back.

The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek had mentioned the sports facility workers. The intent here is to start somewhere and then eventually expand out. Once you have an infrastructure in place that you can move forward, it's easier to expand. It's difficult enough to get—I mean, five times we've tried to get it. It's difficult enough to get it in here to try and deal with it just the first time, with individuals involved directly.

I'm going to have to check into the investigators aspect that they had mentioned, because this is the first time in the five times that we have dealt with this that that issue has been brought up.

He also mentioned the possibility of the police trying to make the decision whether the individual should be involved. I think the police would be overwhelmed if

they had to go through all the applications. In the Durham region alone, there would be thousands of applications that the police would be expected to review to decide which one is good or which one is not, and that way the associations would make the decision on what should or should not be done.

The question regarding the individuals, who it would be—it would be any officials involved directly with the kids. It does not include pickup games, as I mentioned. The length of the check would be determined on associations, because some associations have been doing it for years, and very successfully, so if theirs are good for five years, why would we change that? And, yes, we're trying to bring some provincial consistency in across Ontario for all organizations, yet give the organizations that are already doing it some flexibility.

In closing, you know, for every one of these newspaper or media reports that we hear of, there are tens of thousands of great volunteers out there doing a great job for the right reason. We need to do what we can to protect those great volunteers out there by removing those bad players who aren't there for the right reasons. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario government should put a stop to new private electricity mega deals which are resulting in electricity rates being more than twice as high as in provinces with publicly owned and accountable electricity systems and that Ontario's Auditor General be given a mandate to review all existing private power contracts and report on value for money.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Bisson has moved private member's notice of motion 56. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Twelve minutes, Mr. Speaker? What am I going to do with that?

First of all, I want to say thank you to the Clerks for drawing me at the bottom of the list again. It is becoming a pretty regular thing whenever we draw PMBs, but 56 is the highest you've had me in a long time. I want to thank you for that.

I just want to say to all members of the House that I hope we're able to support this motion, and I want to lay out the arguments of what this is all about. Currently in Ontario, we have a bit of a mixed system where the government goes out through the OPA and signs private power deals with all kinds of different companies out there that build anything from wind farms to solar farms, non-utility generators using gas, cogens—you name it; they do all of these things. But they're signed with the Ontario Power Authority, and those particular deals, when signed, are not open to any kind of scrutiny.

On the other hand, you've got Ontario Power Generation, which runs everything from Darlington to Pickering

to dams on rivers across this province, and they have some gas-fired and coal-fired plants, all of which are subject to rate approvals by the Ontario Energy Board. It seems to me that there's a bit of a problem here, where you have, on the one hand, public power that is open to scrutiny, because there is not a private contract that's hidden behind closed doors. There is a rate approval process by which you can go before the OEB. You can ask questions, and you can find out what you need to know at the Ontario Energy Board when it comes to a rate approval or a rate increase that they're asking for at the OEB.

But when it comes to, let's say, a wind farm being built in your backyard or a non-utility generator such as gas or cogen being built somewhere near where you live, those particular deals are not subject to FOI—you can't do a freedom of information request in order to get the details on the contracts—and the rates they are paid, as far as how they come up to those rates, are essentially closed shop.

What we're saying—Andrea Horwath and New Democrats—by way of this motion is that we really need to have more transparency in the system. If the private sector is able to compete—and that's the argument—with the public utility generator, Ontario Power Generation, then let's have a bit of a level playing field.

I remember that my good friend Brian Mulroney, a former Prime Minister of Canada, used to talk about, "Oh my God, we need to have a level playing field." Well, I agree with Brian Mulroney: You need a level playing field. And the playing field has to be level in the sense that the public has the right to know.

These are our dollars. Yes, they're paid by way of the money we pay on hydro bills, but they're our dollars, and we as ratepayers have the right to know how much this power is costing us to generate and how we derive the cost that comes to be what's in our bill at the end of the month.

What we have certainly seen over the last number of years, first as a result of Mr. Ernie Eves, a former minister and eventually Premier of Ontario who started this whole, how would you say it, journey down the road of private power and making deals with the OPA for private power generation—since that time, we've seen a huge increase in the price of electricity. I believe, and I think a lot of people out there believe, that part of it is because of the way these particular deals have been structured and what's within those contracts.

For example, let's say you're a wind farm or a gas-fired plant. When you're negotiating your contract and you're going through the FIT process and eventually signing a contract with the OPA, there are a whole bunch of assumptions that you put into your contract about how much it costs you to build it physically, the cost to build the plant, and then how you recoup the investment over a period of—about 20 years is what normally these contracts are all about.

How they arrive at the number that is the rate we pay this particular plant for the generation of power is, I

think, very important for the public to know—how they got there. Is the rate we're paying out for this particular plant reasonable when it comes to the investment that's put in, or is this a bit of a windfall? I think there's some evidence out there that there is a windfall in some of these deals.

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We know that when the Liberals were in opposition, my God, they were so mad at Ernie Eves when he decided to go down the road of private power. They were on this side of the House. They were spinning; they were in orbit. I remember my good friend the member from Sudbury, Mr. Bartolucci, and others would come into this House, and they were upset. They couldn't believe that the Conservative government had done that and how opposed they were to it. They warned Ontarians of the day. They said, "If you go down this route, I tell you now that electricity prices will be double and triple what they are today." We as New Democrats said, "Of course. We know that." Because when you compare public power such as Manitoba, Quebec and the Ontario of the day to other jurisdictions that have private power—or a mixed system, as we have now—power rates have gone up.

But here's the interesting thing: They got elected and they forgot. They completely forgot what they talked about when they were in opposition. All of a sudden, they became Conservatives in a hurry. They decided, "Well, what we've all got to do is, we've got to take the same mantra," because Liberals really believed in what the Tories were trying to do; they were just mad at the Tories because they weren't the ones doing it. They got to the other side of the House and they said, "This is a great opportunity for us to make some really good relationships with people in the private sector. We're able to do this and seem as if we're doing some economic development across Ontario."

But the cost has been that electricity prices in this province have gone through the roof. Let me tell you what it means: We've been reading in the House—my leader, Andrea Horwath; our critic, Mr. Tabuns; other members; and myself—story after story after story where individuals in this province can't afford to pay their hydro bills. Where they used to be able to make ends meet on a particular income when it came to paying the hydro bill, the gas bill, the rent and whatever it might be, people are now saying, "Heck, the hydro bill is putting me out of being able to balance my budget." People are really mad, and I don't blame them. They see the rates go up, they say to themselves, "My God, look at what this is doing to my bill," and they're not able to afford to pay at the end of the month.

But then there's the other side of this whole thing, which is that Ontario Hydro, when it was set up by Mr. Beck some years ago, was set up as an economic development tool. Let me tell you. How did we end up with a smelter and a refinery in the city of Timmins with, then, Kidd Creek? The government of the day—and it was a Conservative government that was in power at that time—made some negotiations with Kidd Creek.

I remember people in Timmins—the mayor; council; and the then member for Cochrane South, as it was called at the time, Alan Pope, who was a member of the cabinet of the government of the day; along with New Democrats and others—were all saying, “Listen, we need to add value to the minerals that we take from the ground, and one of the ways that we can do that is by refining and smelting that metal here.” So we built a smelter and a refinery in the city of Timmins, and it employed somewhere between 700 and 900 people directly at the plant, plus all of the spinoff jobs that came from it.

Fast-forward to all of these private power deals. Xstrata, which then bought Kidd Creek—and Noranda; it got flipped over a couple of times—the Xstrata of the day said, “Listen, we have a plant in Sudbury, we have a plant in Timmins and we have a plant in Quebec. If we look at the cost of power, which is 30% of the cost of operating a smelter and refinery, because you use a lot of electricity in a refinery specifically, we can do it for a lot cheaper by going into Quebec.” Why? Because they have public power and they’re able to have electricity sold at cost. Why? Because that’s how hydro was set up in Ontario, and that’s the way it’s set up in Quebec and Manitoba. It’s used as an economic development tool to attract those types of industry into their jurisdictions, in order to create wealth, create economic opportunity and create jobs.

As a result of the high energy prices, as a result of the electricity prices going through the roof, Xstrata closed down the refinery and they closed down their smelter in the city of Timmins. They’ve since torn it down. We’ve lost those thousands of jobs, direct and indirect, in the city of Timmins, and we will never be the same.

We’ve rebounded somewhat because the price of gold and base metals in Timmins allowed us to do some other investments in other mining companies that have offset that; for example, Detour Lake gold mine, Lake Shore, Placer Dome and others have had some investment because of the price of gold being what it was a couple of years ago. We were darn lucky, because we have lost, permanently, out of the city of Timmins some couple of thousand jobs, direct and indirect, as a result of closing down Xstrata.

And that’s just but one town. That is across the entire province. We look at the mass exodus of companies that are moving out of Hamilton, that are moving out of Windsor, that are moving out of all kinds of different communities. A lot of those decisions are based on the price of electricity.

We’re saying, by way of this motion, let’s do two things. The first thing: Let’s stop the construction—don’t cancel existing contracts, I want to be clear. We know the folly of that, because we’re still dealing with that at the gas plant committee, but let’s stop the construction of new, private power deals as a first step.

The second step: Let’s take stock in what we have as far as these contracts. What can we learn from those contracts that’s good and bad, and what do we need to change? Let’s have some scrutiny. The public has the

right to know what is in those contracts so that if any other contracts are ever negotiated again, at least we have a public scrutiny process that puts the light on what people are negotiating. New Democrats believe that should be done within the confines of a public system.

If you look at what Ontario Hydro did prior to the whole taking-apart by Ernie Eves and the acceleration of that happening under the Liberals, we used to be able to deliver power in this province at a rate that was competitive with Manitoba and Quebec, and it was, in fact, lower at some points. We were able to compete and attract those jobs into our community, and people could afford their hydro bills.

We’re saying that this motion would allow us to put a pause, something the government has already said they’re prepared to do as far as new builds at this point. Under their long-term energy plan, which is going to give us a 33% increase in hydro over the next three years and 50-some-odd percent over the next five years, they’ve already said that they want to slow things down. Here’s the motion that will allow you to do that. Let’s stop the new builds as far as anything new on the books, and let’s deal with doing a value-for-money audit on all of the private power deals that are out there so that we can look at how these things are structured. Do they make any sense from the perspective of the ratepayer in the province of Ontario, individual businesses across this province and citizens who have to pay hydro bills?

I think if we do that, we can learn something from that exercise. Then we can be in a position to try to undo some of the damage that the Liberals have caused by way of their energy policy in this province—which has driven jobs out of this province and put people in a position of not being able to afford to pay their hydro bills—and to try to put some sanity back into the system.

I thank you for the time for this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I’m pleased to join the debate and to discuss the motion offered by my colleague from Timmins—James Bay. I read the motion, and it’s kind of an interesting motion. I’m not exactly sure what a mega deal is. I assume it’s bigger than a deal, and I’m not really sure about how one defines the spectrum of a mini deal, a deal, a big deal and a mega deal. But setting aside the ambiguity of some of that, I know he has, actually, read the long-term energy plan, and it’s an interesting motion because the 2013 long-term energy plan does not propose any new third-party peak power gas-fired generation plants. It’s sort of like saying, “I’d like to offer up this motion because it seems to be in line with what the government is going to do anyway.”

However, I actually do disagree with the notion that we should arbitrarily exclude the private sector from the business of generating power. Why shouldn’t a private sector firm be able to produce and sell rate-regulated power into the grid? It just doesn’t really add up.

He mentions Manitoba and Quebec, and very frankly, it’s not a valid comparison. Both of those provinces have

abundant and cheap falling water, which allows them to generate hydroelectricity very, very inexpensively. However, Ontario's power rates are very much in line with US border states such as Michigan, Pennsylvania and New York. Those states that border us and that have lower hydro rates achieve those lower rates, in the main, by burning dirty coal, and Ontario will not go back to burning coal.

The member asserts that hydro rates will go up by some rather arbitrary figure that I'm not sure where he got. However, what the long-term energy plan has said is that, on average, hydro rates will increase somewhere around 2.5% to 2.8% per year. Just for scale, hydro rates over the past several generations have averaged increases of around 2.5%, so this is not actually going to be that much of a departure.

One wonders in doing this whether this is intended to create some super bureaucracy, rather than encouraging investment in Ontario. I didn't actually get that from the general drift of what he said. It does show, however, that the member has read the long-term energy plan, and if he's read that he'll know that it includes very significant cost savings for both industry and ratepayers.

1510

The long-term energy plan is built around five key principles: cost-effectiveness, reliability, clean energy, community engagement and putting conservation first. Those are exactly the same principles that I think the member espouses. So what it means is that, by comparison with the last iteration of the long-term energy plan, three years ago in 2010, consumers can expect to pay about \$520 less over the next five years, and about \$3,800 less looking out to 2030. If you're a large industry, such as what the member has discussed, you can expect to pay about \$3 million less in the next five years and about \$11 million less, forecast out to 2030.

It's worth mentioning, although the member kind of danced around it but didn't actually say it, that since being elected in 2003, our government has not sold off any electricity assets that are owned by the province. In fact, during the 2004-06 period of reinvestments, Ontario was able to ensure a very competitive atmosphere to drive down the price for new generation simply because private sector firms were forced to compete for projects to ensure that they were price-competitive for Ontario taxpayers. This makes perfect sense. Where we have our base load generation, it will come from our hydroelectric plants and our nuclear plants, those parts of generation that meet the peak periods in the summer and the peak periods in the winter that involve generators that are not on all the time. For example, a peak power gas-fired generation plant might only be on 5% to 10% of the time. It doesn't really make a lot of sense to tie up a lot of public dollars to be invested in a peak power plant that's only going to be on one twentieth or one tenth of the time, so those things were subcontracted out. It's very simple technology: You burn natural gas, you boil water, you use compressed steam to spin a turbine to generate electricity.

Now, another point that the member, although he sort of danced around it, didn't mention is the stability that the long-term energy plan has proposed for hydro rates over the next—not just the short time, three to five years, but extending out over 20 years. Some of the analysis that we were presented this morning from the Ontario Power Authority shows exactly that, how the impact of even a large change in the present, when spread out over 20 years, amounted to just a very tiny fraction of a cent per kilowatt hour.

Now, Speaker, I understand the motivation of the member, who's actually been a bit of a role model for many of us over the last 10 years. Despite having a lot of time for him and respecting his intelligence, I'm afraid I can't agree with his opinion on this one, and I would urge members, with respect, not to support this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to join the debate today because there's a couple of things that we need to get straight in terms of the essence of this motion. Just to make sure everyone on camera watching right now understands, we're debating an NDP motion that, in essence, suggests putting a stop to new private electricity mega deals. I believe yesterday they were leading into this particular debate this afternoon by posing a question during question period. I feel it's so important, when we're talking about the most critical pillar of our economy, energy, and the cost of electricity that we need to really ensure that we're talking about the facts. It's important for everyone watching today that they understand that the little bit of fearmongering that was tried to be stirred yesterday was misled. According to Scott Miller, a CTV London reporter—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the member for Huron-Bruce to withdraw the unparliamentary comment.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Withdraw.

But I would like to quote the reporter from CTV London that spoke to the fact that there was incorrect information shared yesterday during question period. Essentially, the report read, "The New Democrats were later forced to admit they couldn't support that figure" that they shared, and they admitted that the figures they were touting, in terms of setting up for today's debate, were taken from an old article and it was incorrect. So we need to make sure that when we're discussing very important issues, we do indeed stick to the facts.

When I say that, I would like to share a couple of things with you, Speaker. First of all, it's nice to see that the third party finally seems to be getting anxious and angry about the cost of energy in Ontario, but, despite that, it boggles my mind that they continue to choose to support this corrupt and mismanaged government.

Another thing that we have to talk about is that—I've spoken about it and the Auditor General has supported the fact that time and time again the sky-high energy prices in the province of Ontario are actually a direct result, in part, of the Liberals' failed Green Energy Act.

Yet the third party, for whatever reason, can't seem to resist standing here today and attacking the private sector.

We've got this all upside down and backwards, because the reality is, we need to be looking at how we can prop up the private sector. They are the pulse, they're the heartbeat of our economy. We need to be looking at what we can do to encourage small business to expand and grow, so, ultimately, we have jobs throughout all of Ontario, rural and urban. In order to go forward and return this province to a state of the economic engine of Canada it once was, we need to have all parts of Ontario performing, if you will, on all cylinders.

In talking about all cylinders, just a couple of weeks ago I spoke in this House about the great work of an example, a benchmark, a case model, that could be followed in terms of public-private partnerships. I stood up and talked about Bruce Power. In my riding of Huron-Bruce, which is very rural—and we've lost a lot of manufacturing—we have to celebrate the fact that this private-public partnership is a significant job provider and part of the economic engine in my area that I call home.

Bruce Power is a fantastic place to work, and it was recognized for having one of the most respected corporate cultures in Canada. They have been a strong, responsible member of the corporate community, and they also have been a major provider of affordable, reliable baseload energy for the entire province of Ontario.

As we have heard many times in this House, Speaker, our economy is in desperate shape as a result of a decade of mismanagement. But we cannot be entertaining motions like today's coming from the NDP that would stifle and handcuff the ingenuity and the entrepreneurial spirit of our private sector.

I look forward to additional comments from my colleague from Nepean-Carleton.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to add my two cents to the debate that the member from Timmins-James Bay brought forward. His motion is quite simple. The first one is to take a pause so that you can look at what is happening. It would be not doing our job if we did not acknowledge that in many parts of our province there are a lot of people who are unhappy with some of the deals that have been signed for private electricity. Whether you look at all of the communities that are opposed to solar or wind or hydroelectricity, at the end of the day, we all agree that we need energy.

Everybody agrees that there is room and a place for renewable energy, but we have to take into account the human factor. The human factor is that, for a lot of those communities, they are not happy. What harm is there in giving them reassurance that we will have an independent third party look at those deals and reassure them that the deal is a good deal for the people of Ontario, it is a good deal for them too? That, to me, would go a long way toward bringing reassurance to people.

Right now, we don't know—as the member has said, those deals, because they are with the private sector, are

completely shielded from oversight. We don't know what's in it. We're all human beings, Mr. Speaker. When we don't know, we always think of the worst. Let's clear the air on this issue. Nobody said that something bad will come out; nobody said that we will throw this all out and we will stop ingenuity and we will stop things from happening—far be it from us. What we want is we want to clear the air. Let an independent third party look at those deals and reassure the people of Ontario that those are good deals. If they are not, maybe there are lessons to be learned as we move forward so that we make sure that our electricity prices remain affordable.

1520

We have all been receiving emails, letters and phone calls since the long-term energy plan came out, and already people are reaching out to their MPP. They're reaching out with stories where they cannot see a 33% increase in their hydro bills being something that they're able to support. They cannot see a 40% increase in the next five years as something that their income is going to be able to afford.

So how do we help to clear the air? We take a little pause on the new one. We don't tear up any contracts—NDPers don't do this; we respect the existing contracts. We just say, “No new ones until we have an opportunity to reassure the good people of Ontario that the deals that are in there now are good and they cannot be made any better.” If we find out a way to make them better, don't we all win? Don't we all win?

Transparency is a wonderful thing. On all sides of the House, people talk about the importance of having transparency. Some of those deals deal with a lot of money. The member used “mega deals,” well, because we're talking about mega bucks. We're talking about lots of taxpayers' money and lots of ratepayers' money that are going to be paying to support those private deals.

There are a lot of people who are unhappy. Why not give them a chance? We are there to listen to the people who have elected us. Why not give them a chance to be heard? Give them a chance to have an independent third party tell them, “You know what? This is a good deal.”

To me, the private sector has everything to gain in doing this. The private sector may come out on top and say, “Look, we are able to deliver things cheaper, on budget,” and it could be an opportunity for them to shine. We don't know what the end results will be, but what we do know is that as long as you keep it as a mystery—a deal where a lot of money gets exchanged but you don't know who's making what and if you're the sucker in that deal or if you're the winner in that deal—then human nature will take over and we will doubt it. The motion will clear the air.

The motion will bring a little bit of sunshine and sunlight onto those deals. It may very well come out a winner: “Please continue 100 miles an hour.” It could very well be: “Doing pretty good, but here are some tweaks.” Or it could not be; we don't know until it's done. But as long as we don't know, people will continue to be fearful, and we're not doing any service to the

people who brought us here by ignoring the fact that there are a lot of people who are unhappy.

The energy critic will be able to explain the finer parts—

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Details.

M^{me} France Gélinas: —and details of this bill way better than me, but I wanted to put in my two cents as the representative for Nickel Belt, where there are people who are not happy, where there are people who cannot pay their bill and who need to be heard. This is an opportunity for us to do what we are elected to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to rise to debate energy policy in this chamber today. I want to commend my colleague from Timmins–James Bay for bringing forward this motion.

Though I don't think we necessarily agree on this, he and I have spent a lot of time in the past couple of months in the gas plants committee. I think the one desire that he and I do share is for more and greater accountability with respect to energy planning in this province, because there seems to have been a lack of it in the past decade. That, I think, is where we depart because we certainly have our views on how we can move forward and he has his. I commend him for putting his ideas down for debate today, but I won't be accepting the premise on which he wants to move forward.

I think the problem is the key issue with this motion is that the government's decisions are the ones that are causing higher energy rates in Ontario. It's not businesses and private sector companies, like Bruce nuclear or others across the province. It is a result of this Liberal government and their decision-making capabilities—or inabilities perhaps is probably the more appropriate term.

I just look, for example, at next week. We will be faced with another auditor's report. It will deal with the OPG. They've been audited, and I quote from the AG report summary: "... challenges in recent years in improving its operational efficiency and reducing its operating costs, especially labour costs." So we will get a sneak peek of that, probably on Tuesday morning, and then we'll all have an opportunity to look at that in more depth.

But I think, Speaker, that is a very key issue for us. Why would we want to give more power and authority to crown corporations at this point in time, given the mess that we have seen with the OPA and others with respect to those cancelled gas plants? It's very clear that it is this Liberal government that is superseding those agencies that they have traditionally set up to be arm's-length. They have superseded their authority, they have interfered with their authority, and that is why our energy rates are high.

So I would question that once again, why we'd give more power and authority to those public companies at a time when we would want to make it harsher for private companies. I think that's an important distinction. One of the other things that I do fully support is this private sector competition that actually starts to keep costs low because there is competition and people want to—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Some competition. Have you seen the FIT program?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I didn't interrupt your comments, and I would ask that you not interrupt mine. I'm actually being quite respectful of your point of view. But that said, I do have a philosophical difference in terms of how we treat the private sector and the public sector. It is different than theirs.

So I'm going to go back. Whether it's cancellation of the power plants or something else that has been quite important to many of us in the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, and that is that in our communities we are actually fighting wind and solar developments at a high, subsidized price by this Liberal government—in fact, we put forward a motion in the public accounts committee asking that the government send the Auditor General in to look at those FIT contracts to determine how much of the public's money is going to subsidize this in the long run and how that impacts the rate base. We're going to continue to pursue that.

The other initiative that we took on today—and we did actually have the support of the third party, which I do appreciate—is to get all of the documents from the cabinet, from the Premier, from the ministers and from the OPA with respect to the cancellation of the two gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville and how that impacts the Ontario long-term energy plan, as well as the rate base for ratepayers here in the province of Ontario. We think that's pretty important because it's pretty clear this Liberal government has the reverse Midas touch. They have the reverse Midas touch: Everything this government touches with respect to energy policy turns to garbage instead of gold.

Speaker, it's not just in energy policy. I look at Ornge, I look at eHealth, I look at Cancer Care Ontario—

Mr. Rob Leone: Pan Am.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Pan Am is another perfect example of this government. Again, if we are going to force private companies to be dealt with in terms of more accountability measures, then I think it would be more prudent for the Ontario government to start looking internally, at some of its own areas. I think there should be less government in the sector, not more government in the sector. I think we have to figure out a way to have lower hydro rates, not higher hydro rates. I think we have to find a way for more reliable sources of power, not less reliable sources of power, like wind and solar, that we're actually heavily subsidizing.

So I think this government—again, I'm not going to attack the New Democrats. They have a position, and I respect that. I don't agree with it. We have our position, which I think is based on solid fundamentals. We've had a plan for two years. We have been running on that plan. But I look at this Liberal government and they've put forward in the past two, three years a long-term energy plan that is effectively a short-term energy plan, that's not effectively even worth the paper it's written on. Speaker, I'll tell you why.

Two days ago, when I asked in this House what the impact on the rate base would be with the cancellation of

the gas plants as it pertained to the LTEP, the minister stood up and he said it's not even in there. Then, at the end of question period, after one of his aides in the back decided to say, "Hey, hey, ho, ho, let's just be careful," he goes, "It is there. It is there now." So it magically appeared.

1530

The problem is, the minister himself doesn't even understand his own long-term energy plan, so it's no wonder that my colleagues in the New Democratic Party want to put forward this motion. It's no wonder that our party has put forward a white paper. It's no wonder that the two of our parties, despite I think some differences in how we would proceed, joined together today to say, "Hey, we need some more documents out of these guys with respect to the long-term energy plan and what the impact is going to be on rates." It's no wonder we've done that, Speaker, because these guys have left the public's rate base and the power system in Ontario in a complete and utter basket case of a mess, and we can't continue to do this.

We have said very clearly that we have a long-term energy plan. It's called Paths to Prosperity: Affordable Energy. We've got a number of paths, 13 in total, that talk about the way that we can move forward here in Ontario. It is a vast set of policies that are very different than where the current Liberal government would take us, and I believe that Tim Hudak is the best person to put forward that plan, the best person to lead that plan and the best person to restore affordable energy rates here in the province of Ontario.

While I will not be supporting this motion, I do congratulate my colleague from Timmins–James Bay for at least thinking about accountability in the energy sector when this Liberal government isn't.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, the reason we're debating this today is because rising electricity prices in Ontario are having a huge impact on families, on businesses and on employment. What we are seeing in Ontario today is really the logical outcome of a program of privatizing the energy system, increasing the costs and overbuilding the system to the advantage of a number of gas-generating companies. We are dealing with consequences of a trajectory on policy that we've seen since the late 1990s with Mike Harris, through Dalton McGuinty to today.

If we, in fact, look at our history, this province—and I've said this in the House before—built its industrial base on renewable power, non-profit power. Those two items together made a huge difference to Ontario's destiny. It allowed us to build industry in southwestern Ontario, and it allowed us to build industry in the north because people who were investing and people who were working had access to power they weren't being gouged for. They were being charged the cost of that power, and in this province, historically we were able to deliver affordable power.

Speaker, many have said in the last decade that the reason we needed to go to privately owned power was to eliminate risk, transfer risk from the public to private investors. Well, first of all, that is a false concept, because in reality, if a company is providing 20% or 25% of a jurisdiction's power, if that company goes under, the government has got to step in to make sure the power is still there. At the beginning of this century, 2002, in Britain, British Energy went bankrupt. It was an atomic-based generating company. It could no longer compete on price, but at the same time, it provided 20% of the power in the UK. The government had no choice. It had to put in billions of dollars in order to ensure that the power continued to flow. You can't say that we're not going to have power for 20% of the country. Governments have to step in. We cannot leave this risk behind.

Speaker, when you're talking about the oxygen line for an advanced industrial society, you don't get to play around. Our experience in Ontario was that when the Conservatives moved to privatize, they brought a whole bunch of new costs into the system. Frankly, we looked at huge fluctuations and spikes in cost in 2002-03, forcing the Conservative government at the time to intervene and pour money in to keep the cost of electricity down.

The movement of Bruce nuclear off the books of Ontario Power Generation and into the hands of Bruce Power meant that not only did we still get stuck with the risk of reactors, but, frankly, the Bruce power station now earns profits, according to their 2010 annual report, in the range of \$500 million a year. That was before the two most recent reactors came online.

In 1995, we weren't paying that \$500-million-plus in profit to a company. That money was staying in the pockets of Ontarians, in the pockets of companies in this province. We got stuck with extra costs.

I've had the opportunity, sitting on the committee inquiring into the gas plants, to look at what scared power planners in this province when they realized that a plant was going to be moved and we would get stuck with the bill. Having to pay for lost profits was a huge fear.

So, if a government makes a mistake—and, frankly, they did in those cases, and we warned them about it—the cost of moving becomes far larger, because you have to pay for two decades of profits. It makes it very difficult to correct a mistake. We take on the risk, we assume new risks in case a mistake has to be corrected, and we also see that, because it is so expensive to pay these companies, they spend a fortune on interest. The Mississauga power plant was paying 14% interest and a 60% interest penalty fee.

My colleague from Timmins–James Bay has brought forward a very useful motion. Assess the impact of private power contracts, assess the value of them and, frankly, let the people of this province see what has been driving these very big rate increases and what we gave up when we decided to privatize the system. This has been an ongoing process—not a reducing process, an ongoing process.

Speaker, I urge everyone to vote for the motion of my colleague the member from Timmins–James Bay.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's been a fascinating debate, and I want to commend all my colleagues for their thoughtful intervention. My friend from Toronto–Danforth—I agree with a great deal of what he said, but I want to go back to the member for Nepean–Carleton, because I haven't found logic in the Conservative position.

I'd like, maybe, if they had some chance to explain to me their position, because the member for Toronto–Danforth was quite right. I became a very great student of the Mike Harris privatization. I was highly motivated to become a student of that, because while this privatization was going on in Ontario, I had gotten elected mayor of Winnipeg. The relationship between Manitoba and Ontario is like the relationship between Canada and the United States. We spend a lot of time watching what's going on in Ontario, because it's on our 6 o'clock news, and smaller provinces rarely permeate the 6 o'clock news. I have to phone friends in Winnipeg to find out what's going on; when I'm back in Winnipeg, I can keep up pretty easily.

But I was in the middle of consolidating and selling a municipal hydro utility that had dams and generation, negotiating with Gary Doer, who was the Premier at the time, to create basically a super public power corporation. There are upsides and downsides to that, but there were two things that I learned in that process, and this is where I agree with the New Democrats.

There are two things you have to look at. One is, what risk is being created, who is allocating it, and are you getting value for money in that risk? It was an interesting kind of process, because it was paralleled here in Ontario.

The second one is that there is an inherent value that comes with the security of a public asset, because it's secured by the people, and you're controlling a pricing system and protecting the security of supply, which is a very positive thing about public utilities. I won't repeat all the details, except to say "ditto" to my friend.

It was so obvious, through all of the energy transactions, that what Ontario was doing at that time was a colossal disaster in the making, because what everyone across the country was telling the Harris government was that the risk of the public asset was hugely at value through privatization. You were basically going to create a stranded debt or write down the value of the asset. So this \$21-billion liability became very real very quickly, which is now about \$8 billion.

1540

Essentially that decision to privatize wrecked the public sector system and wrecked the energy system in Ontario. Anything that has happened since has been different efforts, depending on different ideological perspectives, to try and remedy what was a colossally, I think, stupid decision where we lost control of the assets. Part of the challenge in Manitoba has been—

Interjection: They deregulated it.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Deregulated. Thank you. Sorry; that's a better word for it. Thank you very much.

We did not deregulate, so some of this language is new because most of our looks at it said, "You shouldn't privatize and you shouldn't do it on this kind of scale." We have a system now that's about 55% public and about 45% private right now.

The advantage of a private system that we inherited as a government, with huge debts, with devalued assets and deregulated, was the advantage, and the problem that Manitoba has had—and I think my friend Greg Selinger would tell you it's a problem with an entirely public system—is it's very hard to create private companies and diversify if you're trying to create something like we did here with the Green Energy Act. Not too many people have done that in the North American economy, and we've had some great successes and some failures with that. But there is a substantive green energy job market, and part of that is because of the interface of private sector providers and suppliers, and trying to create an ecology of that, which was part of the solution I think to that.

When I was chairing the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, we did a comprehensive study of the energy architecture of that. If you want to read it, and it was written by Conservatives, Liberals—Audrey McLaughlin—New Democrats—it was quite an interesting mix of us on that, which was really looking at the architecture, particularly of Ontario's nuclear system which is really what is generating our cost. Nuclear, let's be quite frank about it, is almost singularly the most expensive source of energy. It's green, in the sense that it doesn't contribute to climate change, which is important. Closing our coal plants was important, and those were important things.

But it's interesting to me, that we're trying to move forward. What I like about the long-term energy plan is it is looking at the reality of what we have, which is a hybrid system. What we have tried to do and why I have some challenges with this motion is because it's a bit like looking through the rear-view mirror. Value-for-money systems that we now have in government and that Infrastructure Ontario does are the best in the world. They look at two things, which is the value of the asset and the reality of the risk, and can it be allocated.

When deregulation had happened and decisions were made about privatization, I think if we had used that risk profile, I don't think we would have privatized, because I don't think today's techniques would have supported the decisions of that previous government. If you want to run the value-for-money system we now have, I don't think this motion is necessary. I think it's there, and it's now used in everything that we do, and we're going to make some decisions that are going to repatriate decisions that were previously made to do things through a private partnership and look at other things, because I think there has to be a pragmatic lens.

I give my friend from Timmins–James Bay some great credit because I think the foundation of a rational

analysis is there. But I don't think this is a necessary motion, and I think we have to try and work with the benefits of the hybrid system we've inherited.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Timmins–James Bay, you have two minutes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, but just two minutes, Mr. Speaker? How can I do that?

I want to thank everybody for participating in the debate. I just would say the following, that clearly what the public wants is transparency in the electricity system. What we have is a system where, if you're OPG and you have public assets, there is transparency. If you're in the private sector and you sign a private power deal with the OPA, it's not transparent, and a good example of that is what happened with the gas plants.

We need to have transparency in the system, and what this motion calls for is to say that those contracts that are signed—don't go out and cancel them. We know what the cost of that would be; it'd be pretty astronomical. But at the very least, the public needs to know what the actual cost of those particular plants is and what the deal that they got in order to build and operate them has been. Because we need to learn from those deals so that we don't end up repeating what has been done in the past that has driven up hydro costs.

The public needs to have transparency, and that's what this is all about. And again, I'll quote my good friend, Brian Mulroney. Brian Mulroney said, "You know, there needs to be a level playing field," and I agree with him. We need a level playing field when it comes to what OPG is doing—Ontario Power Generation—when it comes to whatever they're doing when it comes to refurb, rebuilding or building brand new, and what the private sector is doing on the other side. It makes no sense, in this province or anywhere, for us to have a system that says, "Here are the transparency rules for public power and here are the transparency rules for private power." In other words, there's none.

We're saying level that playing field. Make it so that the rules are the same so that the public has a right to know what goes into those contracts and make sure that when you do that, it puts the onus on people to make sure they negotiate a private power deal in a way that makes some sense. As New Democrats, we believe that the new builds should be public. We've never hidden that. We've always said that up front. I think history will prove that we were right when you look at what all has happened.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We'll take the vote at the end of regular business.

RYAN'S LAW (ENSURING
ASTHMA FRIENDLY SCHOOLS), 2013
LOI RYAN DE 2013 POUR ASSURER
LA CRÉATION D'ÉCOLES
ATTENTIVES À L'ASTHME

Mr. Yurek moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act to protect pupils with asthma / *Projet de loi 135, Loi protégeant les élèves asthmatiques.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation. Mr. Yurek.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Speaker. I stand today and I'm proud to bring forth my second private member's bill since I've been elected to this Legislature. Really, the other name for this bill is Ryan's Law. It's basically in memory of Ryan Gibbons, a young boy, 12 years old, in my riding. Last year, Ryan got up like every 12-year-old boy, got ready for school and headed out. His mom said, "Goodbye, see you after school," and Ryan headed off to school. He had music class, in which he played the trombone. He had a little bit of a cold coming on and he went outside for recess at his nutritional break.

During recess, the boys were playing soccer and he started not feeling too well so he thought he'd better head into the school, most likely, obviously, to go get his puffer, for Ryan had asthma.

Unfortunately, Ryan didn't even make it to the office and, unfortunately, he didn't make it home that night. His mum, Sandra, is here today. We thank you very much for coming. It's just not the right order of things to happen in this life. The kids aren't supposed to go before the parents.

So we're here and we can do something good for Ontarians—I'll be okay in a second; it's kind of touching. We can do something good for Ontarians in this province if we take care of our kids. If it's something just as minor as fixing the policy and standardizing it across this province, we can and should do that here today. I thank you, Sandra, for your courage in coming forward. You're an advocate for your son and you're an advocate for all the kids in our school system today.

I'd also like to thank the Lung Association for their ongoing drive to ensure we have an asthma strategy for this province. Today we have Sherry Zarins and Andrea Stevens-Lavigne here today. Thank you very much for coming forward and supporting us today through this process and continuing to support us as we carry on. I'd also like to thank Speaker Dave Levac, who was instrumental in helping point us in the right direction in developing this bill. Speaker Levac was the one who brought forward Sabrina's Law to help our children with anaphylactic situations in our schools.

I'd also like to take this time to thank the teachers in our school system who now do what they need to do to keep our kids with asthma safe and keep all our children safe. I'm going to do a shout-out to my daughter's teacher. She's in grade 4 this year. I want to thank Mrs. Keogh, her JK teacher; Mrs. L'Heureux, her SK teacher—she wasn't in the FDK system at the time; Mrs. Burgess, her grade 1 teacher; Mrs. Marcinkiewicz, who taught her grade 2 and, because she liked Maggie so much, she got her for grade 3. Currently my daughter is being taught by Mr. Brock Austin, who taught me grade 8. I thank them very much for keeping my daughter safe, teaching her well and teaching her how to be a good person.

I'd also want to do a shout-out to Mrs. Walt. If anybody who's a parent wants to know the way to get things done in the schools it's to become best friends with the secretary. They run the world, and I tell you, Mrs. Walt takes care of every single kid who comes through that door.

1550

Asthma affects as many as one in five children. That's quite an amount when you think about it, when you go across the province. Asthma and its treatment has evolved over the last few years. Kids before were unable to participate in certain situations at school or participate in sports because asthma was a problem. But medical technology has come forward since the—I've been a pharmacist, I don't know, since 1995. I'm done doing math; I'm now an MPP. But, however—

Interjection: Eighteen years.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Eighteen years. I've seen the progression of medications become available. Inhaled steroids have improved in effectiveness. There are fewer side effects along with them. They're lasting 12 hours a day. So, basically, kids who are on steroid inhalers don't need to take them at school. They take them in the morning and take them at night. The fast-acting medications have improved. They've come out with new forms. The Turbuhaler—you don't even have to press the button anymore. You have to have strong breath to inhale it.

So treatment has improved. It has allowed kids to become more involved in our schools. Unfortunately, and it's nobody's fault, our policy hasn't come forward. I think this is where we need to go forward: Change the policy so that it's standard across the province, so that kids in Timmins are having the same policy as the kids in London, who are going to have the same policy as kids in Windsor, and that is a safe school for our kids with asthma.

The thing I have to let people know who maybe are concerned that puffers are going to be used regularly and routinely—I tell you, if a child is accurately prescribed and treated on their medication, the use of inhalers is minimal. It's not going to be a daily occurrence. It might be twice a week or once a week. If they're bad, if they're catching a cold, sure, they might have to use it a few times a day. However, typically it's not going to be a daily usage.

The one thing out of this bill that I really want to press forward is that puffers need to be on the student. I think, across the province, any parent you talk to, they will agree with me that the puffer needs to be in their pocket. It's not only in the classroom that they might have an asthma attack, or in gym class; what happened with poor Ryan out in the schoolyard might occur.

Another aspect of having this puffer in their pocket is if they're a bus student. What happens if they're on the bus heading home? If the policy of the school is that the puffer is locked in the office, they're not going to have it on them. Or what happens if they're walking home? Many of our kids do walk home. If they're bringing on a cold or that, what do they do if they undergo an asthma

attack? If they're allowed to have their puffer in their pocket, or in their bag or what have you, it will be on them. They know what to do when they get that tight feeling in their chest.

I think, in this day and age, if a family goes out to Canada's Wonderland, that puffer is on them. If your son or daughter is outside playing, the puffer is on him. There's no reason at all why that puffer can't be on them when they're at school.

My bill does aim to protect children with asthma because it's going to create a standardized guideline that school boards will adhere to when devising asthma protocol. I'll go over my four points that will come up though what the bill is trying to come out with:

- strategies to reduce the risk of exposure to asthma triggers in the classroom;

- a communication plan for the dissemination of information on asthma to parents, pupils and employees;

- regular training on recognizing and managing asthma for all employees that interact with students with asthma on a regular basis; and, as I said before,

- require schools to allow children to carry their reliever puffers at all times, provided they do have their doctor's permission.

The other thing that this bill will bring forward is, the principal will develop a file in conjunction with their family physician that has emergency procedures for that student and directions on where the spare medication is stored. I think we do have to come forward that there should be a spare puffer, and I agree that that one should be somewhere safe and stored away so that is accessible in case the puffer runs out, the puffer breaks or the student loses it. That can all happen.

This bill is another tool that we're giving to the Ministry of Education to help protect our students. Speaker Levac brought forth Sabrina's Law to take care of anaphylaxis with students. This law, Ryan's Law, is going to take care of our students with asthma. I hope the ministry will accept and use this tool.

But I would call for the ministry to come forward with a comprehensive bill that includes not only asthma and anaphylaxis but diabetes and epilepsy. We've had other people commenting through me that these are their other concerns. Put it together all as one bill. I'm pretty sure you would get support across all three parties.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Some schools are doing it already.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Yes, that's a good point. Some schools are doing it. Again, that's just the process of standardizing to ensure that students who are getting an excellent education in Ottawa have excellent education in Thunder Bay, at the same time that those students who have asthma are treated the same across the board, so that our students can continue to enjoy gym class, can continue to enjoy recess.

Mr. Rob Leone: Kids can be kids.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Kids can be kids; that's a good point.

If kids' asthma is under control and there's good monitoring and education going on, there's no reason

why their absenteeism shouldn't decrease over time and keep them out of school. When they go on school trips, that puffer is going to be in their pocket in case they take their trip to the Toronto Zoo or what have you. You never know what's going to spark up an asthma attack. As I said, there are many colds and flus in the school system, and this is just a safeguard.

I think it will make teachers at ease in their school day to know that they know all they can know to help that student in case of an asthma attack. There is a procedure in place to help that student out, and they know that student knows what to do when they're feeling the asthma coming along. They can just ensure that that student gets the opportunity to use their puffer. And if they need extra help, the teacher knows what to do at the next step, which would involve the staff in ensuring the student is taken care of.

In my final few minutes here, again, I want to thank the Lung Association for coming out today. You've been an awesome support for us. Sandra and family, I really appreciate working with you. We're going to do what we can to pass this bill today.

I look forward to the debate that's going to come forward, because I think there can be some good discussion heading out. I've had some good letters and emails about what people want to talk about when it hits committee, and I hope it does hit committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is obviously an honour and a privilege to stand in this House and discuss an important piece of legislation. New Democrats are proud to support the second reading of bill—we will be supporting this bill as it moves forward and get it to committee.

As the former president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, I did want to talk broadly about the impact of a piece of legislation like this. It is very true that school boards and individual schools have been adapting to a number of health issues that face our students each and every day. If you were to walk into most schools in the province of Ontario today, you would see a number of pictures of students in the office and a list of what medications they are on and what issues they face. You will also see that sometimes there are some parental restrictions with those children. There is a concerted effort, I think, on the part of school boards across this province to ensure the safety of our students. I do believe that this has come about through progressive pieces of legislation like this.

I do want to thank the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, and I certainly want to thank Ryan's mother and family for being here to support this piece of legislation, because this is actually how progressive change happens. A privilege that we have as legislators in the province of Ontario is that we have the opportunity to raise the awareness on certain issues, to give profile to issues that are currently not always understood—or the impact of those illnesses, in this case, that are not fully understood.

I think that what underpins this entire debate, or what should underpin this debate, is that when we as parents—because I'm a parent of a 15-year-old and a 12-year-old—send our children off to school, we are transferring a level of trust, if you will, to that school. A part of transferring trust is ensuring that the school has all the information that they need and that we, as parents, have conveyed all the information that we need to share with the school. What Bill 135 sort of establishes is a common understanding, and I think that that is so important for that transfer of trust, if you will. The school obviously needs to have a full understanding of the health needs of those children who are entering their doors. Parents need to understand what sort of services their children will have as they enter those doors of the school.

I do believe that the public education system on the whole in the province is genuinely moving to a perspective on education which incorporates the whole child. I know at the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, we were really pushing this ministry to adapt to that concept, which is: You consider the mental health needs; you consider the physical needs; you consider some of the illnesses.

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You make accommodations for those children with special needs, and you make sure that those children who are entering your school at the beginning of the day are healthy and enriched and better for the knowledge they accumulated during the day as they go back home. That is really about relationship building in education, and many boards across the province have come to understand this.

What Bill 135 establishes, though, is truly a framework, an understanding and a clear establishment of the facts. I do think, though, as it gets through second reading, like any piece of legislation, there will be opportunities to make it stronger. Certainly, our understanding is that this bill didn't have as much input as it could have had from the very people who will be on the front lines: the elementary teacher federation. They need to have in place everything that they need to ensure that they will be delivering the best kind of health intervention, if needed.

While we understand that ETFO is supportive of this bill, as of course they would be—actually, OSSTF was here today, and we talked about this bill when they came to meet with me as well. Their only concern is that they have in place the resources they need to ensure that student safety is paramount. While we understand that ETFO is supportive of this bill and supports healthy work and learning places, there may be specific comments that I think could perhaps strengthen this as it goes forward.

There are, of course, issues that would benefit through a thorough discussion in committee, as there always are. Some people in this House may not fully realize that medical interventions are becoming more commonplace in our schools. Disturbingly—and this may be something that will come up through committee—there is also an affordability aspect. Not all students in our schools in the province of Ontario have the resources to have the drugs

they actually need, and this places a whole new level of stress and tension on what should be a very positive and proactive learning environment.

I actually applaud the member for bringing forward this piece of legislation, because it also gives us the opportunity to talk about the environmental impact, which has negatively impacted children greatly in the province of Ontario, and that is around air quality and those environmental illnesses that have become more and more prevalent in the province.

I do think it is incumbent on us as legislators to increase our understanding to ensure, of course, that we bring a new level of compassion into the system in every circumstance with every student and every child.

Of course, we will be supporting this private member's bill. We look forward to it getting to the committee level, where we hope to ensure that, going forward, it's as strong as it can be, because that is our shared responsibility in this place.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to join the debate on Bill 135, Ryan's Law, which has been tabled by the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

I'd like to begin by saying to Ryan's family that certainly our sympathy and our hearts go out to you for the experience you've had, and thank you for your advocacy on behalf of children with asthma.

I've certainly not had that experience in my family, but when I was a child, one of my best friends had very severe asthma. It was in the days before pharmacists dispensed puffers, and he had a number of very serious episodes. In those days, you ended up in an iron lung or an oxygen tent.

I've had some history with families that had really serious experiences with asthma, so I've got a little bit of an understanding of how you can go from a child who's running around on the playground and joining in with everybody else—I actually have a scar over one eyebrow from, I don't know, a seventh or eighth birthday party. I got stepped on at the skating rink, the point being that he was out there skating around with everybody else, but then a couple of weeks later he would be in very serious distress. So certainly we need to take very seriously the problem of children who have asthma and other diseases that are episodic and potentially life-threatening.

Bill 135 has been modeled—the member mentioned the assistance from the Speaker, because it was the Speaker who originally brought us Sabrina's Law, which had to do with anaphylaxis and which did get passed here and came into effect. What Sabrina's Law requires and what Bill 135 would require is a communication plan, an individual pupil plan, a file for each pupil with asthma, obligations for parents to keep the information up to date, and an immunity clause for persons acting in good faith. People may think that's rather a strange thing, but one of the concerns that staff in schools have is that they're not medical. They don't have the knowledge to be medical caregivers, and there's always the concern that if they

step in as good Samaritans, as it were, to work with a student who is in distress, they may not get it exactly right medically because they are not medical practitioners. That indemnity is actually a very important piece of the puzzle. So there are a number of things here in the bill that are modeled on the previous bill that we have.

Just to give a bit of information to people about some of the things that have been going on in the government around the whole issue of kids with asthma, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, working with the Public Health School Asthma Program, provided comprehensive asthma support, and that includes policy development, staff in-service, parent awareness, knowledge-building events and help with students to self-manage their asthma. They partnered four health units with their coterminous school boards. That pilot took place in Durham region, Halton region, Hamilton and Sudbury in the public health and school boards in those areas. So we've got some learning and some experience from those pilots that the Ministry of Health conducted around managing this in schools.

We also have had a school-based program that was developed by the Ontario Lung Association, which has been recognized here today, and the Ontario Physical and Health Education Association, which I'll talk about as OPHEA and which developed a guide called 7 Simple Steps to Make Schools Asthma-Friendly. Its purpose is to help principals and teachers recognize and respond to the needs of children with asthma. That guide was released on May 7 of this year, so last spring, and it is now available for schools, principals and teachers, really, all over Ontario to get some guidance. The guide is based, actually, on the previous research that I mentioned by those health units and their experience, and it recommends that all schools establish a process to identify students with asthma. The member from Kitchener–Waterloo talked about the work that schools often do in identifying students with asthma and other health risks so that school staff know who they are.

Ensuring that students have easy access to their prescribed inhaler, or “puffer,” as we tend to refer to it—at this point I'm really going back to my experience as a trustee and how important it is, once a child is old enough to manage the puffer—or, in the case of anaphylaxis, old enough to manage the EpiPen—that the student be able to have the puffer, the EpiPen or whatever it is—the medication for some other diseases—on their person, because when we've had really tragic circumstances, it often is the case that, whatever happened, the EpiPen or the puffer wasn't with the child. There really does seem to be good evidence that, as soon as the child is able to manage their own medication, it's important that they have the puffer or the EpiPen on their person. Staff should know how to recognize and manage worsening symptoms and asthma attacks.

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There's some really good work that has been done in the area of asthma. The concern that I would have is that we have a bill that is anaphylaxis-specific. We have a bill

now here that is asthma-specific. We've had bills tabled previously, I think, that were diabetes-specific. We've had bills that were specific to a variety of diseases, and we would be a little concerned that what we maybe really need is an umbrella bill that carries a variety of things instead of one at a time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I want to commend my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London for this asthma bill. It is difficult to put in words anything that would make sense to young Ryan Gibbons's mom, Sandra. Sandra has done a beautiful job transforming her pain into action so that tragic incidents like Ryan's can be reduced—ideally, eliminated.

My assistant's son is a normal eight-year-old boy. He plays sports and gets dirty. He's also asthmatic. His mom says that when he declines, people don't often understand the urgency or the seriousness of the episode or the attack. Ryan's Law will hopefully change this so that not only teachers and principals but all support staff, parents and anyone on school property can have a better understanding of this lung disorder.

I'll pick up on what the minister just indicated: Let's also look at revisiting peanut allergies, epilepsy and diabetes. In May 2005, the Ontario government passed Bill 3, to protect anaphylactic pupils, brought forward by the member for Brant. Sabrina's Law, in honour of Sabrina Shannon, requires every school board to establish and maintain a policy and requires principals to develop individual plans for pupils at risk. I understand that was the first legislation in the world to protect children with these kinds of life-threatening allergies. We have to take this further. I'd like to see this government pass legislation that would pull it all together—allergies, asthma, epilepsy and diabetes—rather than this piecemeal, almost reactive approach.

Schoolchildren with epilepsy often require Ativan. I recently received an email informing me that there are still families who struggle to get their school board to administer Ativan to epileptic children. In my family, we went through this a number of years ago. Thank God for the school secretary; she stepped up to the plate for our family. Ativan is a potentially life-saving drug.

Similarly, the Canadian Diabetes Association—I read this in a backgrounder—states that it should not matter where you go to school, but for children with type 1 diabetes, it does. Except for New Brunswick's education policy 704, there really are no provincial policies or regulations requiring school boards or schools to accommodate or protect students with diabetes. Again, we're back to that patchwork approach, varying standards of care, gaps in care. It varies from school board to school board, and even from school to school within the same board.

In closing, I'm asking this House to support this bill. Let's work together and include as many other issues and ailments in this bill, within a piece of government legislation, so that we can protect as many children as possible.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I want to start off by saying, on behalf of Andrea Horwath and the entire New Democratic Party, that our prayers and our love go out to you and to Ryan's family and to Sandra.

There's nothing worse—I can't imagine anything worse than what you've gone through, and the fact that you are here, turning that tragedy into something positive, is nothing short of amazing, and we commend you. So I want to say thank you to you.

Of course, as you've heard, we are going to support this bill. There's no question about that. If I say anything about it, it's really only to strengthen it, to make sure that if it goes to committee and that amendments are made, it becomes a stronger, more workable bill.

Sam Hammond, who is the president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, sent a letter around this bill. One of his concerns—and I want to voice this concern, because it is a real concern. You heard it, I think, expressed by the Minister of Education. It's certainly ours as well. There's just a general concern about all of the medical conditions that many of our students face, and teachers' ability and education workers' ability to handle them.

Let's put this in context: We are in a school board time, a school time, an educational system time, where the old Harris funding formula is still in place, where our schools are chronically underfunded; where there aren't enough adults in the classrooms, in the school yards, in the lunchrooms. There is not the same number that there was at one time. I have children in their 30s. When they went to school, there were a lot more adults in the school system than there are now. Those adult eyes—trained eyes, we hope, in light of this bill—are absolutely necessary.

I also have within my jurisdiction a school, Parkdale public school—I give them a shout-out—where a horrific situation happened. Katelynn Sampson, a young woman, was killed by her foster family. When the school guidance counsellor phoned her home, they were told, "She's fine." She was part First Nations: "She's back on the reserve."

There was a time when you would send someone out to that home, when we had that kind of staffing that someone could follow up if a child didn't come to school. Those people aren't there anymore. They're not there anymore. We can't follow up the way we once could.

This speaks to a deficit in our system—not to mention the state of the school buildings. Now, depending on where you live—certainly, in my riding, these are not the same school buildings my children went to. Many of them have capital deficits that they've had for a long time. They're not in good shape. The air quality is not good. Repairs need to be made. Again, this is not the ideal surrounding for a child with a medical condition, who's asthmatic. My son had asthma when he grew up—not nearly as serious as some children. He had friends—but again the rates were much lower then, too.

Again, more adult supervision, more funding generally into the school—that will really buttress and make stronger the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London’s bill. I want to give him kudos, because this is exactly what we should be doing here, this kind of bill. Our hope in the New Democratic Party is simply to make it as strong and workable as possible.

When you have overworked teachers, not enough education assistants, not enough guidance counsellors or special ed teachers or programs, not enough capital funding into the schools, larger-than-desirable classrooms, the idea of adding something else into a teacher’s demands, to again put into place any medical program, is undercut by that; it’s undermined by that.

Yes, we support it, absolutely. Just to finish off, I again want to say, on behalf of all New Democrats, on behalf of our leader, we are so proud of you for being here. We are so proud of you for instigating this bill and for your activism. Our souls ring with yours in this moment, and we wish that what happened to your son should never happen to another child. I think your presence here makes that more possible.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: As a physician, as a parliamentarian, as well as, by the way, a lecturer in asthma, at the outset of course—j’ai le plaisir de soutenir le projet de loi 135 de mon collègue d’Elgin–Middlesex–London, Jeff Yurek. I’d also like to acknowledge Ryan’s family for their presence and their moral support.

I’d also like to introduce and re-welcome, sitting in double galleries—the opposition gallery has been mentioned, Andrea Stevens-Lavigne and Sherry Zarins, to be joined as well by my colleague at the Ontario Lung Association, Dilshad Moosa, who is joined by her niece visiting from South Africa, Layla Cassim

I would simply say that it’s a very important issue, as has been mentioned. An increase is upon us in asthma, whether it’s allergic triggers, whether it’s, for example, pollution-based, plastics in the workplace, home renovations, insulation, the long-lost pet who will not be turned out of doors but nevertheless continues to flare up allergies of the family—you name it. Many, many reasons and all these things act as a confluence.

My colleague said that students should be allowed to keep the puffer in the pocket. I would support that. I would, though, with respect like to say that this blue puffer, though offering immediate relief—Ventolin or salbutamol—is to be used only as a rescue inhaler, only as an emergency inhaler, not as the underlying therapy of asthma. I repeat that for all Ontarians.

The underlying therapy for asthma are what we call anti-inflammatories—a fancy word for stuff like Flovent or Symbicort or Zenhale, and other medications—that actually puts out the fire that’s going on in the lungs, helps to dry the phlegm, the mucus, the crud that’s actually in the lungs. Because that’s the actual underlying disease. This is only a kind of pep for a while. It’s very

important. It can be an emergency-level therapy, but it is very important to understand the underlying therapy of asthma. You’re not probably going to be carrying just one puffer, most likely, but that still remains to be seen.

It is true that I would support this issue of having schools have a process/procedure because typically what will happen is, a kid is somewhat embarrassed about having this condition, and certainly doesn’t want to self-administer the puffer of whatever colour in front of folks, has a bit of an attack—a need, a wheeze, a cough, phlegm in the chest—and basically goes and sequesters himself, and maybe is found either unconscious or lying in a corner in the washroom, in a stall etc. And that’s the worst-case scenario that can happen in an asthmatic situation. So puffers are very important.

I would also support, of course, the Minister of Education, that this is probably beyond the expertise of principals and the school communities alone. The action plan, whether it’s the green, yellow or red zone, which we can provide to every asthmatic patient for free, courtesy of the Ontario Lung Association, is something that should be written, understood by the family, perhaps even the student. That can certainly be part of the file and part of the overall plan/protocol should there be an attack, meaning, if this happens, then do that. But this is definitely likely beyond the expertise, first of all of the principal, the school communities, and is, of course, something we at the Lung Association are encouraging physicians to do more of at the family practice, as well as certainly at the specialist level.

Triggers of allergies are there. There are certainly many, many confluences that act—the river runs through it, again whether it’s pollution, winter weather, pets. By the way, asthmatic kids and probably asthmatic patients in general should get the flu shot so that we can live and breathe easily.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I’d first like to thank Mrs. Gibbons as well. I commend you for your strength and courage. No one should ever bury a child. Ryan is definitely in our thoughts today. I’d also like to thank the lung association. We do take for granted, all the time, how we breathe, if we’re not in that position. Until you’re in that position, it’s very hard to understand how you feel while you are gasping for air.

I think I want to actually just go a bit further with what we were just hearing. It’s very hereditary in my family. My father had emphysema at the age of 52 and died, and had a puffer in his hand every two minutes. My aunt was the same. My daughter, very young, was very asthmatic. We used to have a nebulizer that we would actually carry around with us at the time.

I think it’s educating yourselves on what actually it is that you can do, because I can be quite frank and tell you that I don’t know how many doctors I went to. I was like, “Is it the blue, the orange—is it the puffer?” I was so confused as a parent. I used to, seriously, phone over to the drugstore to say, “Look, I don’t know which one I’m

supposed to be giving.” The education of trying to learn that as a parent—I can’t imagine how a child would feel trying to figure that out when we as parents are not educated properly on what we’re supposed to be giving. We’re at physicians’; we’re going from one to the next trying to get the answers for these children that are deer in the headlights when they’re gasping for air.

I think that’s first and foremost. I think I actually want to commend my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London for bringing this bill forward, because it’s all about educating ourselves and knowing what to do. If I say anything here today, children have to have a safe place where they can go. When you’re young and don’t understand the ramifications when you’re breathing and if it’s a bad spot or not at a bad spot, because we, as parents—I can tell you numerous times I thought my daughter was fine, you know, and then I’d go in the middle of the night and you could see that she was blue. As a parent, I thought I was on it 90% of the time, but clearly, with not getting the proper information from doctor after doctor, I was not.

I think it’s very important that, even in this day and age, we get the information that we need, and proper information, that people that actually talk about it know what they’re saying instead of just surmising, “Do a blue, and here’s two orange, and then, if that doesn’t work, here’s a tube one that you can take.”

Because you watch even my dad—I mean, my dad was 52 years old. He was taking puffers every two minutes. I don’t even know half the time if he even knew what he was doing, except he was gasping for air. But then two minutes later, he says he’s not feeling good. I go over to get him at the drugstore and they’re zipping him up in a black bag because he’s had a cardiac arrest from his breathing over there.

Today, I’m grateful for this. I think children have to have a safe haven where they can actually go when they feel distressed, because they’re not always sure that they are in distress—that they’re able to go in and get the help that they need without panicking about where that is to go.

Thank you so much for letting me have this opportunity to speak today. From the bottom of my heart, thank you so much for being here. It’s very commendable of you. By no means do I know how you feel, because I do not, but I only imagine the pain that you have. Thank you for this today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Chatham–Kent–Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It’s my honour and privilege to rise today and stand in support of the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London’s Bill 135, better known as Ryan’s Law. As my colleague stated so passionately in his opening remarks, this bill was inspired by the loss of 12-year-old Ryan Gibbons.

Ryan was a typical young boy who loved keeping active, riding his bike and playing with friends. His asthma didn’t seem to slow him down. Like many children, he suffered an asthma attack. Sadly, Ryan passed

away. His mother, Sandra, then took it upon herself, with support from her family, to champion the issue and to help protect all of our children.

Ryan’s Law has a noble purpose: to make all schools across the province asthma-friendly environments. Addressing asthma is something that each of us should take very seriously. An individual in Ontario has a 34% risk of developing asthma before they reach 80 years of age. What we see when we look across this province is a patchwork of asthma policy. This is because there are currently no standards for asthma planning, and school boards are left to develop their own plans. What this bill sets out to do is to help out with these standards.

As the PC critic for sport, recreation and youth, I support this bill wholeheartedly. We must do all we can to protect the health of our children and help them maintain healthy lives. I had a staffer who grew up with asthma. He told me that as a kid he wanted to make sure that his asthma never got in the way of him being a kid. He was lucky enough to avoid any major attacks.

So again, I want to applaud the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, Ryan’s mother and the Ontario Lung Association for working tirelessly to improve the health of our children. Let’s work together in this Legislature and let’s get this bill passed after second reading.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

1630

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I’m pleased to stand and join the debate today as a member of the healthy lung caucus, which I believe my colleague from Durham is a member of as well. It’s a non-partisan organization that is in place due to the vision of the Ontario Lung Association, and we certainly appreciate their efforts to make people more aware of the hazards associated with breathing.

I say that sincerely, because I’ve experienced firsthand the terror in the eyes when someone can’t get their breath. There’s no worse feeling than that. The fact of the matter is that this bill is so, so important. I’m reflecting on my father, but I think of my friend Paula, and I think about my childhood friend Melanie, who lost her husband to an asthma attack as well. Darn it; I’ve got to learn how not to do this. But it’s such a touching, touching experience. I think of Brenda Cummings. She is such a champion for healthy breathing for people of all ages.

And we have to do this. Today, we can do such a good thing as a minority government. We can stand united as breathers and do the right thing and get this through to committee.

I just want to say that it’s important to remember that asthma can be managed, and the quality of life can be so, so good. But we have to have the right support mechanisms in place and the right support infrastructure. This is what this bill is intended to do, in memory of Ryan, and as a tip of the hat and a tribute to the advocacy that Ryan’s mom has put forward so selflessly.

Mr. Speaker, I think we're onto a very, very good thing, and I congratulate the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London. He has led by his heart with this piece of legislation. By doing so, I believe that Ryan Gibbons's legacy will be a healthy and safe learning environment for students who suffer with asthma in all schools across the province.

I'm encouraged by what I'm hearing today in debate, because it sounds like everybody is on the right track, and this piece of legislation, through committee and a lot of good, heartfelt effort, could expand to kids with epilepsy, to kids with diabetes, so that a healthy, safe environment for all students could ultimately be Ryan Gibbons's legacy.

Thank you very much, everyone; and to our member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, congratulations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London, you have two minutes.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: To my colleague from Huron–Bruce, you're shattering our evil hearts on the PC caucus. We're a party of compassion. Thank you very much.

I'd like to thank the members from Kitchener–Waterloo, the Minister of Education, the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, the member from Parkdale–High Park, the member from Burlington, the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex, of course the member from Huron–Bruce and the member from Etobicoke North, who taught me a new medical term today, “crud.” I'm going to my medical dictionary to look that up.

I want to say that this bill does one thing: It's increasing awareness. It's increasing education to our parents, students and educators. Basically, for Mr. Hammond—I'm looking forward to meeting with him; I've made contact with his office—nothing is really going to change from what's currently occurring right now for children with asthma. Right now, children have to leave the class, if that's the policy, and go to the office. This allows them to reach in their pocket and giving themselves a puff instead of leaving the class.

I'm sure the FDK students who might need some assistance are already getting the assistance they need in classrooms, so we can alleviate those fears. We can work with ETFO and ensure that that's done.

With regard to the principals, I certainly don't expect the principals to do this on their own. The bill does make mention of the assistance of the family physician or treating physician—they definitely need to support. I truly encourage families to be more involved with the health care of their children, and this bill will help. It's a bill that's going to minimize risk for our students and improve children's lives.

I think it's a good bill to pass on second reading. Let's get it into committee next week and pass it next Thursday, would be my hope.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

PROTECTION OF MINORS
IN AMATEUR SPORTS ACT, 2013
LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PROTECTION
DES MINEURS PARTICIPANT
À DES SPORTS AMATEURS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 64, standing in the name of Mr. Ouellette.

Mr. Ouellette has moved second reading of Bill 104, An Act to provide protection for minors participating in amateur sports.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the member for Oshawa.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I would recommend the bill to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy. Agreed? Agreed.

ENERGY POLICIES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Bisson has moved private member's notice of motion number 56.

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

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We'll take the vote at the end of private business.

RYAN'S LAW (ENSURING
ASTHMA FRIENDLY SCHOOLS), 2013
LOI RYAN DE 2013 POUR ASSURER
LA CRÉATION D'ÉCOLES
ATTENTIVES À L'ASTHME

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Yurek has moved second reading of Bill 135, An Act to protect pupils with asthma.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Call in the members. It will be a five-minute bell.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Oh, wait a minute. You have to ask him which committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sorry. Mr. Yurek?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Social policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to social policy. Agreed? Agreed.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.
The division bells rang from 1637 to 1642.

ENERGY POLICIES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Bisson has moved private member's notice of motion number 56. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hatfield, Percy	Singh, Jagmeet
Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	Miller, Paul	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	Prue, Michael	
Forster, Cindy	Schein, Jonah	

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please stand and remain standing.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Jeffrey, Linda	O'Toole, John
Arnott, Ted	Kwinter, Monte	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Leone, Rob	Pettapiece, Randy
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	MacCharles, Tracy	Piruzza, Teresa
Chan, Michael	MacLaren, Jack	Qaadri, Shafiq
Damerla, Dipika	MacLeod, Lisa	Sandals, Liz
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Sergio, Mario
Delaney, Bob	McKenna, Jane	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dickson, Joe	Milligan, Rob E.	Walker, Bill
Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John	Wilson, Jim
Hunter, Mitzie	Moridi, Reza	Yurek, Jeff
Jackson, Rod	Munro, Julia	
Jaczek, Helena	Nicholls, Rick	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 13; the nays are 37.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À SOUTENIR LES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Ms. Sandals, on behalf of Mr. Sousa, moved third reading of the following bill:

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

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Sandals.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I will be sharing my time with the member from Scarborough–Guildwood, but I would just like to say that what this bill does—it's An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act. It is targeted at helping more than 60,000 Ontario small businesses and promoting jobs and growth.

Briefly, businesses with annual payrolls of under \$5 million will be exempt from paying the employer health tax on the first \$450,000 of their payroll each year, and if this is going to happen, we need to get this vote done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Scarborough–Guildwood.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. I am pleased to rise today for the third reading of Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act. I know that the members of this House have already had a chance, for some time, to have good discussion about what this bill would mean for small businesses in Ontario. Today I'm looking forward to continuing that discussion.

I had the opportunity to host a forum for small businesses in my riding just last week. Over 100 residents in my community participated: small business owners, employment agencies and community organizations. We talked about a lot of issues, ways for government to improve how we serve our small businesses and how to create job opportunities, especially for our youth.

Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, is a key part of this government's strong plan to create further job opportunities. As a strong voice for Scarborough–Guildwood, I'm looking forward to using my time today to discuss the merits of this legislation for my own community and for communities across Ontario.

First, I would like to remind members how this bill would help small employers in Ontario. Second, I'd like to talk a bit more about the important role that small businesses play in Ontario's economy. Third, I would like to outline what our government has done to make Ontario a great place to do business. Last, I would like to talk about how this bill fits into our government's plan to create jobs and grow the economy.

The Supporting Small Businesses Act would, if passed, help small employers cut costs and reduce paperwork. We know that when small businesses save money, they can put more resources into hiring people and growing their operations.

I'm going to take a moment to remind members of some of the details of this bill and what it would mean for small businesses.

What is the employer health tax, and what is this bill proposing to change? The employer health tax is a tax that is paid by employers on their Ontario payrolls. Currently, all private sector employers, regardless of size, are exempt from paying EHT on up to \$400,000 of their Ontario payroll each year. This bill would increase the EHT exemption for small employers to \$450,000. This would mean up to \$975 saved per small employer annually. Increasing the EHT exemption for small employers would help them cut the cost of hiring, and cutting the cost of hiring would encourage these businesses to grow.

During the small business forum that I had in my riding, I heard directly from small employers—employers such as Bombay Bazaar; Chic Hair Design; Conrad's Barbershop; Creative Learning and Culture Centre; Delta Grinding; Ellis Flowers; Estheticare Day

Spa and Salon, a small business that has been operating in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood for 20 years; Family Leather; Feline Glow; G&G Electronics; Good Luck Catering; GoodLife Fitness; I FIX U PC; India Town; Jong Park Tae Kwon-Do; Just Sweets and Treats; Kaks Hair Emporium; Kipit Baha'i; Land Effects Outdoor Living Spaces; Marshall Arcade; N&A Tax Services; Pals Staffing Services, Plaza Physiotherapy, Procom Canada Systems, and I could certainly go on, because many of these businesses are putting their best efforts in order to stay in business and keep our economy going.

1650

How would this bill help employers, including small businesses, charities and non-profits? This bill would give these employers a tax break, and the cost of this tax break would be paid for by eliminating the same exemption altogether for private sector employers with annual Ontario payrolls of more than \$5 million.

How many employers would this bill help? The Supporting Small Businesses Act would result in 60,000 employers paying less EHT. In fact, 12,000 of those would no longer pay this tax at all, and those 12,000 employers would also save the cost of filing an EHT return. That means less time and money spent on paperwork. With this proposal, a total of 88% of Ontario's private sector employers would not pay EHT, so employers can put more resources into what matters most: creating jobs, innovating and growing their business.

What about inflation? To protect smaller employers from the cost of inflation, this exemption would be adjusted every five years, using the consumer price index.

Those are the reasons that I am urging all members to support this bill. It's a bill that would help small businesses save money. By cutting costs and reducing paperwork, this bill would help small employers focus on some of what they do best: contributing to Ontario's economy and creating jobs.

Now that I've discussed the benefits of the Supporting Small Businesses Act, I'd like to talk about just how important small businesses are to our province. You could say that small businesses are a key engine of Ontario's economy. They are important contributors of jobs. In fact, in 2012, more than half of all Ontarians working for a business were employed by small and medium-sized businesses.

Small and medium-sized businesses are also important innovators and boosters of our province's competitiveness. In the period from 2009 to 2011, approximately nine out of every 20 Ontario small and medium-sized businesses reported an innovation related to product, process, organization or marketing.

Small and medium-sized businesses are boosting Ontario's economy while showing the world what we can do. In 2009, more than 95% of Ontario's exporters of goods were small and medium-sized businesses. Our province's small and medium-sized exporters accounted for approximately 40% of the value of Ontario goods

exported in 2009. Approximately one of every eight small and medium-sized businesses exported a good or service in 2011.

That's why this bill is so important, because small businesses are critical to Ontario's economy, and create jobs for the people of this province.

We know just how important small businesses are for Ontario's economy. That's why we introduced a new plan for jobs and growth in our recent fall economic statement. One of the key pillars of our new plan is supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate.

We know that the fundamentals of Ontario's economy are strong, and we know that our economy is well-diversified with key industries, including agricultural, forestry, mining, manufacturing and services. A really great example in my own riding of Scarborough–Guildwood is the partnership between Centennial College and Bombardier, which has created opportunities for young people to prepare for jobs of the future.

Our government has put in place a competitive tax system for businesses, made regulations less burdensome, and enhanced the safety and efficiency of capital markets, while delivering lower-than-forecasted deficits.

I'm going to take a moment to talk about some of the specific measures we've taken, including tax relief and regulatory reform, as well as education and skills training.

First, I'd like to talk about tax relief. The bill we are discussing today would add to the important steps we have already taken to put in place a competitive business tax system in Ontario. Here are just a few examples of tax measures that are helping small businesses.

Our government's move to a federally administered harmonized sales tax is reducing compliance costs for businesses. The HST is also providing most businesses with input tax credits to recover the sales tax they pay on many of their business purchases. Also, on July 1, 2010, our government cut the corporate income tax rate for small businesses to 4.5% from 5.5%, and eliminated the small businesses deduction surtax.

In fact, Jack Mintz, a well-known economist, estimates that Ontario's Tax Plan for Jobs and Growth reduced the tax burden on small businesses' investments by more than half. That's a decrease in the tax burden from almost 29% to just over 13%.

There are many other tax measures that our government has put in place to benefit small businesses. We have cut business education tax rates by more than \$200 million since 2007. We provided a 10% refundable tax credit for eligible small corporations performing research and development in Ontario. Small businesses are eligible for enhanced refundable tax credit rates for hiring apprentices and co-op students, investing in our young people and our future labour pool.

Those are just some of the ways that our government has put in place a tax system that encourages small businesses to thrive and grow.

Our government has also introduced a number of regulatory reforms to help small businesses. Our Open

for Business initiative is helping to create faster, smarter, streamlined government-to-business services that will make Ontario more attractive for business development while protecting the public interest.

Some of the Open for Business initiatives include: developing a small business sector strategy to strengthen small business success; creating more open, responsive ways to work for businesses; reducing regulatory burdens on businesses and stakeholders by more than 17%, or more than 80,000 regulatory requirements; and building a foundation for improving services to businesses that protect the public interest and promote business competitiveness and welcome new businesses to the province.

Those are some of the ways that our government is helping small businesses through regulatory reforms.

Our government's investments in education and skills training programs are also boosting small businesses' success. Ontario has many different apprenticeship and skills training programs to address the need for skilled workers. Here are a few examples.

The 2013 budget outlined our comprehensive \$295-million youth jobs strategy to support and promote employment opportunities, entrepreneurship and innovation for youth in Ontario. I know that many agencies in my riding are working with local businesses to connect young people with the opportunities available through this program.

Our Apprenticeship Training Tax Credit provides a 45% refundable tax credit for small businesses that hire eligible apprentices in construction, motive power, industrial and certain skilled trades.

The Ontario co-op education tax credit provides a 30% refundable tax credit for small businesses that hire qualifying post-secondary co-op students. The 30% Off Ontario Tuition grant supports post-secondary education, particularly benefitting those with moderate and low income. Those are some of the ways that our government is investing in people and businesses to give our companies a competitive edge.

1700

To recap, our government is supporting our province's small businesses through tax relief, regulatory reform and education and skills training. These supports are helping our small businesses to compete and win in a global marketplace.

I would like to now take a few moments to talk about our government's plan for jobs and growth. As I have mentioned before, the bill we are discussing today is an important part of our commitment to create the right environment for small businesses to invest in Ontario and the right environment for small businesses to grow. I've already mentioned the small business forum I hosted in Scarborough-Guildwood, talking about growing small businesses and promoting job creation. This bill is a key part of that.

We recently introduced our three-part plan for jobs and growth. This plan includes investing in people, building modern infrastructure and supporting a dynamic

and innovative business climate. I have already highlighted a few of the ways that our government is supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate. In a moment, I will expand on the measures we are taking to invest in people and to invest in infrastructure.

But first, I'd like to remind the members of this House of our plan to continue managing responsibly. We are on track to balance the budget by 2017-18, in a fair and responsible way. For four years in a row, we have overachieved on our deficit targets, and we are on track to achieve our deficit reduction—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I've been listening very carefully to you. I think you're stretching it a little far from what is in front of us. If you could bring it back to the bill? Thank you.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. We know we must make new strategic investments to spur growth, to create jobs and to strengthen services for families. Bill 105 is one of the ways that we're doing so.

We also know that the world's recovery from a global recession remains uncertain. Many families are still feeling unsure about their job security and financial future. Should our global economic conditions falter, causing revenue growth to fall further, our priority will be to continue to protect investments in jobs, growth and families ahead of short-term targets.

I'd like to take a moment now to discuss how our government is investing in people and building modern infrastructure. Our plan—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would remind the speaker again. I would like you to speak to the bill that's in front of us as much as you can.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Absolutely, Speaker. We are working to secure agreement among our provinces and federal government for enhancing the Canada Pension Plan. If the federal government cannot be brought on board, we will move forward with a made-in-Ontario solution. This is an important aspect for all small businesses and for workers in Ontario.

We're also supporting 21st century learning because we know that investments in our education will: continue to build on our students' achievements; support innovative, technology-enabled teaching and learning practices; integrate the skills necessary to succeed in the 21st century global labour market. That's why we're moving forward with initiatives including our supports for full-day kindergarten, the 30% off tuition grant and further measures—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'm going to bring the member back. I would like you to speak to Bill 105, because I will have to move to the next speaker.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Absolutely, Speaker. What I'm talking about here today is investing in the people who work each and every day in our small businesses and ensuring that we create a climate in Ontario that supports the growth of our small businesses—supports like providing 30,000 young people with help to find jobs. This is critical. We know that most of these young people will

end up working in our small businesses, and that is an important aspect. We have to keep our small businesses working.

We also know that supporting training and investments in people is going to ensure that we have a qualified labour pool to sustain job growth in Ontario.

Our government is ensuring that we create the right conditions to support small business growth. I have already discussed our strong plan to support a dynamic and innovative business climate and our plan to invest in people. I will now take a moment to highlight our plan to build modern infrastructure, and this infrastructure supports the economic prosperity and growth—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Again, you're drifting into infrastructure, and that has nothing to do with the bill.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Absolutely, Speaker. I am absolutely convinced that in order to sustain our small business growth, we have to support the infrastructure that so many small businesses are connected to in many, many ways.

In fact, many think tanks and economists have talked about the vital role that infrastructure plays in ensuring that our economy remains competitive. These investments are ensuring that we create jobs. Well over 100,000 jobs will be created that are construction-related across this province.

To recap, investing in people, building modern infrastructure, and supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate will ensure that our economy in Ontario continues to grow and thrive. As I wrap up, I would like to highlight again the key points of Bill 105 and why supporting small businesses is vital to Ontario's economy.

This bill would help cut the costs of hiring for small businesses, non-profits and charities. It would result in 60,000 employers paying less employer health tax. It would result in 12,000 of these employers no longer paying the EHT at all. It would also cut paperwork for those employers no longer paying the tax. That's why this bill is so important. It would give a much-needed tax break to small employers so that they can grow and invest in Ontario.

This bill, if passed, would mean businesses in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood would be able to grow and create good, local jobs. As a strong voice for my community, I'm proud to be here at Queen's Park supporting this legislation.

I urge all members of this House to support this bill and to support it quickly, because this is an important opportunity for us to work together to help small businesses to prosper, the small business sector that is so vital to the economy here in Ontario.

NELSON MANDELA

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. John Milloy: We've just been informed that Nelson Mandela, the former president of South Africa, has passed away within the last little while. I know that there will probably be an opportunity for statements in the House as we head into next week, but I thought I would rise on this occasion and seek unanimous consent, in the hope that we could perhaps have a moment of silence in his memory.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has requested unanimous consent for a moment of silence. Agreed? Agreed.

We'll all rise to observe a moment of silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

1710

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À SOUTENIR LES PETITES ENTREPRISES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I respect the House leader's respect for a respected world leader, and I look forward to there being remarks in the future.

Just in response to the member from Scarborough–Guildwood, I want to be deferential to her and pay respect, because honestly she is new here and she's a very experienced and a very excellent speaker. I'd say that this bill was certainly, I think quite liberal, if I could say that, in allowing her to stray slightly from the bill. In fact, at one point there she was talking about a bill that we debated this morning, Bill 141, which is also an important bill tied to the infrastructure of Ontario.

But the bill here is—I hope to have an hour or two to speak on this in a few minutes. If those watching want to tune in here, I'll be taking advantage of that opportunity to put things into a broader perspective with respect to Bill 105.

But, no, her remarks were quite salient with respect to time, the infrastructure and the fundamentals of today's economy to the small part that the bill did—and I think this is where we probably have a fair amount of agreement—at least we tried to get it to committee and move forward with the bill because she did mention that what the bill really does is it increases the ceiling on the employer health tax.

Now, we fundamentally think that it's a tax and, as such, we think that we should look at other alternatives to level the playing field. I'll bring some context to it in my remarks, with a recent report from the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters and the automotive council, part of that is how we can maintain manufacturing jobs. But really, then she did mention, as well, that this whole thing sort of collapses on itself. You get to \$5 million of total payroll, and you don't get any relief. In Ontario,

we've always said—and she did in her remarks—the amount of the tax value to the company under the \$5 million and at the \$450,000-level of payroll would be about \$900, and that wouldn't buy a newspaper ad—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to my friend and colleague from Scarborough–Guildwood. I've known her for a number of years. She is quite polished when she reads a speech, but I do have to say that she should perhaps ask her colleagues and the people in the Liberal Party who prepare these notes—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Oh, no, you're supposed to talk about the bill.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, no; I am—who prepare these notes to keep them on topic because when she spoke, she had to be reminded many times—rightly so—by the Speaker that she was straying off topic. I know that this is a difficult topic.

Interjections.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Comments.

Mr. Michael Prue: I know—it's comments; perhaps the minister doesn't understand this either.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I understand—

Mr. Michael Prue: Okay. Because I'm trying to assist the member from Scarborough–Guildwood because she is such an intelligent person and because she wants, I know, in her heart, to actually speak to the bill.

The important thing for all of us here is to understand that. When you have to speak to the bill, you don't have to read what is put in front of you. It's true. So I'm hoping that she will take this in the heart in which it's given, because I'm trying to assist.

And, Mr. Speaker, when she was speaking to the bill, on those points and those areas when she actually dealt with Bill 105, I commend her for what she had to say. She was quite forthright and honest. This is not a bill of monumental proportion to small business. By the government's own admission, it will run into about \$945 in savings to a small business. That is not going to create that kind of climate that is going to make a great deal. Is it a help to small business? Absolutely. It's why the NDP proposed it in the first place. Is it going to make the kind of fundamental difference in the grandiose scheme of what was being discussed? I think not.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Mississauga-Cooksville.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: East.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mississauga East–Cooksville.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to begin by complimenting my colleague, the MPP for Scarborough–Guildwood. The one thing that I noticed when she was speaking was, she tied it back to the small businesses in her riding. That's what a good MPP does. It really isn't about whether she, for a few minutes, was speaking directly to the bill or not. But the point is, she got it right; she got the big things right. She got it right that this bill as—each of us as an MPP is really talking

about the small businesses in our own riding and what that means. So congratulations and well done.

To the MPP for Beaches–East York, he's a very, very articulate speaker, but I did have a little bit of contention when he says: What's \$1,000 a year going to do for a small business? It's going to do a lot.

Mr. Michael Prue: I didn't say that.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Yes, well, you did. You did. In so many words, you did imply that. I find that troubling, because \$1,000 a year is a lot of money for most people in this province, including me. So I just wanted to say that that is very helpful. You know, little things add up. A penny a day adds up; \$1,000 a year over 10 years adds up—adds up to a substantial renovation, perhaps, for that business. So I wouldn't laugh it off and say that's small, it's a pittance, because to me it's a step in the right direction. It's the kind of things we need to do to make sure that small business thrives in Ontario.

One of the reasons I think that the MPP for Scarborough–Guildwood was having trouble is because this bill shouldn't be debated. It's a slam dunk. I don't even know why we're debating this. It should just go to royal assent, and then we wouldn't be having any debate at all.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm not really sure what to say about that previous comment from the Mississauga East–Cooksville, but I do have some sympathy with what the member from Beaches–East York was saying, simply because he doesn't want to ruin the Liberal spin on what essentially is an NDP idea. The fact is that he wants the Liberals to talk about the essential components of an NDP plan, and when they're not doing that appropriately I can sympathize with him, why he'd be a little upset by the fact that we're not speaking directly to the points that the NDP have made.

This bill is an interesting one. I note that the threshold is being raised from \$400,000 to \$450,000 on who is going to receive a little bit extra of a break. When I look at that, I see the raising of the threshold and the things that have been put forward in this piece of legislation as the government doing precisely the minimal amount before it can actually say—by doing the minimal amount and not costing them money because they don't have any money—they are going around saying, “We're helping small businesses.”

Even though at the end of the day the amount that is helping, the less than \$1,000 in a year, isn't going to create any jobs—I mean, let's face it. A per diem on a government consulting contract is more than what this bill is going to provide. So it's not even a day's work for a small business that does work for the government.

This is being sold to the people of Ontario as a jobs bill, but the amount of relief it's providing—one has to wonder how many jobs it's actually going to create.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Scarborough–Guildwood, you have two minutes.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the members from all sides of this House, from Durham, Beaches–East York, Mississauga East–Cooksville and Cambridge, for commenting on my remarks about the Supporting Small Businesses Act, Bill 105.

I'm very, very confident that what I discussed today about the vital role that small businesses play in our economy is essential and that we have to ensure that we support small businesses' success.

1720

I have a heart for small business. I've worked for over 20 years with small businesses, starting in Scarborough. This weekend was actually an event called Shop the Neighbourhood, which supports buying local from your local neighbourhood stores. I had an opportunity to visit two small business owners in my riding. What they shared with me was their struggle to stay open, but their absolute passion and commitment to their craft and the work that they do on behalf of the community.

One of them was the West Hill Wine Bar. That business owner, in fact, is a top chef. He said to me that it was one article in one newspaper that opened the doors for customers to know that he is there. So that \$975 a year that small businesses are going to be saving could be used to market and promote their businesses. It could be used to create some small innovation; as small as it may be, it might be the key to that small business staying open, flourishing and creating employment opportunities.

I would encourage all of us to listen to our small businesses and to support Bill 105 and really pass this bill into law. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: The first thing I'd like to do officially is ask for unanimous consent to stand down our lead on the third reading of Bill 105.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Durham has requested unanimous consent to stand down their lead. Agreed? Agreed.

Member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, I want to say that, yes, jobs and the economy are central to many of our ridings and the plight of Ontario citizens today. I do want to commend the member from Beaches–East York and the NDP. Let's put this thing in perspective: This measure was introduced in the last Liberal budget, or what I call the coalition budget. It was really brought up by Andrea Horwath and the NDP and was adopted as a consensus measure by the Liberals to make this concession to business.

I have some comments on it because Bill 105—our argument is not about whether it's appropriate to give a tax break; quite the contrary. Our arguments, even in committee, were just that. We should—if it's going to be that good for a small business, as she described, the wine craft store, that \$900 might pay for the ad for the new job, but it wouldn't pay anything towards the new job directly. So our suggestion in committee, and I should put—it's hard because my notes aren't thoroughly

developed just yet; they probably will be on Monday. But the issue here really is this: Bill 105 is quite a small bill, for the viewers here. What it does is simply two things, really. It changes the employer health tax exemption threshold from \$400,000 to \$150,000 of payroll and then it caps it at the \$5 million. Once your payroll is \$5 million, you don't get any exemptions.

Well, in fact, it's worth repeating the section of the bill. Under this section of the bill on page 2, subsection 2.1(5) says, "If the total Ontario remuneration paid by an employer during a year beginning after December 31, 2013 is more than the exemption threshold for the employer and the employer is not associated with any other employers" at the time of the year, "the exemption amount of the employer for the year is nil."

If it's that good that she claimed it helped that little store in Scarborough–Guildwood, imagine what a larger exemption would be. It would be twice as good, perhaps. So if you really want to track the tax policy argument, then we're saying that less is bad and more is good. We moved amendments in committee, and what is the most surprising and disappointing and actually disheartening is, our critic on this file, and our finance critic specifically, Mr. Fedeli, is a very highly respected business person and a small business person, a former mayor of Sault Ste. Marie—

Mr. Rob Leone: North Bay.

Mr. John O'Toole: North Bay; pardon me. I keep saying "Sault Ste. Marie."

He wanted to move the threshold; I believe the number in our amendment was \$800,000, or I guess it may have been to eliminate the employer health tax. Imagine, all the businesses would then go out and hire somebody because they would have more money in their pocket to make more products or services, whichever they provide. They voted it down. The only reason the Liberals ever even did this was because they were forced to do it by the NDP; that's the end of the argument.

I've only got about an hour to speak on this. I don't even have an hour, actually, unfortunately. So I'm going to move on.

We moved a number of amendments. I got a copy; I went to the Clerks' table. This is third reading, and I did speak on this in second reading, and I suggested many of the things then that I thought our critic put forward at the committee level. Stage 3 is where we are here.

There wasn't a single amendment in the bill—not one single amendment in the bill. If they were really—what she was saying in her conclusion was, let's get on with this. In fact, the member from Mississauga–Cooksville—

Interjection: East.

Mr. John O'Toole: —Mississauga East–Cooksville said that we don't even need to be talking about this. That's not how things work, like that, quite so easily, in the legislative democratic process.

Our position, and we stand firm to it, is that small business does create the jobs. In fact, just moving a little bit off the bill for a moment, this morning we debated Bill 141, which is about building infrastructure in

Ontario. We could argue about the different types of infrastructure that are required.

What we've done is look at what the experts are saying on this whole thing. We all agree that this bill, Bill 105, about strengthening our economy and jobs in the economy—our leader, Tim Hudak, gave the Liberal government under Kathleen Wynne an agreement. The agreement was that we would clear the decks—these are just terms, I suppose—that is, give them a certain number of bills, and in return the Premier would table a jobs strategy. We have asked every day for eight straight days, pleading for them to table a jobs plan. They're claiming that Bill 105 is the jobs plan. We've just heard that it's modest, if not non-existent. I guess, well, that's the argument that was being made by the previous speaker.

What we did do is, we looked at the best practices around. One of the documents that we all got this week—I encourage the viewers and the members of government to have a look at it—is called Course Correction: Charting a New Road Map for Ontario. This document is done by Roger Martin, from the Rotman school of business—highly respected; a very highly respected family—and received very glowing remarks when the Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity issued the report on November 28. In it, it does summarize some of the requirements for the province of Ontario to improve its competitiveness. That's really the essence of the whole report. In the report, it does have several sections that I think are relevant to this. One of them is the amount of red tape and regulation. It's mentioned in this report; it's mentioned by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

Let's be honest, not to get too far off the topic here: Some months ago—the most esteemed economist in Canada, probably, is Don Drummond. He issued a competitiveness report. I think it had 163 recommendations. In that, he said clearly that Ontario, and Premier Wynne and Mr. Sousa, the finance minister—we have a structural deficit in Ontario. What that means is, we're expanding expenditures faster than we're expanding revenues.

This is where you get into the dichotomy here. Our argument is that by giving more money to the investor, the small business and the medium-sized business, to grow their economy and to modernize their tooling and technology, they will create jobs because they'll create quality products at a competitive price. That's the economics of it all, to some extent.

In framing all this, we respect the delivery of quality public services; without that, our quality of life is affected. But we can't have that if we don't have the economy that supports it. So it is a Catch-22. The competitiveness document I referred to was issued to the Premier; the information is there.

1730

Another document, as I mentioned earlier, is a report by the manufacturing competitiveness committee of the Canadian Automotive Partnership Council. And even in this report—I've had a few chances to look at it. It dealt

with three or four areas in its two sections on conclusions and recommendations. I don't have enough time to cover it in any detail. It's important reading, and I hope some of the ministers on the economic files over there have a look at it.

It really said it quite clearly. This is why I don't like to plagiarize; I'm giving it full credit: "Reduce the fully loaded cost of labour." This is not Tim Hudak speaking or anyone else. It says, "The fully loaded cost is higher in Canada than it is in the US even though the Canadian industry has taken major steps to reduce the gap. More steps are needed in areas under government control. These include employment insurance," employment standards, "the employer health tax"—it's right in there—"and ... compensation premiums."

WSIB is another area that should be targeted. That's a tax on payroll. WSIB is important. It's insurance, but WSIB has a two-sided edge. It's mandatory that employers apply a tax on their payroll. The tax or the rate—the WSIB premium—varies by industry, and the industry is rated by its amount of risk. A roofer pays more, probably 10% of payroll, than does someone filing envelopes or something. But they all pay.

What they did in the sector, which is a very active sector—which is construction and home renovations, that trades sector—is they upped the rate, and they said, that the whole payroll, not the salesperson in the field who is selling the contract, the person in accounts payable, the person in the payroll department or the HR department, the owner, the owner's wife. Everybody is paying it now. They're not on the job site. In fact, they're not entitled to a claim because they would have to demonstrate that their injury was related to a work-related incident, which would be reported and the WSIB would come with some mechanism of mitigating or offsetting the loss of income.

That's a good example of a regressive tax because it's really almost contradictory to this one, the Bill 105 part. That's only one section I read. With your indulgence, I'm reading the report and trying to relate it to Bill 105—which are other tools at the government's disposal, brought to them by stakeholders interested in growing the economy. It goes on here and it says, "Ease regulatory burden." I'm not making this up, Mr. Speaker. What it says here is, "CAPC members understand and support government efforts to green the economy. It is an initiative that is aligned with the automotive industry's efforts to reduce the environmental footprint ... However, doing so should not put a disproportionate burden on business and should not have the effect of undermining competitiveness and discouraging investment."

The most important thing—there's another report this week. I'm not finished reading it, but it is worth looking at. These reports are not a futile effort by the government. It's an acknowledgement that, "Houston, we have a problem." This one here is Achieving Balance, and it's on the long-term energy plan. Our critic called it the short-term long-term energy plan because we know that the economy is in trouble.

One of the things we've heard from almost every company, whether it's Caterpillar or General Motors—all

these companies are moving to the States. They're not stopping building cars or tractors; they're just building them in a place that has a more competitive environment for investment. We're buying those same things at Home Depot or Walmart or wherever people shop. But in this report—it is important, and this is going to be another filing.

One of the most important writers on the whole issue of energy is Parker Gallant. He's not some political person. Now, here's the real, true story of what's happening on the energy file. Energy as a cost of production is about 35%. You look at the industries in Canada that are stumbling; they're the ones that are big users of energy. The auto sector, steel, petrochemical and forestry are all big users. In fact, I would say Cliffs Resources moved out of here quick because we have uncompetitive rates. It's not me saying it. These are experts saying it. In fact, if you want to look at the real story—the minister said this too, but he doesn't tell you the entire story. This report is "Low Voltage Policy," on the Ontario electricity pricing system. It's written by the Globe. It's an assessment of this report—and I've only got a few minutes here. I wish I had an hour.

Here's what it says: that this year, the—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): And I would ask you if you would tie it to Bill 105 quickly.

Mr. John O'Toole: This is a suggestion, an amendment to Bill 105. It's too late for that now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): But you've now strayed off for three minutes.

Mr. John O'Toole: All right. Just on this, I'll finish off on the energy file, because this year it's 9%. In 2016, it's going to be a 15% increase, and in 10 years it'll be 50% more. That's the cost of doing business in Ontario. It's about jobs. It's about Bill 105. Bill 105 is tinkering with toys. It's a shell game brought on by the NDP as an appeasement to the budget.

Laughter.

Mr. John O'Toole: They may laugh, but—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, it is. This is not humorous. I'm worried about the economy, as some of the experts are. It's not me. I'm just forwarding information for your review.

I'm going to go back to Bill 105 because Bill 105 simply doesn't get the job done. How can we disagree with giving them at least what—the two parties that are running this province collectively—the "coalition government," I call it—have agreed that they're going to exempt up to \$450,000. But the problem is, they're probably going to increase some other regulatory thing where you don't qualify.

They'll have to hire several accountants, first of all, at some ministry to figure out where these thresholds are. They'll have to file reports on all their payroll now. So we're going to have several new people all making about \$100,000 with a new computer and all this stuff to analyze and investigate. It's almost like the College of Trades. They're going to be at the business with the

uniform and the company car outside with the trillium on the side of it, probably with the motor running, and go in to give you a ticket about the haircut—the best story I've heard is about the barber. But Bill 105 simply does not get the job done.

I see that most people have left—

Mr. Bob Delaney: You're not allowed to say that.

Mr. John O'Toole: I shouldn't say that because it's announcing that there are not too many people listening. But I would say this: We did put eight amendments forward, all in good faith, because we are on the record during the debate as supporting Bill 105, on the condition of some receptivity of a financial amendment, some acknowledgement. They could have dealt with it through the electricity rate. In fact, if you look at one of our Pathways to Prosperity papers—we've tabled them with the House. They're public documents. These are recommendations for discussion. One of them deals with the energy rate, but it also deals with the employer health tax. We have thresholds that we feel that new business—new business start-ups, built together with hiring policies. Job creation is the number one job in Ontario. Without that, how do we pay for all the wonderful services we feel we're entitled to?

I have heard speeches on all sides of this debate and cannot find a substantive reason to not vote for it, except that it doesn't go far enough. I want that to be my remark on this part of the bill, with—because I understand that the moment you cut revenue, and it doesn't provide the outcomes you want, which is more employment, then you've got less revenue and you're in a deeper hole.

So I ask them in their rebuttals to come up with some ideas so that we can talk about the economic implications of Bill 105, and they can relate it even to Bill 141, which I think is important. I thought the Minister of Transportation spoke quite well on infrastructure this morning. I tended to agree with him, and our critic, Mr. Klees, did as well.

Bill 105, though, in itself—the new legislation also means that businesses with \$5 million or more in payroll will no longer be able to claim a tax exemption even on the first \$400,000. This is revenue-neutral, really. They're going to get more from the big guys, but if they move, though, like Caterpillar, they won't get that either. Do you understand?

It was supposed to be a revenue-neutral outcome, and it isn't. We've looked at it. Businesses that are going to be affected by this—it's good to put a picture in people's mind. The Canadian Tire store—you'll probably be there buying a Christmas tree, some lights or some other kind of decorations—that is a typical store that employs local people and is usually owned by local people. I know the ones in my riding of Durham. There are three of them, and I think of Higgins in Uxbridge. He's involved in everything in making his community better and safer, and employs students and the rest of it. These are the people who won't get it—they won't get any of this; in fact, they're going to be paying more, because there's no exemption, not even on the first \$400,000.

1740

Why would they put the poison pill in there? If it's good, then it should be fair. You know what I mean? I'm losing faith, I'm losing confidence in Premier Wynne's ability to lead the province. I don't want to be mean. It's not personal. I've seen the video of her running, "I'm different," whatever. And that's fine.

I think everyone here recognizes—first of all, here's the simple analysis for the young pages here, and next week is their last week: no economy, no quality of life. It's pretty raw, but if there's a loss in the economy, if families don't have a job—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A point of order, the member from Mississauga East—Cooksville.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Speaker, I've been listening to the member from Durham, and every once in a while he throws in Bill 105. A lot of what he's speaking about is not Bill 105, but just for safety, he throws in the name—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): —I'm also listening very—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I've just lost—maybe I could get a little bit more time, because I don't want to be so harsh—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I don't think you need it.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's about finding the balance. At the end of the day, you have to find a balance. Our problem is that we have the highest unemployment rate of any province in Canada. That should be a signal to you: "Houston, we have a problem."

All I'm saying to you is, this is a small tool, Bill 105; if it's that good for small, it should be big for bigger. I'm saying we should go further and go faster so that we have jobs for all the young people.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I just want to stand and say I have such incredible affection for the member from Durham. We were discussing the member from Durham, I have to admit, and his comments, and my friend from Toronto—Danforth said, "He's positively James Joycean in his stream of consciousness about bills," which I have to say is true.

But I would also say that he's responsible—if you've never had a conversation with him—for some of the best one-liners ever. Some cannot be shared in this House, but one can, so I'm going to share it. He described what we do here. As he said, "What we do here is Hollywood for ugly people." I think that's pretty funny.

So, on the comments of the member from Durham, who never runs out of comments, who can speak to any bill for any length of time given him—and yes, the member across the way was correct: He does occasionally throw in the title of the bill, and that keeps the stream of consciousness going. We are incredibly entertained by

him, and this late in the afternoon on a Thursday, I say bravo to the member from Durham for managing to keep us awake and entertained, whatever he's talking about. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

The Minister of Consumer Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. When I think about Bill 105, I think about what the reality is in our constituency offices. The reality is, we have many small businesses, and that's what makes up our economy in Ontario. We need to recognize that. It's not always the big companies; it's the small companies—100 employees or less, 50 or less, 20 or less—that make up our economy.

Speaking of the economy, I know the member from Durham. I know him quite well because I live in Durham region where he lives, so I too enjoy working with him on the local scene from time to time. But I do have to highlight that his comments about the Roger Martin report need to be put in some sort of context. So, if I may, in response to his I think more negative comments, I'd like to quote the Martin report, page 10 exactly, which says:

"Ontario's tax system is now one of the most business-friendly in the OECD. Thanks to the adoption of the harmonized sales tax, the elimination of the capital tax, and reductions in the marginal effective tax rate, Ontario businesses are well-positioned to thrive in a competitive environment. The task force applauds the Ontario government for implementing the necessary changes to make Ontario's tax system smarter."

This bill before us will continue to move in that direction. You know, bring on the ideas, bring on the suggested changes, but let's work together. Let's get this bill to committee, where it belongs, and we'll go from there.

Mr. Michael Prue: It has been to committee.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Oh, it has been to committee? Sorry. Sorry.

Interjection.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It's okay; I'll correct myself. It has been to committee. This is third reading. I apologize; I came in later.

Let's finalize this bill. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments? The member for Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: Well, Mr. Speaker, I just want to commend the member for Durham for his, I think, eloquent speech at times, and at times it could be described as erratic. But nonetheless, I think what we've learned today is that this bill, which in its title is supposed to support small business, leaves much to be desired.

I know the member for Durham is very well read and researched. He reads almost everything that comes across his desk. I was sitting beside him during his remarks

today and he has got notes frantically written everywhere. So how he pieces together a cogent communication and speech remains quite the mystery to me.

I think we've seen the two solitudes with the remarks we've seen today from the veteran member for Durham and the—and I don't say this in a negative sense, because I am a rookie as well—member from Scarborough–Guildwood. We've seen the two solitudes in how to give a speech late on Thursday afternoon.

But I think at the heart of what the member for Durham was saying, and perhaps he can comment on this when he gives his last two minutes, is that this Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, leaves much to be desired for business. Whether it is on the regulation and red tape, which he spoke very passionately about—and, let's face it, regulation and red tape in our small businesses is costing millions and billions of dollars, probably. I think something does have to legitimately be done about that. If we are making questions and comments on this bill and having our debate through third reading here, we should be talking about those kinds of costs. Yes, there is a small reduction in costs for some small businesses, but there are massive costs in other areas that certainly need to be taken into consideration. So I look forward to the debate and thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At this late hour of the night, I too would like to stand up and commend my friend from Durham for the speech that he just made. As always, I listened to him intently, because there are gems and pearls of wisdom spaced throughout his speech. I agree with my colleagues who have said you have to pick and choose those parts that are good and get away from the extraneous stuff, but I always find the extraneous stuff to be interesting as well, especially when he strayed into the whole thing about energy policy and how much money was going to be lost by the citizens and businesses. He tried to bring that back, I think, to Bill 105, to point out the difference between an energy policy that will cost thousands of dollars to the average business and this bill, which will give some \$900 or \$945 or \$975, depending on who you listen to when they're actually speaking, in terms of extra funds.

Earlier, the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville said I made a statement which I don't remember making. I don't think it's a pica-yune amount; I think it's an important amount, \$945, that's going to flow to small businesses. I know my friend from Durham doesn't say exactly the same thing, but I do also recognize that \$945 for many businesses is not going to be the difference between success and failure. Is \$945 important for putting an extra ad in a newspaper to try to get people into your shop or restaurant? Of course it is. Is it going to make the difference between whether they succeed or not? I doubt it very much.

So when I have a chance to speak and start my speech in a few minutes, I will be remembering what the

member from Durham had to say. I will try not to deviate from Bill 105, and I hope I'll be successful at it, but I commend, as always, the member for Durham for his insightful thoughts towards whatever bill is up here in the list.

1750

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Durham, you have two minutes.

Mr. John O'Toole: I do really appreciate the somewhat awkward compliments that I received from my colleague from Parkdale–High Park, my friend from the Ministry of Consumer Services, my colleague from Cambridge, as well as the member from Beaches–East York.

Sometimes we're only sort of expounding on a simple bill of two pages really and trying to relate it to the broader discussion of jobs and the economy. It's in that context that we can all use numbers to justify what we're saying, but you have to put them into context. I think the best context right now is just a statement on our economy; the last quarterly report that we had at the update is an example. I'm not trying to be mean. I'm just saying you've got to face the news and the music. That's where we are.

In question period I don't often hear sensible responses. In fact, I do question it sincerely. A very good article on the energy file—this is worth reading—is by Parker Gallant, and it's in the Post. He says that it's costing us \$1.2 billion to export renewable energy that's produced in off-peak time. We're spending—where actually the cost per kilowatt hour is 10.5 cents and the export price is about 2.5 cents, so we're losing 8 cents per kilowatt hour. With the amount measured through the IESO site, we're losing \$1.2 billion. That's the reality of the energy policy we've found ourselves in in Ontario.

It does relate to Bill 105 because Bill 105 is extensively trying to find relief for small business. I'm saying we should find relief for all business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I think, mercifully, for everyone who is here tonight, I won't get my whole hour in, but I guess I'm going to start now and get about 10 minutes in, and we'll finish the rest of the speech at some other time.

A great many things have been said both by the government and by my colleagues in the Conservative Party about this bill and the genesis of the bill and that it was an NDP bill and all of those things—in fact, all of those things are kind of true. So I'd just like to preface my remarks about the bill itself with how it came that you're finding this debate on the floor here today.

This was an idea that the NDP has had for some time. This was an idea that we thought of as a revenue bill to the government. It was not a bill to help small business, as it was originally set out. What happened in the lead-up to the budget and the lead-up to the compromises that were made and the lead-up to this bill coming in in its present form was that the NDP suggested getting rid of the employer health tax for those corporations that had

more than 100 employees or \$5 million in sales, and that we should not be subsidizing those large corporations, those large companies, because they didn't need the money. They too were getting \$400,000 of relief on the first \$400,000 of their payroll that they didn't need.

We gave examples, like the banks, the insurance companies, General Motors and all those companies that did not need that \$945 and, in fact, could do well without it. Our proposal—the initial proposal that went to the government and got modified into Bill 105—was very different, because what we said was that we should continue to do it for small business and keep it at \$400,000 because small business could use the exemption of that amount of money and they could use it to good purpose for hiring people or running the business or keeping their heads above water. But for the big businesses, they didn't need it anymore.

The government sort of half listened to us. They said, "Okay. The big guys aren't going to get it anymore, and the little guys, we're going to put the ceiling up to \$450,000." The net effect of that was that it was more or less revenue-neutral. The suggestion that we had made would have saved the treasury some \$90 million. We thought that the \$90 million was far better spent in either paying down the deficit or in some social programs around housing or welfare costs or people in poverty, some other good purpose that it might be used for.

Now, the government in its wisdom determined the best way to do it, to take that \$90 million, was to give it to small business. Hence, this is how we got this act before us. So I thank my friends in the Conservative Party for saying it was an NDP bill, but it was not this bill. This is a government bill. This is different from what we had suggested, and I'm not sure that it is as good, because if you take a look at it—and I'm not going to say it's a picayune amount, as my friend from Mississauga East–Cooksville suggested I said; it's not. But it is not an amount of money that is going to make a fundamental difference to most businesses. Will they use or do they want the \$945? Of course they do. No one is going to deny for a minute that a barbershop, a hairdresser, a little restaurant struggling, a brand new little computer store with a couple of people working in it, or the hundreds of other stores and enterprises across this province won't welcome the money. The reality is, though, that it's not going to make that much of a difference to them in terms of finding themselves in solvency or insolvency. So that was the genesis of the idea; this is what we thought.

We think that the government has an obligation, in all things, to try to reduce the deficit. Sometimes my friends in the Conservative Party are agog when they hear me talking like this, but as a former mayor I think it is important that we spend within our means and that we manage our accounts and that we try to reduce that deficit, which is unsustainable in the long term, at \$1.1 billion. That's why, when I went to the finance committee and made this suggestion, which is the genesis of this bill, it was actually to be a government revenue tool, not revenue-neutral—just so everybody's clear.

Having said that, we found ourselves with this bill. This is a good bill, and if I had to give the \$90 million to somebody, I think that giving it to small business is not the worst thing we could do with it, because many of the small businesses in this province are finding things difficult. Costs are rising for them, just as they are rising for consumers. The cost of electricity, the cost of taxes, the cost of MPAC coming in and saying, "Your property is about to increase," are causing some very real difficulties. These businesses are looking for support or help from wherever they can get it, and if they're getting it from the \$90 million that in my view should have gone to the deficit, I'm sure they're more than happy to get it that way.

This bill has been somewhat contentious, which surprised me. I didn't think it was going to be all that contentious. When we started out, I remember that at second reading when I stood up to do my one-hour lead-off, I talked about all the revenue tools that the province might have had at its disposal if the government had listened more to the NDP instead of just seizing upon this one little thing in terms of helping small business. When I started, I thought, "Here's an idea; this is going to go through fairly rapidly." To my chagrin, this did not happen. This has taken a long time in debate through second reading.

It was fairly rapid through the committee process, but I'm going to talk about the committee process in a moment. Now we're back here, and I don't know how long this debate is going to last. I would hope against hope that we can finalize this before we break for Christmas because I would like to see this in the tax regime so that people in small business might see some benefit of it next year. But having said that, it had to wend its way, and there was interminable debate here and of course we pride ourselves on being able to say what is necessary to be said in this elegant and wonderful chamber. But in the end, it finally made its way to committee after considerable debate and, I think, a lot of debate. I don't remember there being all that much opposition to this bill at any stage during the debate.

Then we went to committee, and although I could not go to committee yesterday—I'm on the finance committee normally but I could not get there because I had to be in the legislative committee dealing with my own private member's bill. Mr. Speaker, you were there, and quite eloquent there as well, Mr. Speaker, if I might say. That's where I was tied up.

During the course of the debate in the finance committee, I had to read the—I don't know whether I was appalled or amused when I saw the Conservative amendments to the bill. I know they didn't pass, but I'd like to read them into the record because these are the kinds of things that go on here, and I think people need to know. Am I going to have to save this for the next day, Mr. Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I think you should save it.

Mr. Michael Prue: Okay, I can save this till the next day. I thank everyone for their patience.
Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands adjourned until Monday at 10:30 a.m.
The House adjourned at 1800.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
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Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
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Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

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Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
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McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
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Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
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Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
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Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
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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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Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
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Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Todd Smith
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Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, John O'Toole
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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John Fraser, Monte Kwinter
Jane McKenna, Rick Nicholls
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
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Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
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Paul Miller
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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
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