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(Hansard)**

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des débats
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Monday 9 December 2013

Lundi 9 décembre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
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Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 9 December 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 9 décembre 2013

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Our page captain today is Jonathan Arta Yapeter, and we will be joined by his mother, Janny, in the public gallery.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It is my pleasure to introduce a number of doctors from the Scarborough Hospital and the Rouge Valley hospital. We have Dr. Naresh Mohan, chief of staff for Rouge Valley hospital; Dr. Robert Ting, president of the medical staff association of the Scarborough Hospital; and Dr. Jordan Cheskes, vice-president of the medical staff society for the Rouge Valley Health System. Welcome, doctors, to Queen's Park.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to welcome the family of page captain Michaela Knechtel: her parents, Joanne and Clare Knechtel.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'd like to introduce my son, Damien, and his girlfriend, Raki.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Today, it's a privilege for me to recognize, in the members' east gallery, Jessica Rosenbloom, who is visiting us here today to learn more about the legislative process and to see first-hand what it's like to be a member of provincial Parliament.

Jess is actually a grade 5 student at Louis-Honoré Fréchette Public School in Thornhill. I understand that her favourite pastimes are breakdancing, playing sports and walking her dog, Lucy. She is joined today by her mother, Karen Trainoff; her brother, Ari Nusbaum; Cristin Napier; Krista Orendorff; Sumi Shan; and Sugeevan Shan.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to recognize William Renton, from the Woodstock Police Service, who is in the gallery today. Bill has been a big help to me on public safety issues, and I want to welcome him to Queen's Park.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'd also like to introduce Helen Walker, who is the case manager in my constituency office in Pickering-Scarborough East. She organized a meeting today with the doctors attending from Rouge Valley and the Scarborough Hospital. Thank you, Helen, and welcome to Queen's Park for the first time.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'd like to welcome to the Legislative Assembly my new consistency assistant Eric Kroetsch to the Legislature.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'd like to welcome the parents of one of my policy advisers, Dina Stigas: her father, Clement Stigas, was an electrician who worked for the TTC for over 34 years, and her mother, Anna, worked for the Toronto District School Board for over 23 years. Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's my pleasure to welcome Eric and Sarah from Humberview Secondary School. They are job-shadowing me today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park, fresh from a tour of southeast Asia, Jonathan Sweeney-Bergen from Oakville.

ORAL QUESTIONS

LABOUR POLICY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is to the Acting Premier. Acting Premier, under the McGuinty-Wynne government, Ontario has lost 300,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs. But that's not all. Not only are we losing jobs at an alarming rate, but for those who have jobs in Ontario's private sector, wage growth is dead last in the entire country. While workers in Saskatchewan, Alberta, Newfoundland and Nunavut are seeing wages climb on a yearly basis, Ontario workers' take-home pay remains stagnant and well below average.

While your government has blown this off as a mere transition, in fact, only Tim Hudak and the PCs have put forward a plan to create jobs, grow our economy and modernize our labour policies.

Minister, your government is simply limping from crisis to crisis. Why don't you have a full-time jobs plan for Ontario, and why do you believe it's okay for Ontario workers to be dead last when it comes to wage growth in this country?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think the member opposite knows this, but just in case he doesn't, we've actually had a net increase of 474,000 jobs. So they can focus on the losses, but those losses have been far more than replaced—in fact, a net gain of 474,000 jobs. I think all of us were delighted to see the job numbers that came out last week.

Speaker, what is passing strange, though, is this focus on the right-to-work-for-less approach of the party opposite. They talk about increasing income for people, but they're taking an approach that has been shown time and time again to reduce income for people. In fact, some

very prominent members of his own party have come out against this plan.

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Acting Premier: You can spin the numbers all you want, but the fact remains that Ontario has lost over 25,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs since Kathleen Wynne has become the Premier. The Heinz plant in Leamington is just another example of your careless approach to Ontario's manufacturing industry, and sadly, it won't be the last.

Minister, while you were busy patting yourself on the back, Ontario's government unions, like OPSEU, have grown by over 300,000 new members, while Ontario's private sector unions continue to face layoffs and job losses, losing 100,000 members over the same 10-year period. Minister, over those same 10 years, OPSEU elitist Warren "Smokey" Thomas has forcibly extracted over \$500 million in annual dues from his membership. Why does your government choose to stand with union elites like Smokey Thomas instead of the one million people who are out of work in Ontario today?

Interjections.

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

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, again, it's strange that the party opposite is advocating further job loss: 2,000 nurses they want to fire. They want to fire 10,000 education workers. That's a job plan that I don't think the people of Ontario want to see.

But let's see what other prominent Progressive Conservatives have to say about your right-to-work-for-less plan. What John Tory says is, "I don't think it's constructive right now." He says, "I think it's probably the wrong thing to be advocating, and I don't even think it's going to be that good for the economy." That's your former leader, John Tory.

1040

But if that's not good enough, let's talk about Nick Kouvalis—I think you probably know him; he's a prominent Conservative. He says, "If PC members are largely split on right-to-work legislation, then this is not a winner with the general population."

Speaker, the member opposite would know that Alberta, under Ralph Klein, looked into this and decided against it.

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Acting Premier: As you know, union elites like Smokey Thomas forcibly extract hundreds of millions of dollars from their members without providing any disclosure or transparency as to where and how that money is spent. It is outdated practices like these that led to my launching of our OPSEU opt-out website this morning. OPSEU opt-out is an opportunity for current and retired OPSEU members to go online, leave their comments and feedback, and let

us know why they want to opt out of their government union today.

Minister, Ontario's middle class has been completely gutted under your Liberal government's watch. When will Ontario move forward, stop standing with union elites like Smokey Thomas and instead remove unnecessary barriers to job creation and modernize our labour policies like Europe, Australia, the UK and most of the United States have already done?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I'm really baffled by the assertions that the member opposite continues to make when it comes to job creation in this province, because what he is talking about is absolutely a job killer in terms of what will happen in this province if they got to bring in their right-to-work-for-less type of policies that they continue to talk about.

The facts are very clear, Speaker, if you look at the United States and where they are. The states that have right-to-work-for-less types of legislation—what we have seen is that there is a net loss of jobs, there is a reduction in wages and benefits for both unionized and non-unionized workers, and not to mention there are weaker health and safety laws.

We will not ascribe to those kinds of anti-worker, anti-Ontario policies, and we reject their job-killer plan.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. All right, we're starting to raise the temperature. I want to keep it down.

The member for Nepean—Carleton.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Good morning, Minister. On Saturday, hundreds of people protested your office. They are angry and fed up with increased hydro rates caused by poor government decisions by yourself and others over there. But the straw that broke the camel's back was quite simply when the Minister of Energy compared the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants to merely a "cup of coffee." As one protestor put it, "It's not just a cup of coffee.... It's one of our most basic monthly" bills. "I'm just working to pay" them.

This careless comparison by the minister proves without a shadow of a doubt that the Liberal Party is not sorry for wasting \$1.1 billion in the last election. It also proves the Premier only apologized because she got caught.

Will the minister stand in this place and apologize for that careless characterization of the gas plants and that \$2 cup—

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

Interjections.

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

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, last week the justice committee was discussing the costs associated with the relocation of the Oakville gas plant. The relocation costs have been verified by the Auditor General, and I have said and our party has said that the relocation costs were unacceptably high.

The chair of the Ontario Power Authority provided information to the committee that the rate base portion of the Oakville relocation would cost the ratepayer, for the 20-year recovery period, between \$1 and \$2 per year, Mr. Speaker. That was from the chair of the Ontario Power Authority.

But I wonder, to those 60 or 70 demonstrators who were in front of my constituency office, Mr. Speaker, whether the member for Nepean–Carleton told them what her leader, Tim Hudak, said when asked if he would freeze or lower rates. He said, “I will not do that.”

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Well, what the 300-plus protesters told me in front of his office is that they can’t afford to send any more cups of coffee to Bob Chiarelli, Kathleen Wynne and Dalton McGuinty. They told me that they didn’t wake up during the 2011 election campaign and say, “Gee, I wish I could buy the Liberals a cup of coffee for the next 20 years.” No, they told me that they are having a rough time paying their hydro bills because this government needed to win five seats in the GTA. In fact, it wasn’t just the protestors that were seniors and family members; it was also the small businesses who were there that were telling me they are going to have to lay people off or shut their doors entirely because of this Liberal government’s terrible and disastrous decisions.

The protest on the weekend is just the beginning. I know we’re going to hear more in the next couple of weeks. How does this Liberal government expect to create jobs and retain the ones that we have already got in Ontario if their energy policy is the single biggest factor driving jobs away?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I’m sure the member didn’t tell those 70 or 80 demonstrators the number of mitigation measures we have to reduce the payments on their electricity bills, and she voted against every single one of them.

With respect to industrial prices, Ontario’s industrial rates compare favourably with other jurisdictions, despite what she shouts. 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, and in line with states like New York, Virginia and Tennessee.

Mr. Speaker, they continue to state facts which are totally untrue. They talk about Heinz leaving because of energy prices. Heinz actually had their own generation on-site. They were not paying an electricity bill.

They’ve got to come straight with the facts.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The biggest mitigation in making sure that we can control energy costs in this province is by removing that party from office. It’s difficult to trust this government. You look at them every day; they contradict themselves. They contradict the facts with respect to industrial energy pricing. Every major corporation will tell you they’re wrong. The Premier contradicted herself last week in the gas plants committee, including all of the bureaucrats. This minister here couldn’t even tell us last week whether the energy rates that are going up included the cancelled gas plants. It’s like a bad episode of Hogan’s Heroes over there. They know not of what they speak.

I can tell you one thing: In the next six months, Ontarians will have a choice. They can continue to choose that party that puts politics over people’s energy policy, or they can choose a party, the Progressive Conservative Party under Tim Hudak, that understands energy pricing in the province of Ontario, knows how to bring the jobs back and actually has a plan on the floor of the assembly. Will the minister adopt our plan, say enough is enough and apologize to the people of this province?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Will the member tell the people, and did she tell those 50 or 60 people in front of my constituency office, that she and her party are going to proceed with a \$15-billion investment in new nuclear that will make the rates skyrocket?

Did she tell the people in front of my constituency office that she and her party voted against these programs: the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit, a 10% discount off the bottom line; the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit, which saves qualifying individuals up to \$963 per year, with a maximum of \$1,097 per year for qualifying seniors? That member and her party voted against those price mitigations that reduced electricity bills, and she should be embarrassed for voting against what’s going to help electricity ratepayers.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question to the Minister of Energy: According to the Auditor General, the province sells electricity exports at a loss. Between 2005 and 2011, the loss was \$1.8 billion.

Can the minister explain to consumers paying the highest electricity prices in Canada why Ontario is selling electricity at a loss?

1050

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member should know that, first of all, from the opposition party, they had accrued a deficit in electricity. They had been importing at the cost of close to \$1 billion a year.

We invested heavily in the sector, to make sure that we had a surplus. Because we have a surplus now, the member should be aware of how trading in electricity works. Yes, sometimes we sell electricity cheaply; much

more do we sell it at a profit. From 2008 to today, the IESO will confirm to him—I'll arrange a meeting for him; we can go through the books—we generated a \$6-billion profit in the sale of electricity.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Minister, for families, it's just another example of a system that isn't working. They saw the Liberal government spend over \$1 billion cancelling private power deals, spend millions more signing contracts for nuclear expansion plans that were never going ahead. The only way to get affordable electricity from Ontario is to move outside the province. Does the minister think that makes sense?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'd like to read a quote that I'm sure will be of interest to the critic from the NDP. It's from Larry Alderdice of the Power Workers' Union: "It was great to hear that nuclear power ... will continue to play a key role in sustaining the province's energy needs into the future." He's referring to refurbishment, Mr. Speaker.

"The ... units provide a reliable source of safe, clean and low-cost electricity, while also providing a source of highly skilled jobs. The commitment to nuclear in the long-term energy plan will secure great jobs for our current employees and hopefully will open the door for more employment opportunities into the future." Twenty-five thousand more jobs, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, Speaker, I guess answer period is not going to be part of today's agenda.

The government talks about doing things differently, but all people see is a lot more of the same status-quo thinking, and bills keep climbing higher. Instead of clamping down on private power deals, or reining in the growing number of hydro agencies and their CEO salaries or taking some action to ensure that Ontario isn't exporting electricity for cheap while charging people more and more at home, the government offers more of the same. Does the minister think that's good enough?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member knows that we invested heavily to put ourselves back into a surplus. We've invested heavily to make the system clean. We've totally abolished dirty coal-burning generation. That takes \$4.4 billion off the bottom line of the province's expenses in environmental and health care costs.

But in the meantime, because of the pressure on prices, we introduced a number of price mitigation measures which that party voted against in some cases. The Ontario Clean Energy Benefit takes 10% off the bottom line. The Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit saves qualifying individuals up to \$963 per year with the maximum of \$1,097 per year for qualifying seniors.

That member should look in the mirror and ask himself why he wanted to deprive our seniors of up to \$1,000 a year off their electricity bills. That was totally irresponsible.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Catherine Fife: Earlier this morning, the government issued yet another vague announcement about reining in public sector CEO salaries. Will the government set a hard cap for executive salaries—

Interjection: Who's the question to?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I said to the Acting Premier.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes, I did, but you were yelling.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. If I could ask the member to at least be clear who she's addressing the question to.

Ms. Catherine Fife: To the Acting Premier: Earlier this morning, the government issued yet another vague announcement about reining in public sector CEO salaries. Will the government set a hard cap for executive salaries at twice the level of the Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: There was nothing vague about this morning's announcement. We talked about the fact that the government will be moving forward with legislation in the spring when the House returns, which will outline ways in which we can establish a framework, including hard caps, for public sector salaries.

The fact of the matter is—and I think the leader of the third party learned last week with her rather ill-fated press conference—that this is a technical matter. It involves study of what goes on in other jurisdictions. We want to make sure that broader public sector salaries are fair, but they also have to reflect what is needed in that particular situation.

As I told the House the other week, the honourable leader of the party, in her press conference, cited an example and then had to swallow herself whole by saying, "Well, maybe there's an exception for that."

This is not a political ploy. We are actually going to have the work done, and we are going to come forward with a framework which allows for fairness in terms of salaries in the broader public sector.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Protecting the taxpayers of Ontario is not a technical issue. This question is to the Acting Premier. While people feel like they've been falling further behind, they've watched as executives in the public sector have seen their paycheques grow by leaps and bounds. The province promised action, but all we see is yet another plan to have a plan. The minister talks about a hard cap on CEO salaries. If he means what he says, can he tell us what he's going to cap them at?

Hon. John Milloy: As I said, we are going to come forward—this is a very clear commitment that we will come forward with legislation that will give government

the authority to establish frameworks going forward. I would stress to the honourable member that those are frameworks for the entire package that senior members of the broader public sector receive, which includes salary, which includes perks and which includes severance arrangements.

I note that the NDP bill, which the honourable member likes to talk about, did not deal with perks and did not deal with severance. This is a broad study that will take place and will result in a framework. What this legislation does is give government the power to impose caps and to impose a framework. This is the responsible course of action. It is a firm commitment that that legislation will be forthcoming when the House returns in the new year.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: People are tired of watching as public sector CEOs get pay hikes that are worth more than what most families earn every year. Two years ago, this government said they backed a hard cap at twice the pay of the Premier—two years ago. But they also saw every Liberal MPP vote against the plan put forward by Andrea Horwath to cap salaries at twice the pay of the Premier, joined by the PCs. Now they are making promises again, but without any details of what the cap will be. Why should people believe the minister this time?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, let's talk about the New Democratic Party's bill. The leader of the third party went out and held a press conference. In the press conference, she had to swallow herself whole by outlining an individual who received a substantial salary, who she had to admit would have an exception under her bill. This isn't about exceptions; this is about a proper framework.

The other difference between our measures and those put forward by the third party is that the third party talked about just the salary. We want to look at perks. We want to look at issues like severance. We want to look at the entire package. This is a complex matter. It's a technical matter. What this bill will do is give government the power to put in force a framework, including hard caps, in a responsible way, which makes sure that taxpayers' money is properly used by the broader public sector.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Acting Premier. We've been holding economic round tables all throughout Ontario, and the news is quite disturbing. We're seeing company after company pulling up stakes in Ontario and heading to more open-for-business territories. Your high taxes, unaffordable energy and red tape are sending these businesses packing. How many US Steel, Caterpillar and Heinz announcements do you need to hear before you actually change the direction Ontario is headed?

Acting Premier, we're in crisis mode here in Ontario. When are you going to do something for our struggling business community?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I recognize that the member opposite is making reference to a number of initiatives with his right-to-work legislation, things that are actually going to kill jobs in our province. We won't stand for that on this side of the House. We're going to take the initiatives necessary to protect those workers for health and safety reasons, and at the same time provide highly valued jobs. That's why our jobs plan includes investing in people and ensuring that they have the skills necessary to succeed. We're going to continue to invest strategically in infrastructure and those initiatives that create jobs—over 100,000 more as a result—and a dynamic business climate.

1100

Even Roger Martin says, "Ontario's well-educated and active labour force is one of its best assets, and also one of its primary sources of economic potential"—and that was just done last month.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Acting Premier, what I'm referring to, actually, are your high taxes, your red tape and your unaffordable energy, which are driving businesses out of Ontario—and that's before your energy minister's announcement that our already-tripled hydro rates are set to skyrocket over the next five years. It's not very encouraging news for businesses or for families or for seniors.

In northern Ontario, Xstrata Copper closed, terminated 672 employees and moved 115 kilometres over the border, into Quebec, for cheaper hydro.

There are 60 mills in the north that are closed—that's 80% of all the mills in the north—are gone, never to open again under this government.

Last week, Resolute Forest Products in Fort Frances shut down yet another paper line and sent 60 people home.

What is it going to take for you to finally get it?

Hon. Charles Sousa: What we have in this House right now is Bill 105, to support small business. I would look to the critic opposite to ensure that we pass that bill to help small businesses right across this province; over 90% would benefit.

The member opposite also makes reference to energy prices. What we had left over from the Conservative Party was a \$20-billion stranded debt. That's their legacy, and that is still being paid for today by the people of Ontario.

When it comes to taxes, "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."

We are one of the lowest in the OECD countries. That's why countries and businesses are investing in our province.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. The committee has finally received the forensic audit document, the document that was completed in June 2012. It has been a year and a half. I find this time lapse unacceptable. The public has a right to know the contents of the audit of what went on at Ornge. When will the minister see fit to read the report and make it public?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I did have the opportunity to read the investigation report. As I've said many times in this House, I read the interim report. When I received the interim report, that was enough for me. What I read in that interim report made me realize the right place for this information was the Ontario Provincial Police. That is where that interim report went. That's where it belonged.

The committee has asked for the forensic investigation report, and they have now received that report. But I think it's worth noting that the committee has had the interim report for months and months and months.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, the result of the forensic audit belongs to the Minister of Health. She ordered it. She had a duty to read it. She had a duty to read from it, learn from it and make sure that it never happens again. It continues to show that the minister prefers to hide behind excuses rather than admit that she should have read the report and she should have released it to Ontarians.

There are no excuses for hiding information, for taking away transparency. This is taxpayers' dollars that went into the pockets of private enterprise and of greedy people at Ornge.

When will the minister finally make the report public to all so that everybody can see the money that was taken away, everybody can learn and everybody can make changes so that Ornge never happens again?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as I have said before and I will say again, the ministry officials determined, in an abundance of caution, so as not to jeopardize an OPP investigation, that this document be held in the ministry and shared with Ornge. The ministry and Ornge carefully reviewed that document.

A very high priority for me, now that Ornge is on the right track, is to see that justice is done. I, in no way, want to jeopardize that investigation. A decision was made by officials. I tell you, I support that decision, and if that decision were made again today, I would still support that decision because the OPP investigation must be allowed to continue without any political interference or any perception of political interference.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. Like residents across

this province, those who live in Manitowadge, a township in northern Ontario, turn to the provincial government to assist with resolving issues surrounding infrastructure.

A road in the municipality of Manitowadge was designated as an industrial road in 1963 and operated as such until a forestry company withdrew from the industrial road agreement in late 2012. Unfortunately, the industrial partner ended operations in the area and significantly reduced its maintenance activities on the road in 2010. More recently, the road has been closed since July of this year due to a washout.

Mr. Speaker, what is the Minister of Transportation doing to help the residents of Manitowadge access this important rural road?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's always great to have an engineer in caucus like my friend from Orléans, who pays such attention to detail in the infrastructure. I appreciate that.

This is Caramat Road that we're talking about in Manitowadge. I have been working with and I want to acknowledge my friends the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and the Minister of Natural Resources.

This has been a complicated and challenging problem. As you know, the road washed out just a few months ago and it was not maintained. You're quite right; there's been a number of jurisdictional issues. It was an industrial, private road and it was a road nominally maintained by the Ministry of Natural Resources, and the municipality whose landfill is on this site has not been interested at all in taking the road over.

I'm pleased to announce that the Ministry of Transportation will open up the road, maintain it and work with the community to repair the full length of Caramat Road in the coming months.

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: Back to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure: I'm pleased to hear that the minister was able to find a solution for the constituents of Manitowadge. This is an important access point for the residents of Manitowadge, and I know that they will greatly appreciate the support that our government is providing them. It is important that the needs of northern Ontario are heard and addressed.

This provides an opportunity to highlight what our government is doing in northern Ontario. A number of my colleagues, including the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, were in Timmins on Friday for the Northern Leaders' Forum. There was great discussion that emerged from that forum that was very positive for northern Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister please inform the Legislature how our government will continue to build on the positive momentum generated by the Northern Leaders' Forum in relation to infrastructure in northern Ontario?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, whether it's the seven kilometres that we're opening up right away to the

landfill for the community of Manitouwadge or working over the winter on the larger road, I want to thank all of my colleagues, particularly the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, for the Northern Leaders' Forum on Friday, where this and other issues were discussed.

We have over \$500 million, which I think is a record, going into northern roads and highways, our important twinning projects, working with northern development and mines and natural resources to open up those roads for the Ring of Fire and for the very quickly reviving forestry industry.

I want to thank Mayor MacEachern of Manitouwadge, in particular, and the council and the people for their patience, and for working with our ministry to resolve this issue, to get the landfill open and get those services available to the community.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Minister of Health. Ontarians in rural and northern Ontario find it very difficult to access the health care they need, especially in the winter months. Other provinces, like British Columbia, have introduced non-emergency medical transportation programs for people who live in rural and remote communities to make it easier to access their out-of-town medical appointments. British Columbia's Northern Health Connections program, run by Pacific Western Transportation, is so successful that the number of riders has doubled over eight years.

Minister, it's my understanding that Pacific Western has given a proposal to your ministry for consideration. Could you please give me a status report with respect to the proposal?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite raises a very important question, particularly in northern Ontario, and the issue is non-urgent patient transfer, people who need to be transported but they don't need the care available by paramedics in a fully equipped ambulance.

1110

This is an issue that I have spoken about many times, with the people of northwestern Ontario in particular. In fact, the North West LHIN is now working on resolving the issue so that people get the care they need, and we also get the right care, the most appropriate care. This work is under way right now.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Minister, we all know that northern Ontarians rely on the Northern Health Travel Grant, yet your government has increased spending for this grant by 133% without improved customer service. Ontarians are having to wait up to eight weeks to receive reimbursement for medical services, putting northerners out of hundreds of dollars.

Pacific Western Transportation has put forward a proposal that would both save money and improve service.

Minister, will you commit today to giving northern Ontarians more options when travelling distances for health care and adopt Pacific Western Transportation's proposal?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I find it interesting that the member opposite thinks there is one solution to this problem. In fact, it is much more complicated than that. What I will reiterate is that this is an issue that is being resolved, that the people in northwestern Ontario are working very hard to find the most appropriate solution for this particular issue.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Last Friday you gathered in Timmins, along with the Premier and others, for your Northern Leaders' Forum, where the Liberal cabinet and the Premier tried to tell northerners that everything is going to be better now.

But as we wake up on Saturday morning, we find out we still have no rail passenger service because your government confirmed, in fact, you're not going to do it. We still have the same bad forest tenure problems that we had before Kathleen Wynne became Premier. We still have the same—and actually worse—energy policies that we had before Ms. Wynne became the Premier of Ontario. We now are going to have a 33% increase in electricity over the next three years and our northern highways are still downloaded.

Can you tell me what is different come Saturday morning after the northern summit than there was Friday morning when you arrived?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: May I say to the member, you were there. You saw what a positive meeting it was in terms of the commitment we made to work with northern leaders—municipal, First Nation, Métis—moving forward on the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario. You heard the comments by northern leaders, such as Timmins mayor Tom Laughren, whom you represent, what an historic occasion this was.

Also, you heard certainly a commitment on my part as Minister of Northern Development and Mines that, indeed, we will continue to look at all options moving forward for the Ontario Northland transportation. We are committed, and I am committed as minister, to a sustainable and a viable ONTC, something that makes a lot of sense. We have changed the commitment from one of divestment to one of transformation. This was indeed an exciting day. Eight of my colleagues—the Premier was there as well—an historic, tremendous day in northern Ontario—

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, as I said on Friday, nobody's going to say you're not welcome to northern Ontario. We're glad any time somebody comes to visit us. But what we're looking for is: Where's the beef? Where is there going to be change in the policies that this government has put forward that has hurt northern Ontario?

We lost Xstrata. Why? Because of high energy prices in the city of Timmins. We lost forestry jobs. Why? In large part due to your own forest tenure policies that your government put in place.

So I ask you again: Tell me one policy that you've changed from Friday morning to Saturday morning as a result of that northern summit.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The member is being remarkably disingenuous, particularly related to the extraordinary work that we have done with northern leaders related to the northern Ontario growth plan. I think the member also knows, in terms of the Ontario Forest Tenure Modernization Act, we are now seeing involvement by First Nations in a way that we've never seen before in terms of management of our crown forests. We've seen new companies opening up and that's been an exciting—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. Minister, I would ask you to withdraw.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'll withdraw—oh, was it “disingenuous”? I'll withdraw. I didn't realize that was unparliamentary, Speaker.

We are working incredibly closely with our northern leaders, and Premier Wynne has made it very clear our commitment is absolutely not something we are just talking about. We're working with northerners. We've got a northern cabinet committee put in place so we can put a northern lens on all—

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

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We had a cabinet meeting in Sault Ste. Marie several months ago. We were up there with eight of our colleagues, including the Premier, meeting with all northern leaders, First Nations and Métis to continue to move forward on all the economic development in the north—

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

Hon. Michael Gravelle: —including the Ring of Fire, including working on making the—

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

The member for Etobicoke North.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Merci, monsieur le Président. Ma question est pour le ministre du Travail, l'honorable Yasir Naqvi, and I would appreciate an ingenuous answer.

As members of this Legislature are well aware, there has been for some time a global economic restructuring occurring. This, of course, affects manufacturing, goods, services, resource allocation, exchange rates, and, in particular, labour demand.

While the overall economy steps towards improvement, I still encounter constituents in my own riding of Etobicoke North who face particular challenges in the labour market. Though so many aspire, desire, seek and come to Ontario with the promise of a better life, a good job and assured prosperity for their families, nevertheless, particular obstacles remain: recruitment fees and

ills and a lack of protection under Ontario's strict rules of health and safety.

Speaker, would the minister please inform this chamber: Why are certain employers able to continue to circumvent Ontario's labour protections?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I appreciate the member from Etobicoke North's very important question. Our government is committed to standing up for Ontario's workers because safe and fair workplaces are the building blocks of a competitive and growing economy.

Speaker, as you may recall, just last week, the government tabled a bill to ensure that we are protecting vulnerable workers in our communities across the province. The bill is quite extensive. It makes it illegal for employers to charge temporary foreign workers recruitment fees or to take away their personal documents, like passports.

Also, the member from Etobicoke North will be happy to hear that we are requiring employers to provide information to their employees about employment standards rights, and we provide that information in 23 different languages besides English and French, languages like Tamil, Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, traditional and simplified Chinese and more.

Also, we are making sure that co-op students, trainees and unpaid learners are also covered by the Occupational Health and Safety Act through this legislation.

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

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I would like to say shukria—thank you—to the minister and commend him for his initiatives and commitment on this file. I will likely be able to return to my riding of Etobicoke North over the break and reassure my constituents that our government has heard their concerns, takes them seriously and has begun to act.

Speaker, safe and fair workplaces have been a hallmark of the province of Ontario. With such workplace guarantees, prospective employees can focus on earning their daily bread, providing for their family, stimulating the economy and ultimately building a more prosperous and just society.

Even so, unfortunately, I continue to hear from workers who have been taken advantage of by their employer: workers who have worked but who have nevertheless been left without pay, often with no recourse, remedy or redress. Such workers are often unaware of their full rights, and that, of course, is a recipe for disaster.

Would the minister please inform this chamber: What is the Ministry of Labour proposing to ensure that hard-working Ontarians are paid for the work they do?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: At its heart, this legislation is very much about making sure workers get paid for the work they have done and giving businesses who play by the rules a competitive advantage.

This bill, if passed, would remove the current \$10,000 cap on the recovery of unpaid wages from a Ministry of Labour order to pay. It would also increase the time limit to recover wages from six months or a year to two years, so workers will be able to get money that they are owed.

In terms of temp agencies, we should be very proud, because we were the first Parliament, the first government in all of Canada, to bring in legislation, in 2009. We are taking the next step in protecting workers who get employment through temp agencies.

The proposed legislation would extend joint liability for both unpaid wages and workplace injuries, encouraging every business to make sure that their workplaces are safe for all workers and that they are treated fairly.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Health. We know that the Auditor General's report on Ornge and the Ministry of Health was scathing about the lack of oversight on the part of the ministry over Ornge. Multi-millions of dollars were wasted, and the lack of oversight rests with the minister.

1120

Since then, we've heard often from the minister that things have changed. I'd like the minister to tell us how often she has met with the new chair and the CEO of Ornge. Can the minister tell us what the most recent financial statement of Ornge is and how much of a deficit is Ornge running this year? What will the total budget for Ornge be in this fiscal year?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, I'm very pleased to say that I meet regularly with the chair and with the CEO of Ornge. They are very fine people, providing very strong leadership at Ornge.

I can tell you that I'm looking forward to appearing before a committee on Wednesday, because I'm hopeful that at that committee meeting we'll be able to have conversations about the improvements in service at Ornge, although I suspect that might not be where the member opposite will want to take that conversation. But I look forward to getting a report from the committee. I look forward to getting the legislation passed.

Ornge is under new leadership. It's in a very strong position. It is saving lives every single day.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: I didn't hear anything about the numbers. Obviously, the minister hasn't read her briefing notes about Ornge and what the deficit is.

I'm going to make this actually very simple. This is a very recent document that Ornge issued, and it is an RFP for the replacement of the interiors of the AW139s. Speaker, this is going to involve multi-millions of new dollars for Ornge.

I'm going to ask the minister this very precise question: Has the minister read that RFP, and does the minister know what the cost of that new installation for the 10 AW139s will be and what will it do to the deficit that Ornge is running?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker—
Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. Order. Sit down, please. I don't want to lose control.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I'd like to know is, has the member opposite read any of the 1.5 million pages of documents that have been submitted to the committee? It's pretty clear he hasn't read the interim report of the forensic investigation, because they asked for it again. They already had it, and they asked for it again. I think that indicates maybe they didn't read it the first time.

But if the member opposite is suggesting that we do not replace the interiors, then I completely disagree with him. It's essential that patients being transported get the best possible care. That does require making changes to the interior, so I endorse Ornge moving forward with retrofitting the interiors of those helicopters, Speaker.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Deputy Premier as well. Autism Ontario and all clinical experts in the field recognize the overwhelming evidence that early intervention and services for children with autism are critical. However, Patricia Dunkley from Niagara Falls has been facing huge challenges in getting appropriate help for her four-year-old son Nathaniel. He has developmental delays and exhibits behaviour that are similar links to autism. Nathaniel, nearly four years old, is trapped on a wait-list to see a specialist, a wait that often exceeds two years.

Deputy Premier, if your commitment to autism is well-demonstrated, as you say, why is Nathaniel being forced to wait during this critical time in his development?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you for bringing forward this issue and this case. We agree that early intervention is critical to improving outcomes for eligibility for IB—absolutely. That's right.

We're determined to make further progress. That's why we've made investments in autism. We've made changes to the program. We removed the previous government's age six cut-off for eligibility. There has been a 114% increase in funding for autism, and this year we invested over \$185 million in autism services. I do meet with parents with children with autism, and I recognize that they face unique challenges, Speaker. We will continue to increase our investments. We will continue to work with our partners in the sector as well.

While we continue to increase our investments, though, we recognize that the prevalence of autism has gone up as well. One in 150 children used to be diagnosed. That has increased to one in 88.

We know that there is more to be done. We have a clinical expert committee looking at how our services are delivered with a view to delivering services in smarter ways to reduce wait-lists.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'm going to go back to the Deputy Premier. Without an official autism diagnosis, you're well aware that Nathaniel is ineligible for any govern-

ment funding that would have a life-changing impact on his development. Even after receiving a diagnosis, there is a significant wait-list for accessing treatment. Multi-year delays for diagnosis and access to appropriate treatment is unfairly harming the long-term well-being of young children, like Nathaniel, with autism.

What is this government going to do for children like Nathaniel whose entire life will be negatively impacted by these unacceptable wait times for diagnosis and treatment?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Again, with respect to autism, we've tripled the number of children receiving intensive behavioural intervention. We recognize that there are waiting lists, Speaker. That's why earlier this year we invested an additional \$5 million for autism intervention programs. This will help create additional spaces, relieve wait-list pressures and help more children and youth get the help they need earlier. We recognize that.

Our clinical expert committee is currently reviewing barriers to early intervention and access to diagnosis with a view to identifying opportunities for improvement. The committee is made up of top researchers, academics and clinical experts and will advise the government on the latest research with the view to enhancing services.

We remain committed to helping all our families and all our children achieve as much as they can.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. I understand that last year, Mr. Speaker, the city of Toronto took the first step in an e-service strategy with the implementation of a reloadable debit card as a method of payment to Ontario Works. It sounds like an interesting project, but I have some concerns.

I believe last year the opposition party talked about a debit card for social assistance recipients, and they would restrict how the recipients could spend their money. I believe that the opposition party thinks that it would somehow magically know whether you buy carrots or buy chips, or control how Ontarians can choose to make choices. Putting this aside, it sounds really impractical.

Minister, can you please tell the House, how is the debit card currently being used in the city of Toronto? Are there any restrictions on the social assistance recipients?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm going to thank the member for her question and provide assurance to all members of the House that there are absolutely no restrictions on what recipients can invest or spend their money on that they receive from the provincial government. As with other payment methods, recipients are free to do what they want with their own money.

The majority of social assistance recipients receive their money through direct bank deposits, but there are some recipients who, for one reason or another, don't have a bank account. That's why these reloadable cards are made available, and it's a very convenient way, and it has worked out very well in the city of Toronto.

We want to make sure that clients understand that it's helpful to have a relationship with a financial institution, but if they don't, we'll do everything and anything we can to ensure that they get the money they have coming to them, and they can invest it and spend it in the way they want.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you to the minister for that response regarding how Ontario recipients can choose their method of payment by reloading the debit card, but also have the same freedom as all Ontarians, the freedom to spend their own money as they see fit. I know in my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt, the residents will be pleased to know that there are options regarding the reloading of debit cards that will enable them to help manage their money.

Overall, the reloading debit cards seem like a great idea, Minister. They also provide flexibility and more choices. They also allow families and individuals to decide how they want to spend their money and how they manage their money.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can he please inform the House if the reloadable debit cards are something that other municipalities are considering?

1130

Hon. Ted McMeekin: It is a great idea. It's a pilot project that's worked very well in the city of Toronto. We're prepared to look at it for other municipalities, should they want to do that, because we believe that's the right thing to do.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Acting Premier. Last week the plant manager of Kimberly-Clark in Huntsville, Rene Landry, wrote me, concerned about high electricity prices.

He writes: "Our annual electricity cost is approximately \$4.5 million and current rates in Ontario are among the highest in North America. The most relevant measure of electricity pricing for K-C Huntsville is how we compare it with other K-C facilities—our competition for finite capital and job growth. Kimberly-Clark Huntsville mill has the highest per-unit electricity cost of any K-C tissue mill in North America. If electricity rates do not become more affordable, Ontario risks losing important investment from companies like Kimberly-Clark."

Translation: You're risking losing even more jobs because of your high energy prices. Acting Premier, what do you say to Kimberly-Clark?

Interjections.

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

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: First of all, what I would say to the member is that I'm more than pleased to meet with the manager of Kimberly-Clark at his convenience to review his energy file. I can tell you that there are

significant numbers of industrial companies across Ontario who are accessing demand response and demand management to reduce their energy in a very significant way. I'm happy to review those opportunities with him. In addition—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —the letter makes reference to rates across North America. I said earlier this morning that 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 and in line with states like New York, Virginia and Tennessee. But the bottom line is that I'm more than happy to sit down and meet with him to review his energy file and to see what we can do to accommodate him.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: To the minister, I'll take you up on that offer, because we watch company after company pick up and move their operations to provinces and states that have energy prices that are cheaper.

Kimberly-Clark is a big employer in the town of Huntsville: 174 highly skilled Ontarians go to work there every day to produce Kleenex brand facial tissue. This letter from the plant manager is a warning, loud and clear.

He goes on: "Reliable and affordable energy is essential going forward to help ensure a more competitive business climate, which will help create jobs and bring economic growth to the province."

Minister, how do you expect our companies, factories and job creators to compete when they are forced to pay some of the most expensive hydro costs in North America?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: As I indicated, I'm very willing to meet with the manager you referred to. I have a quote here from the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters of Ontario: "The long-term energy plan review responds to a key priority for Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters" of Ontario "by providing greater clarity and certainty for manufacturers with respect to electricity rates going forward. CME also supports new initiatives to enable manufacturers to better manage their energy and the associated costs. Importantly, the long-term energy plan will reduce overall system costs, which ultimately translates into more competitive forward rates for businesses."

I'm happy to meet with him and see whether there's anything we can do more immediately.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Education. In January of this year, the hard-working men and women who ensure that our schools are safe and clean signed a memorandum of understanding with this government. This memorandum of understanding con-

tained important provisions regarding disability benefits for injured or sick workers, provisions that are being ignored by a number of school boards.

At a time when this government is making the centralization of education bargaining one of its top priorities, how does it explain to these hard-working men and women that a signed agreement with the Liberal government is not worth the paper it's written on?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to respond to the question. As you know, we worked very hard when we first took office under the leadership of Premier Wynne to work with a whole host of education sector workers in order to make sure that we had memorandums of understanding with all of them. In fact, over the course of that period, we were able to achieve agreements with all of the teachers' unions, the support workers, the education support workers represented by CUPE, by OSSTF, by ETFO and eventually with the education support workers who were represented by various other unions.

What's interesting about this is that in fact the details vary from memorandum of understanding to memorandum of understanding, so that the details with different unions do vary.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Minister, it may be true that details vary from memorandum of understanding to memorandum of understanding, but any successful collective bargaining relationship has to assume that once a deal is struck, all provisions in that agreement are honoured. The problem with the MOU that you signed or that your government signed with the province's education support workers is that a number of local boards are simply not honouring the disability provisions. This, in turn, is causing enormous difficulties for many sick and injured support workers, most of whom are making less than \$40,000 a year. At a time when this government is asking hundreds of thousands of teachers and support workers to put their faith in centralized bargaining, how does this government explain a signed promise that was never honoured?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I don't think you were actually listening to quite what I said, which is that there are different details depending on whether the education support workers are with OSSTF, ETFO or CUPE. In this particular case, the discussion is around one of the areas in which the details between the three MOUs vary and the understanding that various people have of the difference in the details between the three different templates that go with the three different unions.

SPECIAL REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I beg to inform the House that I've laid upon the table the 2012 Annual Energy Conservation Progress Report, volume two, from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm honoured to introduce, from Wallaceburg Community Living, today to Queen's Park David Katzman and Don Parent, who are sitting with my wife, Kate Bartz, and my daughter, Annie McNaughton. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to introduce Maureen Roy and Tim O'Sullivan from Welland. They're here today to meet with us to hear the Huronia apology.

Hon. Michael Coteau: We have a number of people who are joining us this afternoon for the tribute to the late President Nelson Mandela. In the east gallery today we have Consul General Tselane Mokuena and Consul Reginold Ncamane, who are joining us today.

Also, we have individuals who have received the Order of Canada who have been tireless advocates for Mandela back in the 1980s and onwards.

We also have individuals from the Nelson Mandela Foundation Canada and from historical societies and human rights organizations, and we have some representatives from Nelson Mandela Park Public School, representing education.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to welcome here today Mr. Moola, who was a personal friend of Nelson Mandela who marched with him back in the 1950s.

I'd like to welcome all of our friends here to Queen's Park today.

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

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It gives me great pleasure to introduce a friend, Kory Earle, who is from Carleton Place. Kory is president of People First of Ontario and first vice-president of People First of Canada. He's here today to hear the Premier's apology over Huronia Regional Centre.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'd like to introduce two individuals, Gregory Lannon and Loretta Young, who were former Huronia residents and who are here today for the apology.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to announce that Debbie Vernon, Beverly Link and Betty Ann Bond are here, or about to arrive, for the official apology with regard to Huronia Regional Centre. I'd like to welcome them here to Queen's Park.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It's my pleasure to introduce in our members' gallery today Ahmed-Shah Hotaki, who is the editor and owner of the Afghan Post. Welcome to Queen's Park.

HURONIA REGIONAL CENTRE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I move unanimous consent to be able to read out the names of the Huronia survivors who are going to be in the House for the apology.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion. Agreed? Agreed.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: These are the names of the survivors—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Read the names.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Sorry?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Go ahead. You can read the names.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you. This includes the survivors, the names of deceased victims, families, friends, supporters, many present and some not able to attend:

Corey Lee; Sue Bristow; Teri Armitage; Marilyn Dolmage; Jim Dolmage; Patricia Seth; Marie Slark; Richard Paul Bailey; Gabriella M.; Dawn Roper; Victoria Freeman; Joyce Balaz; Bill Hiltz; Arn Row; Georgia Helleiner; Tim O'Sullivan; Maureen Roy; Brent Becigneul; Bill Witts; Linda McEachern; Camille Barr; Andrea Johnston; Linda Cowan; Doug Cowan; Vernon Stuart-Dolmage; Francine Stuart-Dolmage; Murphy Stuart-Dolmage; Heather Stuart; Jay Dolmage; Leah Dolmage; Carrie Anne Tompkins; Elizabeth Rose; Ann LeBlanc; Catherine Rowley; Sean Rowley; Barry Smith; Thelma Wheatley; Michael Dalziel; Cheryl Eadie; Danielle Pittman; Bruce Kappel; Kory Earle; Nora Wilson; Rena Post; Kerry Thomas; Deb Richards; Dale Sheets; Richard Taylor; Diane McLean; Maureen Todd; Virginia Mills; Rola Hamdan; Lynda Kahn; Jack Pearpoint; Sue Hutton; Paul Cochrane; Caseen Johnson; Robbie Cowdrey; Lorraine Bradley; Bill Rolfe; Joanna MacLeod; Alex Reid; Toinette Parisio; Peter Ogradnik; Madeline Burghardt; Larry Bailey; John Balatka; Brenda Parris; Kathy Oates; Tim Glass; Val Irving; Wendy Glass; John Arthur Clark; Randy Vanderburg; Rodney Vanderburg; Denise Embury; Timmie Ann Schramm; Helen Sanderson; Harold Johnston; Joseph Durand; Gian Mele; Merylie Houston; Lucy Houston-Jardim; Jennifer Henry; Susie Henderson; Isabella Henry; David McKillop; Eileen McKillop; Christine Clarke; Muriel Grace; Theresa Devine; Gillian Chernetz; Betty Ann Bond; Beverly Link; Cindy Mitchell; Kim Robinson; Muriel Kabel; John Goodridge; Donna Braithway; Donna Goodreach; Diane Miles; Meyers Sadoway; Francis Sadoway; David Houston; Beverly Houston; Jesse Houston; Joanne Gallagher; Doris Power; Jordan Power; Peter; Alex Reed; Michael Callahan; Judith McGill; Debbie Vernon; Paul Nichol; Debbie Ann Bond; Cathy Stroud; Kate Rossiter; Jes Sachse; and Molly Croke.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's not often that I agree with former Premier Dalton McGuinty, but back in 2002,

he said what a lot of people believe: “If a rural community loses a school, it’s not the same as shutting one down in downtown Toronto where there’s another one six blocks away. What you’re doing is robbing the community of an important component. It’s the heart and soul of a community. If you don’t have a school it’s really tough to attract and to hold on to young families.”

Speaker, I couldn’t have said it better myself. Many families in Newbury and neighbouring Southwest Middlesex are strongly opposed to the possibility of closing Mosa Central Public School, consolidating the Mosa Central students at Ekcoe Central Public School in Glencoe and constructing a \$4.7-million addition at Ekcoe Central.

I attended Ekcoe from kindergarten to grade 5 and later attended Mosa Central from grade 6 to 8. It was at Mosa that I developed my interest in the political process and served as a legislative page. I should also mention Glencoe District High School, which is also at risk of being closed, where I attended secondary school and served on the student council.

These three schools are cornerstones in our communities and vital pieces of our local economy. In rural communities, it’s more than just enrolment numbers; it is about attracting and retaining young families.

Speaker, I stand proudly with the residents of Southwest Middlesex, Newbury and the parents and students at Ekcoe, Mosa and Glencoe District High School.

DEMENTIA

Ms. Cindy Forster: I met recently with Teena Kindt, CEO of the Alzheimer Society of Niagara Region, and she’s trying very hard to make this government aware of the crisis looming with the number of people affected with dementia illnesses.

In the Welland riding alone, the number of people is expected to grow by 25% by the year 2020. There are 8,500 individuals and their families living with dementia in my area.

On a national scale, the numbers are even more frightening. According to a new study, the number of Canadians living with Alzheimer’s and other dementia-related illnesses now stands at 750,000 and will double to 1.4 million by 2031.

The Alzheimer Society has highlighted three solutions that will narrow the gap between persons with dementia and the need. The first is some prioritized funding in next year’s budget for those with dementia, the need to establish standardized wait times for long-term care and the need to provide more staff in long-term-care facilities to deal with the support of people with dementia. I’m proud to support the Alzheimer Society of Niagara Region and know how hard the staff worked in addressing this condition.

Dementia-related illnesses, of which Alzheimer’s is the most prevalent, are health issues we can no longer ignore. I urge the government to listen to these concerns and suggested solutions, and to address this issue, as it is spiralling out of control.

1310

EVENTS IN UKRAINE

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Yesterday, in Kiev, Ukraine, hundreds of thousands of the city’s residents packed Independence Square yet again, chanting “Ukraine is Europe,” waving thousands of national flags, calling for the reversal of the government’s decision to halt European integration and for the resignation of president Viktor Yanukovich. This was the largest in a series of pro-European demonstrations that began two weeks ago, expressing the will of Ukrainians in Kiev and across the country. The size of yesterday’s protest and others have reached a scale not seen since the 2004 Orange Revolution.

This morning, there have been reports of riot police moving into central Kiev. On the first day of December, the day after the violent crackdown against the peaceful protesters, the Ukrainian Canadian community organized its own “Maidan” demonstrations in Toronto and across Canada. These were in support of the pro-European demonstrations in Ukraine. I spoke at this rally to lend my support to the Ukrainian constituents in Mississauga East–Cooksville during this turbulent political crisis.

Canada was the first western country to recognize Ukraine’s independence. Canada and Ukrainian Canadians, including the over 300,000-strong community here in Ontario, have played a critical role in helping Ukraine’s journey to democracy. I call on the Yanukovich government to respect fundamental human and democratic rights, such as the right to peacefully demonstrate. I also call on Canada to stand shoulder to shoulder with Ukrainians.

LAKESIDE FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: This special time of year makes nights sparkle, but few festive displays in our province can hold a candle to Burlington’s brightest seasonal tradition and longest-running festival, the Lakeside Festival of Lights. The festival celebrates its 18th anniversary this year, with over 60 fun and colourful displays lighting up the city’s lakeshore throughout the holiday season.

I would invite all members of this Legislature and those watching at home to pay a visit to my riding and spend an evening in beautiful Spencer Smith Park with family and friends. Enjoy dinner at one of Burlington’s many great downtown restaurants, walk out over Lake Ontario along the winding Brant Street Pier for a panoramic view of the displays, or take in the crisp night air open-air ice skating on Rotary Centennial Pond, a 10,000 square foot open-air ice rink slated to open for the season in the week before Christmas.

Of course, there is no magic without hard work behind the scenes, and so it is here, where dedicated volunteers give of time each year to care for the dozens of displays. Kudos to them, Speaker.

You can visit Burlington’s Lakeside Festival of Lights between now and January 7, 2014.

ARTSCAPE YOUNGPLACE

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A few weeks ago, I was proud to participate in the opening night ceremony of Artscape Youngplace on Shaw Street in Trinity–Spadina. This is now the largest cultural institution serving the West Queen West neighbourhood, home to some of Toronto’s most creative people. I would like to recognize another great success from Tim Jones and his team at Artscape. They have restored a school that has been unused since the year 2000 back to its rightful role as a community hub.

Artscape provides rental space to arts groups and artists at both market and below-market rates. With their community focus mandate, Artscape Youngplace has provided a new home for 13 artists, such as Ruth Adler and Eve Egoyan, as well as arts organizations such as the Luminato Festival, the Koffler Gallery, the Centre of the Arts and the Centre for Indigenous Theatre.

I would also like to acknowledge the generosity of lead donor the Michael Young Family Foundation.

Artscape Youngplace is helping to build a community with creativity and art at its centre. Thank you to this vital community organization.

THE AFGHAN POST

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I’d like to take this time to congratulate the Afghan Post on their 15th anniversary of being in business and keeping their readers informed and engaged. It is my privilege, also, to introduce Ahmad-Shah Hotaki, the editor and owner of the Afghan Post, who is here today in the member’s gallery and whom I met with earlier.

As a newly elected member, I am pleased to represent the community of Scarborough–Guildwood, which is home to a large and vibrant Afghan population. I’ve been to many of the local stores along Markham and Lawrence and in other areas.

The Afghan Post plays an important role in reaching out to Ontarians of all faiths and cultures. This paper speaks to them and informs them and has given the Afghan community a voice here in Ontario. The Afghan Post and business owners like Ahmad-Shah Hotaki are part of what makes Scarborough–Guildwood a vibrant place and this province so diverse and dynamic. They drive the economy with the long hours they dedicate to their work and the jobs that they create within our communities.

Congratulations again to Ahmad-Shah Hotaki and the Afghan Post on 15 years of serving the diverse and vibrant people of Ontario. Here is a sample of the cover of October’s issue.

LIMBA THE ELEPHANT

Mr. John O’Toole: I rise today to pay tribute to Limba, Canada’s oldest elephant, who passed away peacefully December 3 after a short battle with cancer.

Limba had been a celebrity attraction at the Bowmanville Zoo for over 25 years. On Sunday evening, I was honoured to be asked and joined with hundreds of people—with Mayor Adrian Foster, federal MP Erin O’Toole, as well as Limba’s friends within the community—to have a vigil in honour of Limba.

In her first 26 years, Limba was raised alone in a zoo outside Ontario, without an elephant family of her own. When she came to Bowmanville Zoo in 1989, Limba bonded closely with those at the zoo who cared for her, took her for walks, played in the water and stayed with her during thunderstorms when she was frightened.

Limba’s trainer, Robert Crawford, has been her constant companion for many years. She bonded with neighbours like Anne Wilson, who made elephant sandwiches of bread and vegetables as a special treat. Limba was more comfortable with people, especially with children, than she was with other elephants.

Our community and families visiting Bowmanville Zoo and virtually all around the world developed close and fond ties and memories of Limba. There have been thousands of tweets and other social contacts around the world. Just three weeks ago, she was cheered by thousands of fans as she walked in the Bowmanville Santa Claus Parade. She was a gentle giant who prompted a spontaneous outpouring of affection and support from the world community. She will be sadly missed.

I extend my sympathies to zoo owner Michael Hackenberger; his wife, Dr. Wendy Korver; their sons, Kurt and Dirk; and to Limba’s faithful friend and trainer, Robert Crawford, and all the staff at Bowmanville Zoo.

Thank you for the opportunity.

STEVEN MUIR

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House to recognize my longest-serving employee, Steven Muir. Steven has worked in my constituency office in Oakville for over 10 years and is a great asset to the office.

Throughout his life, Steven has faced a great many challenges in his mission to advocate for those with intellectual disabilities. Steven brings much-needed attention to those with intellectual disabilities by spreading a positive message of acceptance and inclusion.

Nothing has ever stopped Steven from developing important life skills; nothing has ever stopped him from becoming a strong advocate. It’s his mission to encourage everyone he meets to become more tolerant, more caring and more understanding people, especially to those who have differences. Steven leads by example and strives every day to be a better person himself. I’ve learned a great deal from my friendship with him, and I really admire his compassion and his inclusive nature.

The community of Oakville recently awarded Steven with the All Star Award to recognize his efforts and his work for our community. Community Living Oakville partnered with organizer James Montague, in hopes of having more people living with a developmental disability celebrate their success.

He's a wonderful MPP constituency office assistant. He participates in all extracurricular events, including summer festivals and government announcements. He was here last week and joined us for question period and lunch. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Steven for all the great work he does.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: His Worship Leo Jobin, the mayor of Chisholm township, and a number of very concerned property owners came to my Nipissing riding office last Friday literally beside themselves over their most recent assessments from the Municipal Property Assessment Corp.

After hearing their concerns, there are certainly legitimate questions that MPAC needs to answer. The residents believe that MPAC is using "unfair and poor property comparisons and valuations, resulting in high property assessments." Of course, these assessments are used to determine municipal taxes, and some residents have seen unseemly increases.

1320

To be quite blunt, Speaker, when I looked at their current assessment and tax bill, I could not believe these homes in Chisholm were paying that kind of tax. There is a sense that MPAC has specifically and unfairly targeted residents who recently built or renovated existing properties, and that they are bearing an unfair assessment burden.

I would urge MPAC to sit down with Mayor Leo Jobin and the residents of Chisholm to discuss this situation and have a second look at how they've calculated their assessments in this particular township.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LIQUOR LICENSING STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT DES LOIS CONCERNANT LES PERMIS D'ALCOOL

Mr. Marchese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 150, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to liquor licensing / Projet de loi 150, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les permis d'alcool.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'll read it as shown, as it is written.

The City of Toronto Act, 2006, is amended by adding a new section 92.1, which allows the city of Toronto to pass bylaws limiting the number of licences granted to

liquor licensed establishments or classes thereof. Section 97 of the act is amended to allow the city to pass bylaws requiring liquor licensed establishments or classes thereof to be closed to the public at any time.

Section 5.1 of the Licence Appeal Tribunal Act, 1999, is amended by adding a new subsection (4.1), which states that, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, in a hearing that the tribunal holds under the Liquor Licence Act, the tribunal must consider a resolution of the council of the municipality as proof of the needs and wishes of the residents of the municipality.

Section 6 of the Liquor Licence Act is amended by adding a new subsection (3.1), and section 8.1 is amended by adding a new subsection (1.1). The new subsections require that, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, the registrar and the board must consider a resolution of the council of the municipality as proof of the needs and wishes of the residents of the municipality. Section 17 of the act is amended by adding a new subsection (1.1), which requires the registrar to give notice of an application for the transfer of a licence to sell liquor to the municipality in which the premises are located.

Section 148 of the Municipal Act, 2001, is amended to allow a municipality to pass bylaws requiring liquor licensed establishments or classes thereof to be closed to the public at any time. The act is amended by adding a new section 154.1, which allows a municipality to pass bylaws limiting the number of licences granted to liquor licensed establishments or classes thereof.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: Please say no. Please.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader is asking for unanimous consent to move a motion. Agreed? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item number 74 be waived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy has moved that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item number 74 be waived.

Agreed? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(ii), the House shall meet from 6:45 to midnight tonight, Monday, December 9, 2013.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy has moved that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(ii), the House shall meet from 6:45 to midnight on Monday, December 9, 2013. Agreed? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1326 to 1331.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy has moved government motion number 33. All those in favour, please stand and be recognized by the Clerk one at a time.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Dickson, Joe	McNeely, Phil
Bartolucci, Rick	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milloy, John
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gerretsen, John	Moridi, Reza
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Murray, Glen R.
Chan, Michael	Hunter, Mitzie	Naqvi, Yasir
Colle, Mike	Jaczek, Helena	Piruzza, Teresa
Coteau, Michael	Jeffrey, Linda	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Damerla, Dipika	MacCharles, Tracy	Sousa, Charles
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Wong, Soo
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Zimmer, David
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	

All those opposed, please stand and be recognized by the Clerk one at a time.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Jackson, Rod	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Barrett, Toby	Leone, Rob	Schein, Jonah
Bisson, Gilles	MacLaren, Jack	Smith, Todd
Chudleigh, Ted	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	McDonell, Jim	Taylor, Monique
Elliott, Christine	McKenna, Jane	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	Miller, Norm	Walker, Bill
Forster, Cindy	Miller, Paul	Wilson, Jim
Gélinas, France	Milligan, Rob E.	Yakabuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff
Harris, Michael	Natyshak, Taras	
Hatfield, Percy	O'Toole, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 35; the nays are 43.

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

Motion negated.

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, Monday, December 9, 2013.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy moves that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, December 9, 2013. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a whole lot of noes.

All those in favour of the motion, please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1335 to 1340.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy has moved government notice of motion number 32. All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Dickson, Joe	McNeely, Phil
Bartolucci, Rick	Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Murray, Glen R.
Chan, Michael	Gravelle, Michael	Naqvi, Yasir
Chiarelli, Bob	Hunter, Mitzie	Piruzza, Teresa
Colle, Mike	Jaczek, Helena	Sandals, Liz
Coteau, Michael	Jeffrey, Linda	Sergio, Mario
Crack, Grant	Kwinter, Monte	Sousa, Charles
Damerla, Dipika	MacCharles, Tracy	Wong, Soo
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Zimmer, David
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Jackson, Rod	O'Toole, John
Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bailey, Robert	Klees, Frank	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Leone, Rob	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	MacLaren, Jack	Schein, Jonah
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Elliott, Christine	McDonell, Jim	Taylor, Monique
Fedeli, Victor	McKenna, Jane	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fife, Catherine	McNaughton, Monte	Vanthof, John
Forster, Cindy	Miller, Norm	Walker, Bill
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Milligan, Rob E.	Yakabuski, John
Harris, Michael	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff
Hatfield, Percy	Natyshak, Taras	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 37; the nays are 44.

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

Motion negated.

PETITIONS

CHARITABLE GAMING

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, as I get my petition out here. It reads as follows:

“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...; 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” of Ontario; “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”—how unfair; “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'm pleased to sign this on behalf of all the hard-working hospital auxiliaries in the province of Ontario and present it to Morgan, one of the great pages here in her last week.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I have a little bit of quiet in the House? There are about 25 conversations going on. It's very difficult to hear the members.

LONG-TERM CARE

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

“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 they 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 the only province in Canada—including the three territories—where our Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes;”

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 agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Payton to bring it to the Clerk.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

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

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas access to affordable housing is an important priority;

“Whereas the government of Ontario has committed nearly \$3 billion to the creation of new affordable housing since 2003 and has supported municipalities in regard to existing units;

“Whereas there is an important role for all three levels of government when it comes to affordable housing;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls on the federal government to support the government of Ontario and Ontario municipalities in upgrading existing affordable housing and creation of new affordable housing in Ontario.”

Mr. Speaker, I will sign this petition and give it to page Michaela.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here that has been circulating in the province for some time. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. John Vanthof: I have a petition here from all across the province.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads, ‘That, in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles’;

“Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

“Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

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

“We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately.”

I wholeheartedly agree, and sign it and give it to page Matteya.

1350

WASTE REDUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition, and I give the petition to page Payton.

AIR QUALITY

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

“Whereas Ontario’s Drive Clean Program was implemented as a revenue-neutral, temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

“Whereas emissions and vehicle failure rates have dropped dramatically between 1999 and 2010, the Drive Clean program has clearly outlived its usefulness; and

“Whereas Ontario’s new Drive Clean tests are recording higher-than-normal failure rates, even in cases where there is nothing wrong with a vehicle’s emissions system; and

“Whereas this causes added inconvenience and higher costs for Ontario drivers; and

“Whereas in the case of pre-1998 vehicles, it is becoming increasingly difficult for owners to find an establishment that will provide the ‘tailpipe’ test for vehicles without the required on-board computer; and

“Whereas the Drive Clean program has generated a profit to the government of \$19 million over the past two years, despite a Supreme Court ruling that revenue-neutral government programs cannot generate a profit, the government is refusing to return this surplus to Ontario taxpayers;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Ontario government to take immediate action to end the Drive Clean program and return accumulated profits to Ontario taxpayers.”

I affix my name in full support.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints in the areas of hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children’s aid societies and retirement homes; and

“Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate any of these areas; and

“Whereas people wronged by these institutions are left feeling helpless and most have nowhere else to turn for help to correct systemic issues;

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

“Grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children’s aid societies and retirement homes.”

I couldn’t agree with this more, Mr. Speaker. I will affix my name to it and give it to page Michaela to take to the table.

WASTE REDUCTION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly which reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

Speaker, I'm pleased to sign and agree with this petition, and to ask page Julia to carry it for me.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

“Whereas Kimm Fletcher, a mother of two diagnosed with brain cancer, has been prescribed with the drug Avastin to help prolong her life;

“Whereas the Ontario health ministry's Committee to Evaluate Drugs (CED) has indicated that the use of this drug is associated with higher, progression-free survival rates;

“Whereas this drug is not covered under OHIP—but is in other provincial jurisdictions;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ontario Parliament call on the Premier and her health minister to extend OHIP funding of the drug Avastin, so that Kimm Fletcher, and others like her, can have as much time to enjoy with her family as possible; and to tell the Wynne administration that ‘Our health care system includes Kimm Fletcher.’”

I'm pleased to sign this petition and pass it to my page, Ana. Thank you very much.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Bill Walker: “Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

“Whereas Kimm Fletcher, a mother of two diagnosed with brain cancer, has been prescribed with the drug Avastin to help prolong her life;

“Whereas the Ontario health ministry's Committee to Evaluate Drugs (CED) has indicated that the use of this drug is associated with higher, progression-free survival rates;

“Whereas this drug is not covered under OHIP—but is in other provincial jurisdictions;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ontario Parliament call on the Premier and her health minister to extend OHIP funding of the drug Avastin, so that Kimm Fletcher, and others like her, can have as much time to enjoy with her family as possible; and to tell the Wynne administration that ‘Our health care system includes Kimm Fletcher.’”

I support this, will sign my name and send it with page Cynthia. Thank you.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“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

“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 fully support the petition. I will give that petition to page Arvind. Thank you.

DIABETES

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

“Whereas the Liberal government implemented cuts to the Ontario health insurance program such that Ontario residents suffering from diabetes saw their annual eligibility for blood sugar test strips reduced to 200 per year, less than one a day; and

“Whereas a blood sugar test strip costs approximately 70 cents; and

“Whereas this latest cut to services to Ontario patients is just another misguided measure to nickel-and-dime Ontarians; and

“Whereas a focus on preventing disease and hospitalization is in the long-term interest of patients, their families and the province;

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

“To immediately reinstate full and unlimited eligibility for blood sugar test strips covered by OHIP for all Ontario residents suffering from diabetes.”

I agree with this petition and will be passing it on to page Jonathan. Thank you.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O’Toole: The petition here reads as follows:

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

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

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

“Whereas sites zoned for industrial and/or commercial use are the best locations for large electricity transformer stations” on ground so zoned;

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

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

I’m pleased to sign and support this on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham and present it to page Najat.

VISITOR

Hon. John Gerretsen: On a point of order, I wonder if you could welcome my spouse and partner in life, Assunta Gerretsen, who is with us today in the members’ gallery to witness the proceedings here today.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, with the House’s indulgence, I would just like to explain. I think that we have visitors here today and members of the House who are here anticipating a statement from all parties concerning Huronia and also a later one concerning the passing of former President Mandela. All three party leaders are on their way back from a funeral, the tragic death of a police officer, and they’ve been a bit delayed.

So, Mr. Speaker, with consultation with the other parties, I think you will find unanimous consent that at this point we recess to the call of the Chair, and that when the House resumes, up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak with respect to the Huronia

Regional Centre apology. Following that, the House shall recess for five minutes, and then up to five minutes shall be allotted to each party to pay tribute to former President Nelson Mandela. Following this item of business, the House shall proceed with orders of the day.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has—we have consent, you said?

Hon. John Milloy: I think you’ll find consent.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Is there consent to recess the House at the call of the Chair? Agreed? Agreed.

This House stand recessed until the call of the Chair. There will be a five-minute bell to call the members back to the House following the recess.

The House recessed from 1402 to 1440.

HURONIA REGIONAL CENTRE

CENTRE RÉGIONAL DE LA HURONIE

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Good afternoon, everyone. It is not lost on me that this afternoon we are doing two very connected things. We are—I am—here to speak truth about a painful chapter in our history and to seek reconciliation with all of those who have been harmed. We will then pay tribute to a man who embodied the power of truth and reconciliation, so I draw on that strength as I offer this apology.

A government’s responsibility is to care for its people and to make sure they are protected and safe, and therein lies a basic trust between the state and the people. It is on that foundation of trust that everything else is built: our sense of self, our sense of community, our sense of purpose. When that trust is broken with any one of us, we all lose something; we are all diminished.

I want to address a matter of trust before this House and my assembled colleagues, but I am truly speaking to a group of people who have joined us this afternoon and to the many others who could not be here today. I am humbled to welcome to the Legislature today former residents of the Huronia Regional Centre; and the Rideau Regional Centre, in Smiths Falls; and also to address former residents of the Southwestern Regional Centre, near Chatham, along with their families and supporters. I want to welcome all of you, I want to honour your determination and your courage, and I want to thank you for being here to bear witness to this occasion.

Today we take responsibility for the suffering of these people and their families.

Aujourd’hui, nous assumons la responsabilité des souffrances subies par ces personnes et les membres de leur famille.

I offer an apology to the men, women and children of Ontario who were failed by a model of institutional care for people with developmental disabilities. We must look in the eyes of those who have been affected and those they leave behind and say we are sorry.

As Premier and on behalf of all the people of Ontario, I am sorry for your pain, for your losses and for the

impact these experiences must have had on your faith in this province and in your government. I am sorry for what you and your loved ones experienced and for the pain that you carry to this day.

À titre de première ministre et au nom de l'ensemble de la population de l'Ontario, je suis désolée des peines, des pertes et de toutes les répercussions que vous avez subies et qui ont miné votre confiance dans la province et dans le gouvernement. Je suis désolée de ce que vous et vos êtres chers avez dû vivre, de même que pour la peine que vous avez endurée jusqu'à ce jour.

In the case of Huronia, some residents suffered neglect and abuse within the very system that was meant to provide them care

We broke faith with them and with you, and by doing so, we diminished ourselves. Over a period of generations and under various governments, too many of these men, women and children and their families were deeply harmed, and they continue to bear the scars and the consequences of this time. Their humanity was undermined. They were separated from their families and robbed of their potential, their comfort, their safety and their dignity. At Huronia, some of these residents were forcibly restrained, left in unbearable seclusion, exploited for their labour and crowded into unsanitary conditions. While the model of care carried out by this institution is now acknowledged to have been deeply flawed, there were also cases of unchecked physical and emotional abuse by some staff and residents.

Huronia was closed in 2009, when Ontario closed the doors to its last remaining provincial institutions for people with developmental disabilities. Today, Mr. Speaker, we no longer see people with developmental disabilities as something other; they are boys and girls, men and women with hopes and dreams, like everyone else. In Ontario, all individuals deserve our support, our respect and our care. We must look out for one another, take care of one another and challenge ourselves to be led by our sense of moral purpose before all else.

Today, we strive to support people with developmental disabilities so they can live as independently as possible and be more fully included in all aspects of their community. As a society, we seek to learn from the mistakes of the past, and that process continues.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that we have more to do, so we will protect the memory of all those who have suffered, help to tell their stories, and ensure that the lessons of this time are not lost.

We are so sorry.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm going to split my time with my colleague the member from Simcoe North, who has spoken about Huronia on many occasions here in the Ontario Legislature.

I'm a proud Ontarian. I love my province dearly. There's no place I'd rather be or be from. But we have a very sad chapter in our history that demands an apology. When we do wrong, we need to speak to it plainly and honestly.

Compassion has always been part of what defines Ontario. It's part of our character. The duty to support

our most vulnerable is our government's most important responsibility—to protect those who cannot protect themselves. When we fail that, we fail all Ontarians, and there is never an excuse.

As a province and as a government, we failed the children of the Huronia Regional Centre. These developmentally disabled boys and girls, men and women looked to us, as caretakers and as leaders, to be there for them, their protectors; instead, horrific stories of systemic neglect, physical, emotional and sexual abuse. To abuse that trust and then to abuse the innocent lives is atrocious and inexcusable. It's flesh and blood, brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, sons and daughters. For too long, these boys, girls, men and women were out of sight, out of mind, the burden of that experience entirely on their shoulders and that incredible weight on the backs of their parents and families.

It's truly unfortunate it took so long to get to this day, but we all owe an incredible debt of gratitude to those who fought to get us here, many of those in the gallery here today on this historic day.

1450

I want to offer my thanks to Marilyn and Jim Dolmage, Patricia Seth and Marie Slark for their inspiring bravery and incredible tenacity. You gave a face to the cause, a voice to those who could not speak up for themselves, and a peace to those who cannot join us here today.

We stand here today collectively and apologize to the families, the boys and girls, the men and women. We are truly, truly sorry. Our apologies will never erase the pain or the tragedy. There's nothing, sadly, that we can do to take away the memories, to bring people back. But we must remember, and let us never forget this day, so that we never see it repeated again in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: As the MPP for the area where the Huronia Regional Centre was located, I'm pleased to be here today. I want to thank the Premier for the apology and I want to thank the kind words of our leader, Tim Hudak.

I know that with the closure of the Huronia Regional Centre, a lot of pressure was put on the Community Living organizations across our province, and when we're dealing with people with exceptionalities, I want to thank Community Living Huronia and Simcoe services in particular, the two major community living organizations in Simcoe county.

But I can tell you, the Premier did say—she said it right up front—we still have a lot to do. There are two things I hope that we can all, as MPPs, and I hope we can all, as community leaders, work on. One of them, of course, is some of the cases with how the police handle people with exceptionalities in extreme cases. I think there has already been some retraining done in that area, because we've had some pretty sad stories in that particular area.

The other one that I really hope we can zero in on is the people, the men and women who have raised their children; they were people born with exceptionalities,

and they've raised them to adult ages, and now the people are at—they're old people. Some of them have very feeble health. They're having a very, very difficult time finding the services in our province to handle them. I hear it continually in my area, and I hope that that's something that we can say to any government, whether it's past or present or future, I should say, that we have to deal with that as well, because there is definitely an area of concern that we have to take care for people, as our leader has said.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and again, thank you, Premier, for bringing this. It's a sign of leadership, both from my leader as well, to bring this apology today.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The victims, the women and men, girls and boys, who suffered abuse at the Huronia Regional Centre have waited a long time to hear two words from the Premier of Ontario: "I'm sorry." And it's important to understand why this apology could only be morally legitimate if it came from the first minister and not a member of cabinet. The survivors are citizens of Ontario, not wards of the province, not clients of the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and not simply claimants in a legal action against the Attorney General. They are citizens.

The courts have ruled that these citizens were neglected by our province when it had a duty of care, and the settlement mandated an apology. But it was always up to the Premier to dignify that apology. It's up to the current Premier to speak on behalf of all previous Premiers and to speak through the highest office of our province's democratic institution. This apology is an admission of wrongdoing, but it should also be a pledge that our province will never allow such neglect, such abuse, such a betrayal of our most vulnerable citizens, to ever happen again.

Ces excuses ne peuvent pas effacer le passé. Mais elles peuvent permettre aux survivants du Centre régional de la Huronie et à leur famille de retrouver un peu de paix afin de pouvoir aller de l'avant.

Sadly, many of the victims did not live to see this day, and many who wanted to be here in person could not attend because this event was scheduled at somewhat short notice, even after decades of delay. Hundreds are watching from home across this province, and some survivors and their families, friends and supporters travelled across winter roads to get to the Legislature this afternoon.

I hope they can take some solace in this apology, and I hope that the Premier will back up her words with actions. She must immediately clear away the roadblocks preventing survivors and their families from accessing their files. Sixty-five thousand pages of documents are owed to the survivors of the Huronia Regional Centre. Survivors should not have to file freedom of information requests to access their files. They should not incur any undue financial costs after all they have been through.

It's not enough for the government to say that the files are lost or that the files are inaccessible. The Huronia Regional Centre survivors and families have waited long

enough. The government must not diminish an apology with excuses. It must do whatever it takes to get the survivors the information they deserve. We cannot close this dark chapter in Ontario's history until all of the survivors and all of their families are contacted, compensated and fully informed.

So let's leave this historic moment of apology, which the Premier did very well in delivering, with open hearts. In fact, let's make it open our hearts. Let's learn from the past—absolutely—and let's make sure that forevermore the province of Ontario looks after all of its citizens.

Applause.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Pursuant to the earlier agreement, this House is recessed for five minutes.

The House recessed from 1457 to 1503.

NELSON MANDELA

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, there are some people whose contributions to humanity transcend borders, so when they die, the loss touches us all.

I'm honoured today to join with all parties of the Legislature and everyone in the Legislature today to pay tribute to Nelson Mandela.

Interruption.

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

Order.

This House stands recessed for five minutes.

The House recessed from 1504 to 1506.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is a day of high emotion, may I just say. It is high emotion for everyone.

There are some people whose contributions to humanity transcend borders, and so, when they die, the loss touches us all. I'm honoured today to join with all parties of the Legislature to pay tribute to Nelson Mandela.

Aujourd'hui, j'ai l'honneur de me joindre à tous les partis de l'Assemblée législative pour rendre hommage à Nelson Mandela.

There are few individuals who have done more to inspire the world, and like everyone in this room, I was deeply saddened to learn of his death last week. As a student of history and a huge believer in the power of the human spirit, I know his life will continue to serve as a beacon for change throughout South Africa, here in Ontario, and around the world.

I want to welcome everyone who has come here, particularly the consul general of South Africa, to join us today. Thank you very much.

As I thought about my statement today, I realized it's difficult to find new ways to talk about this man or the things that he meant to us individually. But I find myself returning again and again to the fact that he spent 27 years locked away in prison. This punishment, as unjust

and inhumane as it was, did not break him. It is a testament to his spirit, and to the human spirit, that he did not allow himself to be taken over by anger. And so he was able to make that long walk to freedom with his heart empty of hate and his mind free of bitterness or resentment. As he said afterward, he understood that you cannot drink poison and expect it to kill your enemies.

After these trials, this imprisonment, he went on to do more good than any one man or woman could dare to imagine: the first democratically elected president in South Africa; the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize; and a face, a voice, a force and a story that made people believe that the world could be good.

We, as Canadians, are privileged to have welcomed Nelson Mandela as an honorary citizen, and we're proud that he visited our beautiful province three times during his life. He famously said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." So it is no surprise that his visits here often focused on our schools and the students and teachers that he met there.

In June 1990, on his first visit to Canada, he addressed a large number of students from across the GTA at Central Tech. In 1998, more than 45,000 students and their teachers filled what was then known as the Sky-Dome to hear him tell the story of his life and describe the South African struggle for freedom and justice.

During his last visit to Canada, on November 17, 2001, he was present for the official naming of Nelson Mandela Park Public School, which was rechristened in his honour.

Last Thursday, parents and teachers from this school were already scheduled to attend the North American premiere of a film about Mandela's life. When he died that same evening and the news of his death spread, the event turned into a very special tribute. Many of the students who were there that night described Nelson Mandela as a man who never gave up. It was his resilience, his determination and his commitment to justice that inspired them. That is what the world expects from its leaders.

I was struck by a comment made by the principal of Nelson Mandela Park Public School, Mr. Jason Kandankery, who I believe is here—the principal of the school is here.

Principal Kandankery said, "In these times of political upheaval and political leaders who unfortunately far too often lack integrity we bear the name of the man who was all about integrity," and that is the school.

I stand here today because Nelson Mandela's legacy of fairness should serve as a challenge to us all. Ontario is truly a beacon of acceptance, tolerance, opportunity and equality in the world, and we will work together to ensure it remains worthy of a school that bears his name.

L'Ontario est véritablement un lieu d'acceptation, de tolérance, de possibilités et d'équité dans le monde entier. Nous allons travailler ensemble pour veiller à ce que notre province demeure digne d'avoir une école qui porte le nom de Nelson Mandela.

In 2001, he told students here in Toronto that they were the future leaders and that violence and hatred had no place in a free and democratic society. At that time, the school began a tradition that exists to this day. Each school day begins with the reading of a quote by Mr. Mandela that reflects his philosophy and reminds the students what they can hope to accomplish.

So I would like to conclude by bringing this tradition to our chamber today, and I quote: "It always seems impossible until it's done."

The world is a better place for his presence, and on behalf of the people of Ontario, we mourn his loss.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The roles we play in the provincial Legislature are critical to the well-being of our province and the citizens of Ontario, and we take pride in our work on behalf of all those we serve. In reality, the shadow that we cast on the international stage is incredibly small. Not so for one man; not so for Nelson Mandela.

While the entire world knew the day would come, it was nevertheless sad to hear of his passing in Johannesburg, South Africa. As dignitaries from around the world make their way to his funeral, including Canadian Prime Ministers Harper, Chrétien, Campbell, Clark and of course, Brian Mulroney, a moment here to say farewell and thanks to Nelson Mandela is welcomed by me and all colleagues of all parties, and I'll speak today on behalf of the PC caucus.

We are humbled to be but a few of the billions worldwide who also remember with pride the role that Canada played in Mr. Mandela's struggle. It made me proud, as a Canadian, when Canada, under Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, stood almost alone in supporting the anti-apartheid movement, supporting Nelson Mandela and bringing sanctions upon South Africa to push for his release. It was almost Canada alone, while other great nations hesitated. It always made me damned proud as a Canadian while others faltered—

Applause.

Mr. Tim Hudak: From the days when he was first noticed as a leading human rights advocate in the often-violent anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, to those 27 years as the world's best-known political prisoner, to his Nobel Peace Prize in 1993, and finally to his incredible 1994 election as South Africa's first democratically elected president, Nelson Mandela built a legacy that will be forever a major chapter in our world's history. As Canadians, we should also be proud that Nelson Mandela, back in 2001, became the second of only five outstanding world figures to be named honorary citizens of our nation of Canada, which made him, therefore, part of us: a Canadian as well. I'm proud of that too.

On a personal level, I remember being an undergraduate student in the University of Western Ontario back in the 1980s, starting to take notice of the broader world around me, and how Mr. Mandela was one of those incredible, towering, inspirational world figures, already iconic in the struggle to end racism and bring democracy to South Africa—an incredibly inspiring champion of freedom, equality and justice.

And to think, after 27 years in prison, to forgive those who unjustly imprisoned you in the first place—what an incredible man.

As Mr. Mandela himself once put it, “Everyone can rise above their circumstances and achieve success if they are dedicated to and passionate about what they do.” Nelson Mandela had that dedication, and then some. He had that passion.

Today, our small world here thanks him from the bottom of our hearts for all of that, and so much more.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We mourn Nelson Mandela’s death even as we celebrate his life. We revere his courage in the struggle against apartheid. We respect his leadership to the people of South Africa. We hail him as a hero to oppressed peoples around the globe. We welcomed him as a friend and honorary citizen of Canada, and we remember his visit to this Legislature with awe and admiration.

But it’s only with his passing that we can start to grasp just how deeply Mandela touched the world. He spent 27 years of his life unjustly and wrongly imprisoned. It’s hard to imagine, for any one of us, having to endure something like that. It’s hard to imagine you wouldn’t simply give in to bitterness and to anger or simply give up in despair. But after being locked away for 27 years of his life, Mandela left prison on Robben Island, and he didn’t call for vengeance against his captors. He didn’t give in to the brutality of a system that took 27 years of his life. Instead, as an amazed world looked on, he renewed his call for equality, for fairness and for change.

For Mandela, politics was a powerful instrument. He relied on justice and reason, rather than bloodshed and strife, to bring freedom to his people. He proved what he had always said: “It will always seem impossible until it’s done.”

It’s no wonder why he captured the hearts of people of all ages, but especially those of children. As I watched the news this week, I saw pictures of children in Johannesburg laying flowers in Nelson Mandela Square. I saw pictures, as the Premier was talking about, of kids in east Toronto lighting candles on the steps of the school that bears his name. I saw pictures of kids in countries around the world paying tribute, as we pay tribute to Nelson Mandela in this Legislature today.

Pour Nelson Mandela, la démocratie n’était pas seulement un idéal mais un mode de vie.

We who are elected representatives of the people who sent us here should feel humbled and grateful for this honour. Democracy for Mandela was hard work too. He taught us never, ever to rest on our laurels, never to take our rights and freedoms for granted and never to assume that we know better than the people we serve.

Mandela was a people person, and people loved him right back, not just for his many achievements, but simply for his humanity.

1520

Nobody gets to live forever, but some are never, ever forgotten. Rest in peace, Nelson Mandela. You made the world a better place, and the world will remember.

Applause.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À SOUTENIR LES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 5, 2013, on the motion for 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): The member for Beaches–East York: further debate.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is one of those speeches where you make part of it one day and then a few days later you continue on, so I’d like to go back to where I started because I think this whole thing needs to tie together in one united speech. So, just very briefly, the things I talked about the last time—and in a preface of my previous comments.

This bill is a bill which I believe was engendered by the New Democratic Party. It was a bill that was part of the package of demands that we took forward to the government prior to the last budget coming down in March or April of last year. We made the demands because we felt that the budget needed to reflect some of the issues that New Democrats hold dear, and one of the issues that we held and continue to hold very dear is that where people or corporations or those who are well off have sufficient monies, they should pay their fair share for the running of this wonderful province. The demand was that we end the largesse, that we end monies going to large corporations, but that we continue to keep it going for smaller corporations, smaller companies so that they could have an employee tax credit. That was the demand we made, and over the course of weeks and maybe a month or so that followed, the government agreed with that demand. However, it was changed because New Democrats saw it as a way of putting nearly \$100 million into the treasury; the government saw it as a way to give more money to small corporations at the expense of larger ones.

Be that as it may, as I said the last time, New Democrats are good for our word and we are thankful that this was brought forward, although not in the guise and not in the way we had anticipated. We continue to want to work with the government in order to make sure that small business is successful, but we are also increasingly mindful that we cannot, as a province, sustain record levels of deficit in the long term. It is simply not sustainable that a government continues to run a \$10-billion-plus deficit year after year after year.

That’s what I spoke about the last time, Mr. Speaker, and now I’d like to go on with my speech about the difficulties in getting this bill before this House.

It would come as a surprise to many—and I know it certainly would come as a surprise to the Minister of

Finance—that this bill has taken so long, because New Democrats spoke in favour of it and, with some minor problem-raising, the official opposition spoke largely in favour of it as well, although I do commend my colleague the member from Thornhill, who actually brought it right down to perspective how much money was actually involved in small business, being some \$900 a year, or about the equivalent of what it would cost to hire one person plus their health care and other things for one week. It's not a huge amount of money that's been freed up to small business, but I'm sure that it's a welcome amount no matter how small it is.

You can understand my consternation when we started to get what I considered to be a few bullying tactics from the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance wrote me and my colleague from North Bay, from the riding of Nipissing, a letter back in November—end of October, beginning of November—telling us as the finance critics of our respective parties that we were not doing enough to push this bill forward. Now, I was taken aback when I got that letter.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Downright offended.

Mr. Michael Prue: I was offended, because I had spoken in favour of this bill in the House. I had done everything in my power to make sure that this bill made its way to committee, where it needed to go. I did not see or witness anything from my friend from Nipissing that did any different from what I did.

So I fired off a letter a couple of days—and I'd like to read it into the record, because I don't know where the government is coming down with this. I might not ordinarily have said anything about that initial letter, except I got another one on Sunday. I don't understand where this government is coming from, if they want speedy passage of this bill, if they attack members on the other side of the House, who are relatively blameless in what we are doing in terms of this—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Well, I wrote back; I'm going to read what I wrote to the finance minister in November. I wrote to the finance minister, and I'm going to quote the whole thing:

“Re: Your letter of November 5, 2013”: This is to Mr. Sousa.

“Dear Minister Sousa,

“Thank you for your letter.

“I wish to draw your attention to the fact that we first proposed closing this loophole and providing small business tax relief several months ago. At every stage, the government has dragged their feet and refused to move forward with the simplest of measures. The government has shown they can move with lightning speed when it suits their political purposes; for example, the EllisDon bill. Now they're playing the same old games that are turning people off politics.

“For a government that claims not to like political games, you show a remarkable appetite for sandbox politics. Families and small businesses alike will be disappointed that the government chose to cast aspersions

and blame others for its failure to properly plan its legislative agenda.

“As you well know, there is a well-established process for setting the order of business of committees. So, I admit that the contents of the letter were puzzling. I attended no meeting where Bill 105 was discussed as the top Liberal priority. When committee business was set at subcommittee, your party indicated that Bill 21, Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families), was its priority. The subcommittee agreed that the next two weeks of business would be composed of one week addressing Bill 21 and one week considering the study relating to the auto insurance industry. When PC members moved a motion, which they discussed beforehand, to look at issues regarding the Pan Am Games, we supported this in the interest of fairness: In the next two weeks, each party would have an issue of its choice on the agenda, and the government's choice was Bill 21.

“The government chose not to follow procedure. The government could have raised this issue with the House leaders, but did not. The government could have raised this issue at subcommittee, but did not. The government could have spoken to members of the committee beforehand to indicate a shift in priorities, but did not. Instead, the government chose to try to score cheap political points.

1530

“There are numerous options to move this bill forward according to standard procedure. I invite your House leader to raise them in order to ensure that changes long called for by New Democrats can be moved forward in a timely fashion. This place will work best when we all work within the system and follow the rules.

“Thank you again for your letter.”

It was signed by me, with copies to Ms. Horwath, Mr. Bisson, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Mr. Hudak and Mr. Fedeli.

I would not ordinarily have said anything about this letter. I know that the government letter was a public letter, because I was asked by several reporters about it. We would not ordinarily have brought this out, except that yesterday I got another letter. This letter is again from Mr. Sousa. It's sent to both Mr. Fedeli and to me. It's dated December 8, which was Sunday. It came on a Sunday. It reads, “Dear Mr. Fedeli and Mr. Prue”—I'm not going to read the whole letter; just most of it.

Hon. John Milloy: Read the whole letter.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Come on. You've got an hour.

Mr. Michael Prue: The whole letter? Do you want the whole letter? You can have the whole letter:

“I was encouraged to see third reading debate begin on Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act. This is getting us closer to cutting taxes for more than 60,000 Ontario small businesses. If all parties can work together in the coming week to ensure this job-creating bill is passed before the House rises on Thursday, Ontario's small businesses won't be forced to unnecessarily pay higher taxes next February.

“This legislation is an essential part of our government’s economic plan to support a dynamic and innovative business climate, helping ensure Ontario continues to be one of the most competitive places in North America to do business. If this legislation is implemented, 90% of small businesses in Ontario will no longer pay this tax.

“In order for the tax cut to take effect January 1st, I’m calling on you as the finance critics to lead your respective parties in agreeing to allow a final vote on the bill before the House rises on Thursday. If your parties refuse to allow the passage of Bill 105 before the House rises, small businesses will be forced to pay higher taxes on February 15th, when many businesses pay their first employer health tax (EHT) installment.

“This bill has already been subject to nearly sixteen hours of debate before being stalled at a committee, delaying progress for more than two months. Let’s focus on passing this important piece of legislation and avoid further political games to ensure small businesses are spared unnecessary red tape and can benefit from this tax reduction in time for the new year.”

It’s signed Charles Sousa, with carbon copies to Tim Hudak, Leader of the Opposition, and Andrea Horwath, leader of the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, the umbrage I take is not in the beginning, because, yes, we are supporting this bill and, yes, the bill will do exactly what the finance minister says. The part that makes me take umbrage is that after I wrote to him, after I wrote and explained, if he did not already know it, that there was no delay from me or, as far as I know, from Mr. Fedeli, from the Conservatives, at any stage during this entire process—not in this House, not in the subcommittee of the finance committee, not in the finance committee itself. At absolutely no stage were any dilatory actions whatsoever taken by any of us, nor did I see any dilatory actions from my party. I am not subject to what goes on in the Conservative caucus, but I am unaware that any took place there. For the finance minister to state, “The bill has already been subject to nearly sixteen hours of debate before being stalled at a committee”—I don’t believe it was stalled at any point. It was called before the committee when—

Hon. John Milloy: We had 16 hours, Michael.

Mr. Michael Prue: Sixteen hours of debate in this House. The government—the government—asked that the debate continue.

Secondly, it was not the New Democratic Party—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: If the minister can do anything but heckle, perhaps he can—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I need to be able to hear the member for Beaches–East York. He has the floor. Other members will have the opportunity to participate in the debate.

I return to the member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: If there were 16 hours of debate in this House, it’s because there were members in this House who wanted to speak to it. I certainly know my

own caucus stopped speaking to this bill long before, I think, eight days was up. But I do not preclude Conservative members, who felt it was important to speak—the right to speak. They thought it was important, whatever their issue or contribution was. That’s what they did. But this letter is written to me, too.

Perhaps the government House leader, when he responds to my speech at the end, can simply state how it is that any member of the New Democratic Party, myself especially as the finance critic, had anything to do with stalling this legislation in the House, in the committee, in the subcommittee or any other place. I would like to hear that, because when aspersions are cast—as they are in this letter—about me and about my actions, I take considerable umbrage. I take considerable umbrage because this is totally wrong and misplaced. I take considerable umbrage when he went on to say: “Let’s focus on passing this important piece of legislation and avoid further political games to ensure small businesses are spared” etc. Again, if it is said and if I am accused in the letter, which I’m sure will be made public at some point by the government opposite, I want them to spell out exactly what games I was playing, what games my party was playing. For a government that has been in power for 10 years, for a government that knows what they have to do, for a government that has a House leader who, in most cases, runs government business fairly well—calls the bills when they’re necessary, sends the bills to committee, chooses which bills are called forward into committee—I find this very, very strange. It is not my doing what government bills end up before any of the committees of this House. It is the government’s House leader who is responsible for determining whether Bill 21 had priority over Bill 105 or whether some other piece of legislation has priority. The decisions were made by the government of the day that other bills had priority before this one, and you proceeded with them. We did not, under any circumstance, try to delay the passage of any bill that I am aware of in the last two years; not one—save and except, maybe, EllisDon, which we thought was bad legislation.

Having said that, I also want to say a few things about my colleagues in the Conservative Party. When this came to committee—unfortunately, I was not there that day because I was otherwise occupied in a different committee dealing with the tip-out bill, which was before general government, which was my bill, and I had to be there.

Mr. Steve Clark: Did it get through?

Mr. Michael Prue: It got through, and I thank all the members on all sides of the House for that. It got through committee, anyway, and I’m waiting for the government House leader to call that into the House for third reading.

My colleagues in the New Democratic Party were there on the day when Bill 105 went to committee, and I know the New Democratic Party had not one amendment to make to the bill—nothing. We were satisfied with the bill.

I do have to state that I wonder sometimes about my colleagues in the Conservative Party. They must have

some pretty smart people who think up bright and witty and fun things. I want to read some of these into the record, too, because if there was a dilatory place anywhere or perhaps just a sense of fun, this is what happened with this bill when it got to committee. A couple of the motions—there were four in all; I'm only going to read three of them because one of them is hugely technical. The first one was changing the name of the bill. They came up with two things for the bill. Perhaps when my Conservative colleagues comment on my speech, they can say why they felt that this was important for a bill that's going to help small business, a bill that is not going to cost the taxpayers any money, a bill that is designed to get the economy going—would move a motion like this. And I quote from the PC motion: "I move that section 6 of the bill be struck out and the following substituted"—section 6 is the short title of the bill. It's going to change the bill from An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act to a bill that would be entitled—"The short title of this act is the Raising Taxes on Family-Owned Business in Ontario Act, 2013." On that subject—and I don't know what debate went on around this, but I can only assume it was designed, at least in part, to have some fun and waste a little of the committee's time.

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The second one was almost the same, Mr. Speaker. The short title of the bill was changed, I guess when that first one wasn't accepted. The title was changed, again, to read—"The short title of this act is the Robbing Peter to Pay Paul Act, 2013." Perhaps my friends might want to comment on that.

The New Democrats made no such motion in committee, and even the government has to acknowledge that this was perhaps done in jest, but certainly would have no bearing on the bill itself, nor do I think it wasted much time because the finance committee dealt with the entire bill in that same time slot, that same afternoon as general government was debating my bill on tip-outs.

The last one, though, was problematic to me, and I'm glad that it did not pass. The last one was the Conservatives'. It was a two-pronged motion but the second one is too complex. No one will understand it if I read it into the record. But the purport of the first one was, "I move that the definition of 'A' in subsection 2.1(2) of the Employer Health Tax Act, as set out in section 3 of the bill, be amended by striking out '\$450,000' and substituting '\$800,000'."

Now, if you just read that, you might wonder what that was. That was an attempt by the Conservatives to take a bill that was going to be relatively revenue-neutral, that had stood at \$400,000 for a number of years, move it up to \$450,000 for small business, but in the alternative, take it away from big business. By moving it to \$800,000, the effect of this bill would have cost the treasury half a billion dollars. I don't know, for a Conservative Party who stands there and says that they are trying to balance a budget, or that we cannot have a budget of \$10 billion in deficit, why they would move

such a motion that would move it another half a billion dollars in the red. Perhaps they can explain that. But in any event, that didn't pass. At the end of the day, the bill was passed without amendment and was sent back here for debate.

Now, all members of the House are entitled to debate it, and I hope they do. But I am also mindful of the time, and I do agree with the Minister of Finance that if this government can find the will and if this Legislature has the will, this can and should be passed by Thursday. There is no sense in delaying this until we come back at the end of February. There is no sense in not giving small businesses what they need and there is no sense in not giving that very small, slight stimulus to small businesses throughout the province.

New Democrats, Mr. Speaker, support the bill. We support the bill because it increases the amount that small businesses are going to be able to write off from \$400,000 to \$450,000, and it ensures that the money that is going to pay the net economic loss to the treasury comes from those businesses that can afford it, those that have more than \$5 million in revenue, and those which have, in almost all cases, more than 100 employees. This is meant to be money for small business, to get them started. It's not money for big business, to keep them going.

The second thing and problem we still have with this bill, although it is minor, is that we have a problem because we're not sure how the government is going to stop the problem of companies segmenting the workforce. What this means is that companies often can split themselves. Companies having \$5 million in profit in a year, 100 employees, can look at a bill like this and say, "We're going to set up two companies, two parallel companies"—almost like the Twix bars, almost like the ones that flow the caramel on top and the other ones that swirl the caramel on top. Companies can divide themselves, trying to get the extra revenue.

We are mindful that this happens quite a bit in terms of taxation policies, not around this employer health tax, but around a great many taxes where employers cut their company in half, in thirds or in four in order to get the best possible tax advantage. We want to make sure that this bill, if passed, works to the benefit of small companies and not merely to be given to larger companies that choose to segment their workforce, thereby setting up smaller companies to get under the \$5-million threshold.

Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to close—and I'm not going to speak for my whole hour. I don't need to. I'm not trying to be dilatory here. I'm not trying to do anything that's going to stop or hold up this bill. But I do want to close by saying that New Democrats came into this with good faith. We have acted at all times in good faith to try to get this bill passed because we know the importance of it to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and the small businesses they represent.

But we came in making this argument for this bill. In the beginning it was part of a larger package, and this

was one of the smaller parts of the package. As New Democrats, we are mindful that this government is in a \$10-billion deficit. We are also mindful that this Legislature is going to need to act on some very large priorities in the near future. We know that the Ring of Fire needs billions of dollars in order to put roads and railways, transportation and infrastructure, into it.

We also know that cities like Toronto, Hamilton, London, Windsor and Ottawa are desperately trying to get their transportation and their transit infrastructure in place. We have heard the figure being raised of some \$34 billion to end gridlock in Ontario, and we know that all parties in the Legislature have talked about ways of getting that money flowing in order not only to revive the economy but also to end gridlock, which is costing billions of dollars.

We have suggested, New Democrats, that there were other ways. This was part of the package. Bill 105 was a very small part of the package that we suggested. We also suggested at the same time that government should be doing much more, and they haven't done it. We suggested that, beginning in 2015, the government should stop the billion-dollar corporate tax loophole on the largest corporations on HST rebates, things like restaurants and box seats. You know, that's an annual cost of \$1.3 billion, and over the next 20 years, for the life of both the Ring of Fire and the transit, would bring in \$18.9 billion.

We have also suggested, as part of the package of which Bill 105 is a small part, that beginning in 2018 planned cuts in corporate tax rates from 11.5% to 10% will cost the treasury \$800 million a year or, over the 20 years, \$10.4 billion, which I would think can be used for a great many better purposes.

We are also mindful that, beginning in 2018, planned tax cuts only for individuals earning over \$500,000 a year will cost \$470 million to the treasury if that is phased out, or \$6.1 billion over 20 years. The total cost of these tax loopholes and giveaways that the government seems hell bent on going forward with, although there is a small sop now to small business, is \$35.4 billion, enough to build all the subways, all the transit systems and probably a railroad into the Ring of Fire.

For clarity, Mr. Speaker—I promise not to stray—what we're looking at here, from what I have described, the tax loopholes that the delayed HST, if we delayed that, we could save \$1.3 billion. If we brought corporate tax compliance into effect, we could save \$200 million a year. The EHT exemption is only \$100 million. But this is the kind of thing we were trying to convince this government needed to be done.

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I am thankful they listened in part. I am thankful that this bill has been brought forward, and I will do everything I can to make sure, by sitting down early, that this bill receives as speedy a passage as I can possibly give it. I would ask my colleagues to have measured speeches about the bill, whether you like it or not, and I would ask, if at all possible, that it be finished by Thursday afternoon.

But, Mr. Speaker, I cannot be like the finance minister and order that it be done, and I will not cast aspersions on anyone who is simply doing the duty that they are required to do. This is a deal that is traditionally done by the government House leader, often at meetings with the House leaders of the other parties: determining which bills will go forward, what kind of package will be brought, how long the speeches will be. When it is open-ended, then I think all members of this House have an obligation to the people they represent to say what they need to say.

Having said that, I think I have said what needs to be said and I ask that the bill be passed into law. I also ask that the political games need to stop if you are going to seek support in the future from me or this side of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's a great opportunity for me to be in the House this afternoon to speak for a couple of minutes regarding Bill 105. I will admit that I didn't hear all of the comments made by the member from Beaches—East York. I did catch some of the beginning and most of the last little bit.

If I'm not mistaken, though, the member from Beaches talked about certain games that were being played and there was a discussion around what might or might not have taken place on this side of the House with respect to making sure that this very important bill could pass through this House in order to meet the deadline that everyone in the House is aware of, so that we can actually, as a government and as a province, continue to support small businesses in the new year.

It is my understanding that the member suggested that games were being played on this side of the House. Several times at the general government committee it was, in fact, members from that particular caucus that saw fit to do whatever they could to impede progress, which is unfortunate.

Every member in this House will have heard by now from the various representatives of the government caucus who have spoken extensively and rather eloquently about this particular bill, about how important it is to make sure that this particular piece, as with all others from budget 2013, move through the House to take effect so that we can continue moving forward with Ontario's economy to make sure that it grows, to make sure we remain a prosperous province.

So, as the member from Beaches did finish off in his remarks—and it is appreciated, I think, that he didn't use up his entire allotment today because it's so important that we make sure this bill does pass before the end of this year. I call on all members, as I have many, many times before on other pieces of legislation, to get behind this bill. It will move Ontario's economy forward. It will help us continue to be the greatest province in the best country in the world. I sincerely hope that members across all three caucuses will work with us to make sure this bill passes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I always enjoy listening to the member from Beaches–East York. He’s made a few good points this afternoon, but I just want to talk about a few things.

He talked about political games. I guess I’m somewhat surprised, being fairly new in this Legislature, at the political games we see going on and the arrogance on the government side. When he talks about people coming into my office not knowing how they are going to pay their hydro bills, pay their rent, and he jokes about it being just another Tim Hortons coffee a year—math like that is scary. I know there are a lot of people in Ontario, but one coffee a year does not pay for that power plant fiasco.

I got a call the other day from somebody and he was furious with me, arguing, “What have you done to get rid of this government, these guys?” He called them a lot of names I can’t repeat here. All I could say was, “We’re trying our best.”

We talk about a bill here, but I don’t think they realize the urgency with business. We see businesses leaving all the time. While this bill has some merit to it, they’ve got to do something to stop the bleeding in this province. I mean, we look at some of the businesses—and these aren’t our words. I heard this morning how competitive our energy prices are, but then I hear the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers’ Association say that our rates are higher, double what they are in Nashville, in many places in the States, double what they are in Montreal and in Vancouver, when you look at Toronto’s rates.

I don’t know where they get their numbers. I think obviously a lot of people would call those numbers something. But in my books, when you say something that there’s so much evidence against—and whether there is evidence or not, we’re looking at these companies leaving in droves. Every month, every week, there are another 700 or 1,000 jobs gone. We want to talk about affecting the deficit. Those taxes have a big impact on the deficit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it’s an honour to be able to stand here and speak on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming–Cochrane, and to follow my colleague from Beaches–East York. He always explains things in a way that puts a new light on things. I’m going to use some of his words that I’ve never used before. One phrase he used several times was “taking umbrage.” In northern Ontario, that would be, “We find it offensive.” One of the things that we find offensive in this caucus is that the roots of Bill 105 were part of the package that we asked for to pass the budget. I believe the budget was passed in—help me here—April?

Mr. Steve Clark: You guys helped pass it.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, we did help pass that budget to get some of the things like Bill 105.

For the government to say, “Well, now, you people are holding things up,” it was our idea and we gave it to you

in April. So is it us trying to hold things up? No, it’s the same as the Financial Accountability Officer. It was our idea. We appointed somebody to the committee, and we had to drag it out of the other two parties.

Yes, this bill should go through, and the government should be the one who should quit playing games. This idea, a version of it was floated before April, was passed in April as part of the budget, and now we seem to be all surprised that “Oh, Christmas is coming, and we haven’t got our agenda cleared.”

People, please. This is a good bill. It’s not going to save the world, but it’s good for small business. The other side should quit playing games, and they should pass it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: There is, obviously, a variety of opinions on this bill, but I think the important thing to note is that if this bill does not pass on Thursday, small businesses in this province are going to have to pay higher than necessary business taxes starting on February 15, 2014. Now, parties either want that to happen or they don’t; we don’t. I understand the other parties are saying they’re in support of that. There’s a way to make that happen. Obviously, every member in this House is entitled to speak. I don’t think anybody disputes that. We gauge how much we speak and what we say as to the pace that we want legislation to pass. It’s that simple.

I don’t think the letter that was sent to the critics was sent in the way it’s being received, perhaps. What I understand the minister said in his letter was, “Let’s set the partisan stuff aside. Let’s get this bill through.” If there’s anything more than that, I certainly don’t read that into the letter. More than 60,000 Ontario small businesses will benefit as a result of this. It will benefit their bottom line; it will benefit their ability to promote the jobs and the growth we need in this province.

We continue to work to try to make this province—I think that’s with the opposition parties, as well—one of the most attractive places to do business on the continent. Any business with an annual payroll of under \$5 million will be exempt from paying the EHT on the first \$450,000 of payroll each year. It seems to me that we all agree that this should be done. It’s a matter of trying to fit that passage of the legislation into the remaining time we have left, which is until Thursday of this week. So I’m hoping that the goodwill that can be applied to this piece of legislation will allow this bill to pass at some point in the future, hopefully before next Thursday, so that businesses will prosper as a result.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That’s it for questions and comments. We go back to the member for Beaches–East York for his response.

Mr. Michael Prue: I’d like to thank the members from Vaughan, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Timiskaming–Cochrane and Oakville for their comments.

To the member from Vaughan: He has raised the issue, and it's the first time I've actually heard the general government committee mentioned in all of this. The letters that were sent to me were in my role on the finance committee, or possibly estimates, although I know that estimates had nothing to do with it. Certainly, I had never heard general government mentioned before. If it was in the general government committee, it was because it was sent there by the government House leader—the government chooses which committee to which to send bills, and it certainly had nothing to do with me.

The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry made the point of getting rid of this government. I know that I get letters like that every day too, but I have to remind people that we have a job to do here. Since the time of Bill Davis, the only opportunities we have to get rid of a government—there are only three options. One is at a throne speech, but we have to be prorogued first. The second is on the budget, and the third is on supply, which precedes the budget. That's it. In the meantime, New Democrats think we have to work on every single bill, in order to get the work done that needs to happen here in this House.

The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane made the point that we're not holding up anything. He also pointed out the Financial Accountability Officer. It seems to us that these are demands we made at the time of supporting the budget, things we expected were going to happen. Nine months or more have now dragged on—about nine months—since those demands were made, and we're still not seeing any concrete action. You have to understand our disappointment.

The member from Oakville made the point that he did not read into the letter the same things I did. But then again, the letter was not written to him.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I rise to speak for one hour on third reading of Bill 105, so settle in and get ready. We're going to talk about the Fedeli Focus on Finance a little later, but I am going to be speaking about the government's employer health tax legislation. This bill is currently named, and will be named, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, but I have to tell you that I am going to be the one to stand in this Legislature and explain the problems with that title, because the title also peels back and illustrates the problems underlying this whole bill.

This bill is going to provide tax relief to the tune of \$75 a month to small businesses and take away \$9,000 a year from family-owned businesses. That's exactly what this is going to do. We suggest, and we did suggest at committee—the member from Beaches–East York was actually right—that it be called the raising taxes on family-owned businesses act, because that's really what this is all about. The small amount of money, the \$75 a month, is all about being able to say we're doing something, when what you're really doing is much bigger.

I will take an hour to discuss that and illustrate to you what this bill is really going to be doing in Ontario.

Sadly, as I'll also discuss, I did bring those amendments to committee, but the government and third party coalition was activated, and we were unable to get this truth in advertising when it comes to this bill.

My comments over the next hour will focus on how little this particular piece of legislation actually does to address the spiderweb of destructive policies this government has implemented over the last 10 years, and how it will do nothing to prevent even more businesses from considering closing their doors for good or leaving Ontario like many have—and I'll talk about those—and relocating for good-paying jobs to other more business-friendly jurisdictions throughout Quebec and the States.

I can understand why the Liberals want to try to take ownership of this. Speaker, as you know, being here then, it was a PC government that first introduced the employer health tax exemption as a way to assist small business in the province by reducing their overall tax burden. This brought the \$400,000 exemption, which, by the way, on this bill, ekes up to \$450,000. That's the \$75 a month that I was speaking about.

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, they say, but the Liberals had 10 years to offer true relief to small business in this respect. Only now they're acting, and, quite frankly, it's too little, too late.

For me and for my colleagues, this legislation here today exemplifies exactly what's wrong with this government and their approach to governing. They are unwilling to go far enough to take the decisive action that's needed to provide real tax relief for Ontario business.

When you think about the budget two years ago in the spring, Ontario was poised to have our corporate tax rate reduced from 11.5% to 10%. The Liberals promised that. Our PC Party is absolutely in favour of that. But in order to win the support of the NDP and make their coalition survive, the Liberals succumbed to the NDP desire and cancelled the tax rate. That, in effect, is a 1.5% tax increase to business in Ontario from what we were scheduled to see.

But, sadly, this bill is merely tinkering around the edges by this government and will not do enough to solve the obvious job crisis we have in this province: 600,000 men and women woke up again this morning without a job; 300,000 of them used to work in manufacturing, before the policies of this government hollowed out our once proud industrial backbone in Ontario.

There are actually more than a million Ontarians looking for work today. The Liberals have shown time and time again their willingness to speak out of both sides of their mouth when it comes to providing real help for small businesses in this province.

We saw this clearly at committee, Speaker. As a result of my motions not going through, many, many family-owned businesses will actually be paying \$9,000 higher taxes after the Liberals and the NDP joined forces to defeat our PC motion to amend Bill 105 at committee.

For example, we introduced an amendment to increase the employer health tax exemption to \$800,000, which was called for by the Canadian Federation of Independ-

ent Business, and which would have saved—truly saved—small business thousands of dollars annually. Then, certainly, it would have been truly called the Supporting Small Businesses Act.

Speaker, let me read from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business's letters. On October 29 they wrote to the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. I read one of the sentences: "To ensure the ongoing economic competitiveness of Ontario's small and medium-sized firms, it is our standing recommendation that the government continue increasing the threshold in future years until it reaches \$800,000 in order to bring Ontario's" employment health tax "exemption closer to that of neighbouring provinces such as Manitoba. CFIB remains committed to working with the government and opposition parties to bring this to fruition."

On November 19, the CFIB wrote to our Premier, the leader of the third party, the leader of the New Democratic Party: "CFIB has long advocated for payroll tax breaks, and our standing recommendation is to eventually increase the EHT threshold to \$800,000 over time. Indexing future EHT threshold increases to inflation, as proposed in Bill 105, would help the province reach that target faster."

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Finally, on December 2, they wrote to our Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and said, "CFIB believes that Ontario's EHT exemption threshold should be comparable to that of other provinces and it is our standing recommendation to have it gradually increased to \$800,000 over time." Why would they want that? Because today Ontario has the single largest employee expenses in all of Canada. This is what we have: Our employee tax expenses are the single highest in all of Canada. Something is wrong here. So we proposed this exemption.

Let me read you a quote I received that very morning from one of the largest manufacturers in North Bay. This is his actual email when he realized that they were about to get dinged with a new tax: "Good gosh. Our payroll is over \$5 million. I have to ask my finance group what the actual dollar impact will be. One thing for certain: Once we are driven out of the province, the impact of these things will be zero. The more I read about Ontario's financial situation, the bleaker the future looks." That's an unsolicited letter from one of the largest manufacturers in the city of North Bay.

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes, it was. I have stood in this Legislature and told you it was unsolicited. I don't like being impugned by that.

Employers told us what they needed, and they were flat out ignored by the Liberals and the NDP, who voted against the \$800,000 amendment. The new legislation also means that Ontario businesses with \$5 million or more in payroll will no longer be able to claim a tax exemption on the first \$400,000 of their payroll, increasing taxes on family-owned businesses, much like—the

business I'm referring to would be like the locally owned Canadian Tire in your riding, or the locally owned independent grocers in your riding. You know who owns these? Men and women who are neighbours of yours. This is thousands of dollars their taxes are going up to give this \$75 tax break to the small business. That's why we believe this also should be called robbing Peter to pay Paul.

This is all about the name, so this party can stand up and say, "Look at us, we're helping small business," when they really aren't, at the expense of medium, family-owned businesses. That's what they're doing. This doesn't cost the government anything or virtually anything. They talk about it being close to revenue-neutral. This is just all about moving the deck chairs on the Titanic around. That's all this is. This does nothing to help small business.

The Liberals and the NDP voted against our amendments to remove that cap and make it truly a tax credit for businesses—all businesses, not just tinkering at the edges. This new tax on family business will discourage them from hiring and expanding. This legislation is merely an eye drop of relief for Ontario businesses and the most minor of minor tax relief measures in the province with the highest payroll taxes in Canada.

As I said earlier, Ontario residents pay the most payroll taxes. It's actually \$9,970. The source is the Toronto Star, June 16, 2013, based on the Fraser Institute tax freedom day analysis. That's what our payroll taxes are in Ontario. That's what the highest taxes in Canada are. We need to put this legislation in context with the overall framework that this government has laid out, which is actually driving jobs, business and investment out of Ontario, fleeing—fleeing, Speaker—for more friendly places to do business. This fails to address the structural costs facing job creators.

I want to take some time to talk about why this minuscule movement on behalf of the Liberals toward helping small business isn't nearly enough to reverse the damage they've done over what I like to call the lost decade. I'd like to start off by discussing our debt, which has doubled—doubled—in just 10 years, from \$139 billion to \$273 billion. Remember, it took all those Premiers 137 years to grow our debt to \$139 billion. It took these guys 10 years, Speaker, to double it. Our debt is at record levels. The deficit has pushed the envelope of credulity. It is a must that the budget be balanced and that we get it balanced before 2017. It's a must that Ontarians finally get a break in their tax rate and that we get out of the business of corporate welfare. We must advocate for free trade and make sure it happens. Our paths to prosperity must be a two-way street.

As PC finance critic, I see a road back that won't be easy. Don Drummond told us that this will not be easy. There are tough roads ahead. But it can be travelled, and we will travel it as a team that wants nothing but the best for Ontario. We want Ontarians to be proud again. We want Ontarians to be working, and working in jobs that bring personal pride as well as a decent income. There's

no easy path here, Speaker. All you have to do is look around the GTA and Hamilton, and you see daily traffic gridlock that is costing us millions of dollars in lost productivity.

This legislation also does not address any—any—of the questions that I've raised for the finance minister in my series called Fedeli Focus on Finance. There are very serious questions, serious holes in this government's fiscal plan, that the minister apparently doesn't have any answers for. Let me take a few minutes and talk about these. I know that I have addressed them in this Legislature in the past, and for those of you who are following who want to have a greater understanding, and for my friend—I am sorry he's not here today—the Fedeli Focus on Finance can be downloaded at fedeli.com. You can subscribe to it.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The full series for Christmas.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: You can get the full series. Email me and I'll email them to you. I'll also email the three various media stories that have been generated: the first, from the Globe and Mail, that talked rather nicely about Focus on Finance number 1; the Windsor Star, that had a great article and commentary and editorial on Focus number 2; and the Toronto Sun, actually—Simon Kent wrote a rather complimentary article about focus number 3.

What happened here, Speaker, is that back in the Dwight Duncan days, the former Minister of Finance, he talked about balancing the budget by 2017-18. What he said was that we would have an across-the-board wage freeze that would save this province \$6 billion in our budget by 2017-18. And that's it: all talk, no action. So we thought we would do a deep dive here and do an analysis from the Ministry of Labour's own website. They're the only source of information that we used for Focus number 1. Our team dived into that, and what we came up with was the fact that there was indeed no wage freeze across the board. Sadly, what we saw was that out of all of the agencies, boards, commissions and ministries, eight out of 10—80%—of those bodies actually had a wage increase of 1%, 2%, 3%, 4%—all different. Every one of them is documented. So you have to wonder, without the cornerstone, the real piece that's supposed to save the budget and balance the budget by 2017-18, how are you supposed to balance that when that cornerstone \$6 billion is not there? Of course, we ask the finance minister these questions and all we get is a lot of talk that says, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. We're going to balance." We'll talk about that in Fedeli Focus number 3, in a moment.

So we jump into Fedeli Focus number 2, which talks about the debt and deficit, and why that matters in Ontario. You have to appreciate, Speaker, that with this record debt of \$280 billion, it brings two things. Number one, we had another deficit this past year, of \$9.2 billion, but we also had interest of \$10.4 billion. We're adding almost \$20 billion to our debt this year. We're growing that debt to that number. That interest is \$10.4 billion that we can't spend on health care. That's another \$10.4 billion that we can't spend on education. That's why we

see cuts to physiotherapy for seniors. That's why we see cuts to cataract surgery. That's why knee replacements take 18 months, if you're lucky. This is why the debt and deficit matter to Ontarians.

1620

We'll continue to drill into this. I know that's a boring talk: debt and deficit. It couldn't be more boring to people. But this is a very important topic when you understand that our deficit is larger than all other provinces' deficits combined.

Here we hear the excuses: "The dog ate my homework"; "It's the feds' fault"; "Everybody is in a global recession." Everybody else has recovered and is doing very nicely, thank you. We're the laggard again, not just in Canada but worldwide. We are this laggard. Our debt-to-GDP when these guys took over was 27%—a revered number worldwide. Today, it's over 37%, and their own statistics tell us it's going to 40%.

That's why we get compared to Greece—because when Greece's trouble started, their debt-to-GDP was 37%. We get compared to the laggard in the States, California, because we both had around a \$10-billion deficit—except for the fact that they're three times larger than we are and have that capacity to pay for it. We're three times smaller and we have the same deficit. We're compared to Detroit—the bankruptcy now in Detroit. Our debt per person in Ontario is in the \$20,000 range. Well, guess what? Detroit, which is now bankrupt—their debt per person is in the \$20,000 range. That's why you hear people compare us to Greece, California and Detroit. Pick one of the three and that's trouble. We're compared to all three. Those are indisputable facts.

Let's talk about what is being hidden from the public now. In Fedeli Focus on Finance number 3, we got into the fact that we have—all of the revenue is shown. We asked the finance minister, "How are we going to balance the budget?" All they say to us now is, "We're going to balance," but if you look closely, what they've done is—all the numbers on how to get there are now not available. That's the first time here in our budget system that those numbers are blanked out; you can't see. They just continue to show the bottom totals that say we're going to somehow magically balance. They do hide the numbers from us, Speaker. Why? Because they can't get there anymore.

Speaker, this legislation comes at a time when we're struggling with skyrocketing hydro costs, increases to WSIB premiums, a College of Trades tax, restrictions on the skilled trades through outdated apprenticeship ratios, and a forest of red tape and regulations that strangle the ability of Ontario's businesses to prosper.

Let's look at energy rates, especially given that we're now more than three years past the Oakville power plant cancellation. Ontario's industrial rates are the second-highest in North America. Just today the energy minister stood up and somehow boasted that our energy rates, especially in northern Ontario, were the lowest, and I'm thinking, "Really? I don't get that." First of all, Xstrata Copper, which was in northern Ontario, was the single

largest user of power in all of Ontario—they were lured across the border by the province of Quebec for cheap power. How could they have gone for cheaper power when we're supposed to, according to our minister, have the cheapest power? One of them is not being accurate and factual with us, Speaker, and I'm going to tell you which one it is.

Let's look at the one thing he forgot to mention today. He forgot to mention the global adjustment. He was very coy. I'm sure if I look at his record this morning, he was talking about the one little line on the energy bills, and that's the real-time pricing. Yes, he may have been accurate in that statement; that indeed may be one of the lowest, but that is not the total of your hydro bill.

I've picked a hydro bill from a large manufacturer in North Bay, again. Their hydro bill, for just the pricing of hydro, is \$43,762.84 this one particular month. For them, that's about \$500,000 a year. That's the price of their energy—just the energy. So the minister might have been accurate when he was talking very narrowly about one line of the many lines. What he failed to mention is the global adjustment, the big pot that they dump all the expenses in, such as the gas plant scandal cost of \$1.1 billion and the rich subsidies to wind and solar. Dump all that in the pot. That pot added 4.28 cents—about four and a quarter cents—a kilowatt hour to this guy's hydro bill. Remember, his hydro was \$43,700 a month. This global adjustment—something that Quebec doesn't pay and Manitoba doesn't pay and the States don't pay; this is added to his hydro bill—is \$73,395.96. That is \$1 million a year added to his hydro bill that the minister kind of forgot to mention, by the way.

This is a year ago; this is February 24, 2012. Speaker, that's when the global adjustment was 4.25 cents. Today, I went on the IESO's website. Today, the global adjustment is 7.6 cents a kilowatt hour. When I take his hydro bill and multiply it by 7.61 cents, while his hydro was \$44,000 this month, his global adjustment is \$130,000. That's \$1.5 million a year that the energy minister forgot—I'll use the word “forgot”—to tell us about. That's what happened.

That's the global adjustment. It's the government's catch-all fund for the misdeeds and mistakes they've made in the energy file, including the power plant cancellations—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): A point of order, the member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I always enjoy listening to my colleague and his interesting theories; however, his meanderings on electricity policy have nothing to do with a bill that has to do with An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I acknowledge the point of order, and I would remind the member for Nipissing that we are, in fact, debating third reading of Bill 105. It would be helpful if his comments could come back to the bill.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. My point that I'm making to the member across is that their bill is

tinkering at the edges when there are real problems for businesses in Ontario. You may not want to talk about the real problems in Ontario, but to me, Speaker, you need to understand those core problems and what is killing business in Ontario to illustrate to these people why this bill of theirs isn't going to solve the problems. So I will continue for a couple of minutes, Speaker, on the long-term energy plan and what it's doing.

This is certainly an energy folly here. Rates have tripled. When this government took over, energy was 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour. Today, the highest rate you can pay in business is 12.9 cents a kilowatt hour, as of November 1; Speaker, that's three times. You wonder why this company's bill, their global adjustment—their bill now is \$180,000 a month instead of \$40,000. This is one particular example.

This is what's killing business, and we just got told this past week that now, all of a sudden, the rates are going to skyrocket. What a way to run a government. This is—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I ruled on the previous point of order.

Point of order.

1630

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, it is, in fact, the same point of order: standing order 23(b). The Speaker did rule on it, and the member has not gone back to the subject of the bill.

Interjection: Enforce the ruling, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Actually, he did go back to the subject of the bill, and then he returned to the basic argument he was making. I return to the member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker. Again, let me remind the government that this bill is tinkering at the edges. We've got to understand what is genuinely happening in Ontario so that we can understand how to fix it. I know you don't want to talk about your disastrous energy policy. To the member: I understand that. We sat across from each other during the gas plant scandal hearings, where we disclosed \$1.1 billion. This government continued to say all along that it was \$40 million and \$190 million, but the auditor came out with \$1.1 billion. Somebody has to pay that. So it's being added to your hydro bills, which are now increasing, which is why these guys have come out with this bill that's going to give small businesses \$75 a month so they can stand here and say it's the small business saviour act. This is what it's all about.

They're trying to bluff the businesses of Ontario that this is really something to help small business, when we know that reining in this ridiculous energy policy is what we need. I won't even get into the entire Green Energy Act—in fact, there's absolutely nothing green about the Green Energy Act. But that folly is also adding one of the richest subsidies in the world, and that folly is also hurting small business, which is why these guys do not want to talk about energy and want, instead, to talk about

some kind of bill that will do absolutely nothing it is named to do.

I talked about one of the businesses where this morning the energy minister—he said we have the lowest energy. I talked about Xstrata Copper. This bill would not have helped Xstrata Copper. This bill would have added to Xstrata Copper's taxes—to their employee health tax—here in Ontario. Would this bill have stopped them from moving to Quebec? No. They moved to Quebec because we make green energy at night, when we don't need it. The auditor told us just recently that we've paid \$1.8 billion to Quebec and to the States to take the surplus power.

In November 2011, the auditor told us that in the first 10 months of 2010, we had already paid Quebec and the US \$420 million. That's \$500 million a year—\$500 million. That had to be added to somebody's bill. Somebody had to pay that. Not only do we pay Quebec to take our power—we pay them to take it—but they turn around and knock on the door of Xstrata Copper and say, "Look at all this cheap power we have. Why don't you cross the border and open up here?" So they shed 672 jobs in Ontario and moved across the border. That's what is happening. That's what they don't want to talk about. That's exactly what they don't want to talk about.

Speaker, I could carry on about this—maybe one more minute, if they'll allow me. I'm going to talk about what I call the law of unintended consequences. It's a very important point that the Auditor General also told us. When the so-called Green Energy Act was invented, they did not do a business study. There was no business case written. So they had no idea what the law of unintended consequences was going to be. And so, Speaker—

Mr. Bob Delaney: On a point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I draw the Speaker's attention to standing order 23(b)(i). The question under discussion has nothing whatsoever to do with the Green Energy Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Again, I would acknowledge the member's point of order and, again, remind the member from Nipissing that if he chooses to talk about these kinds of subjects related to small business and larger businesses, he has to bring his comments back to Bill 105. I would remind him of that.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I'll end the chapter on energy here by suggesting that if we continue with this government's energy policies, those businesses won't be coming back again. Our industrial rates are, indeed, the second-highest in all of North America, and we need to make affordable energy a priority.

So, let's talk about business—any business—and ask them what their three biggest input costs are. They'll tell you that they're taxes, energy and labour—or, in Premier Wynne's Ontario, strike one, strike two, strike three and, unfortunately, they're out. They're out in droves, Speaker. I want to talk to you about the number of businesses that have fled Ontario under this government, that won't be coming back, even with passage of this legislation.

This legislation gives \$75 a month to small businesses, but it takes \$9,000 away from each family-owned business. That's the problem.

Let me read you the names of some companies that have announced that they've had enough of Ontario's business climate: Caterpillar, whose jobs went to Indiana; Heinz, whose 1,000 jobs relocated to Ohio; US Steel, who shut down in Hamilton; in North Bay, Sandvik, who'd been there for quite a while, gone to New Brunswick; Xstrata Copper, as I mentioned, in Timmins: 672 jobs gone to Quebec.

Some of the other recent closing announcements include Sklar Peppler in Ajax; GM transmission and assembly plants in Windsor; ExxonMobil chemical films in Belleville; Saputo dairy in Brampton; Navistar in Chatham; Daimler trucks in London and St. Thomas, and their bus factory in Mississauga; Edscha in Niagara Falls; GM Camaro production in Oshawa, gone to Lansing, Michigan, as well as their 110-year-old operation in St. Catharines; Tender Tootsies in Glencoe; Faurecia in Bradford—we just heard that one last year.

Add to that the 60 mills in Northern Ontario—that's eight out of every 10 mills; 80% of all of these mills are closed forever. That includes Resolute Forest Products in Fort Frances, who just last week shut down another paper line and sent 60 people home. This is a shocking display of what has happened in the Ontario that I grew up in.

This legislation won't do anything to reverse the damage through the increase in WSIB premiums forced upon small businesses. Again, this awards \$75 a month to small businesses, and they pay for it by taking \$9,000 from a smaller group of family-owned businesses. That's how they're paying for this. They're robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Let me read you my February 1, 2000, press release where we talk about the damage that's being done by WSIB. Now, if that's a tax area that you wanted to fix, we'd be sitting here talking about this.

"Upon recall of the Ontario Legislature this month, the Liberals and their new leader need to repeal Bill 119 and its crippling tax on small businesses." That's a tax on small business that they should be talking about, Speaker, not this made-up savings. This tax hurts independent tradespeople and contractors.

I was joined by Steve Ciglen, Brent Tremblay and John Best at the launch of the "Fix the WSIB" campaign to protest that new tax on independent operators, sole proprietors, partners in partnerships and executive officers of corporations that came into effect on January 1. Now that is a tax on business.

This tax that they're adding to medium-sized business, family businesses—I expect the same kind of reaction.

This WSIB tax is, plain and simple, a tax on hard-working Ontarians designed to cover up the Liberal government's mess. This is the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board's—the WSIB's—\$14-billion unfunded liability. They created a tax to pay that off. In this particular case, it's virtually revenue-neutral. They create a tax on family-owned businesses to give it out to the small business community, \$75 a month.

The WSIB tax is cutting into the earnings of small businesses and contractors, and for some it could be the straw that breaks the camel's back. The stated goal of Bill 119 was to capture more people to pay mandatory premiums who are unlikely to ever claim for an injury. I warned at that time that there's no relief to those who already pay the WSIB. Speaker, this is a clear example of an area they should be fixing, a tax that they imposed that has unintended consequences. They impose a tax; businesses close.

1640

Here, on the small business tax, they're imposing a tax on family-owned businesses. We already can imagine what the results will be.

This act will not reverse the College of Trades tax that targeted independent contractors in Ontario. It's severely hampering the ability to hire and create jobs, and for some, it's killing their ability to stay in business at all.

You heard me read that comment from that one local company, that unsolicited comment where they had said, "Enough's enough." What they had said, again: "Once we are driven out of the province, the impact of these things will be zero. The more I read about Ontario's financial situation, the bleaker the future looks."

Speaker, back to this College of Trades tax, again, we did a survey in partnership with the North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce, and 77% of the respondents said personal income taxes should be the first taxes to be cut. It was very valuable feedback. Seventy per cent said they believe a training tax credit would be valuable in helping train their employees, while 73% don't believe the arbitration system for public sector labour disputes is working. Sixty per cent believe time-of-use electricity pricing should be optional. The survey also shows—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to hear the member for Nipissing.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I don't think he knows we already cut personal income taxes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan to please come to order. And I would say to the member for Nipissing, again, his remarks need to come back to Bill 105.

The member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. Again, what I'm trying to illustrate here is that on Bill 105, this is tinkering around the edges, coming up with a name of a bill where they can run out and say, "Look at me. Look at me. We're helping small business," when, really, what they've done is robbing Peter to pay Paul. There's no money; there's no wealth being added. There's no net tax break. They're taking the money from family-owned businesses and redistributing it to smaller business when, really, what we've got here are problems they should be fixing.

The survey showed overwhelming support for the government to be more transparent and to cut red tape. Now, that's a bill that we would get behind. In fact, we have brought these bills to the floor of this Legislature,

and this government has voted against our bills time and time and time again, bills that would do real good for the business community: cutting corporate taxes, which this government did not do in the budget of 2012. In fact, they should have cut the taxes from 11.5% to 10%, but in order to satisfy their coalition with the NDP, we did not see that tax break. That's basically an increase of 1.5% in the taxes that the business community had anticipated.

You wonder why, and I've said this in this Legislature before, this patient capital, or dead money, as some call it—we have \$500 billion in the banks of large businesses in Canada. They will not invest it in Ontario because this government is unpredictable. They tell you they're going to lower corporate taxes, and then they don't lower them. They tell you one thing, and they do the other. That's the problem. They tell you that this is a tax savings, but really it's just shuffling the cards. There's no net cost here. So what they really should be doing, as I was talking about the WSIB, is fixing that. The College of Trades: They should be fixing that.

But this isn't the end of the new taxes this Liberal government wants to hit us with. The expensive tax-and-spend policies that they have are needed to feed that addiction that they have to spending. In the gas plant scandal hearings, those documents, 186,000 documents, we discovered this government is considering nearly 50 new taxes and fees to pay for their gross overspending and incompetence.

The first of those, driver's licence fees, which they denied, suddenly were implemented in September. Our leader, Tim Hudak, stood on this floor and brought out the long list: adding 75 cents to your phone bill, increasing the HST by 1%, adding five cents to a litre of gas, increasing hunting and fishing licences, increasing your driver's licence fee. They denied them all, "No, we're not doing that," and then very shortly, only a couple of weeks later, they did that. That's a tax that they're adding.

Mr. Bob Delaney: A point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, standing other 23(h) forbids the member from making an allegation, which is what the member has just done. As well, he has strayed yet again from the subject of Bill 105.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I didn't hear a false allegation made by the member for Nipissing to another member.

I would again return to the member for Nipissing, and he has the floor.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker—

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: So disingenuous.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member to withdraw that unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I withdraw, Speaker.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you for the floor, again, Speaker.

Quite simply put, perhaps if this government was more interested in actually helping small business than putting the Liberal Party interests first, they could have done more before now.

Ten years, an election looming, and all of a sudden we're going to have bills with great names—signs that they can slap up: “Look at us. Aren't we the great guys? Look what we've done.”

This legislation does not go back and undo the billion dollars that was wasted on eHealth. This legislation that's going to increase taxes on family-owned business will not go back and undo the almost billion dollars wasted on Ornge; Dr. Mazza's \$9.3-million payout that the minister turned a blind eye to. This Bill 105 certainly can't go back and undo the disastrous Mississauga and Oakville power plant cancellation that added \$1.1 billion to our hydro bills—incidentally, Speaker, the auditor reminded us that \$513 million of that was the result of the Liberal decision to place the new plant in Napanee. That ill-fated decision alone, which was made long after the cancellation, added \$513 million to this debacle.

This legislation, Bill 105, also can't fix the Liberals' faulty math surrounding the decision to sell off the ONTC. Of course, we're going to learn more about that in the auditor's report tomorrow. It's very interesting to point out that the Liberals—in the announcement by the former minister and in the announcement by the former finance minister, both have announced this will save \$265 million. Well, we caught you red-handed again. In the gas plant scandal documents, there they were: letters from the treasury board, from cabinet and from the finance ministry, that, “No, no, there's not going to be any \$265-million savings; this is going to add \$790 million.” That's a—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to be able to hear the member for Nipissing. I'd appreciate the House coming to order. The repeated interjections are particularly annoying.

I would ask the member for Nipissing to resume his comments, and again remind him that we're discussing Bill 105 and his comments have to come back to Bill 105.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I know that they don't want to talk about the billion-dollar spread at Ontario Northland. That's why they come up—this government has a knack for coming up with clever names—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Once again, I ask the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan to please come to order and respect the rules of the House.

The member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. This bill is just another example of this government saying things to appear like they're doing something, but they're only hollow words. This government has a knack for coming up with clever names for bills which actually do the opposite. This is the Supporting Small Businesses Act, and while it indeed does support small business, it's

purely at the expense of family-owned businesses. This is a zero-sum game. It doesn't cost the government much, if anything. They get to stand up and say, “Look at us. We're doing something for small business.” That's to make up for all the things they actually did to destroy small business in Ontario.

1650

Again, Speaker, they're robbing Peter to pay Paul. They're shuffling the deck chairs on the Titanic. That's all that this bill is doing. It won't do anything to bring Cliffs Resources back and erase the government's abysmal management of the Ring of Fire development: 1,200 permanent jobs, 2,500 construction jobs tied to chromite. They're not materializing as a direct result of this government. Again, they're tinkering on the edges.

Now we have the latest spending scandal surrounding the Pan Am Games. This bill isn't going to do anything to target executive expenses for parking or coffee or the \$700 million for the athletes' village that's not in the budget.

For all of these reasons listed and so many others, this legislation does little, if anything, to improve the overall picture for small business in Ontario and for our economy as a whole. Again, it's too little too late.

Now, Speaker, I will address the specific content of the bill, which we tried to amend to make it fairer for all Ontarians and to provide some real relief to them. Unfortunately, the Premier turned on the coalition button and, on cue, the Liberals and NDP became one to defeat the best interests of Ontario's family-owned businesses yet again.

The content of the bill: The bill proposes to increase the exemption amount from \$400,000 to \$450,000—like I said earlier, about four times—for the 2014 to 2018 calendar years, with the amount to be adjusted for inflation each year starting in 2019. So while the intent and the name suggest it will help small business, it's all about the Liberals realizing that their policies are actually killing Ontario business. It isn't enough that the overall context of the legislation or the government's policies are taken as a whole; it also proposes to implement a new exemption threshold for companies with a payroll of \$5 million or more. Again, this is a zero-sum game. I can't stress this enough. The government says it will help 60,000 small businesses, and it will: \$75 a month. But 5,000 family-owned businesses and medium- and large-sized businesses in the province, the businesses that also create jobs, will pay more. Further, this hurts their ability to compete in the global marketplace by adding to their input costs. That's what's happening.

Again, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, as I read in their letters, want the exemption to go to \$800,000. That's a significant tax savings for business. We brought that amendment and said, “People, here's some real meat that will actually help businesses in Ontario, and that amendment can stand.” They voted against it. The NDP and the Liberals voted against that amendment, voted against small business, voted against the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

Instead, we go from \$400,000 to \$450,000, marginal at best, a \$75-a-month saving for businesses with 100 employees and under. But we get to be able to stand here and say, “We’ve helped small business—at the expense of family business.”

This also allows the minister to make regulations providing for special rules that apply to employers who are associated with registered charities. Now, this is an area that I’m a bit concerned with as well, because this makes the minister have the ability to arbitrarily change things through regulation around charities. I just want to remind you of the cricket club scandal. That’s how these things happen, when the Ontario Cricket Association gets \$1 million when they only asked for \$150,000. This is just setting the table for another Liberal minister to change the rules to benefit somebody friendly to their government. That beacon has to go on because that’s part of what this bill is.

Speaker, let me read you specifically our motions that the NDP and the Liberals voted against. These are motions that would have truly helped small business and made a difference.

“I move that the definition of ‘A’ in subsection 2.1(2) of the Employer Health Tax Act, as set out in section 3 of the bill, be amended by striking out ‘\$450,000’ and substituting ‘\$800,000.’” Now we’re talking.

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: No, we did vote on it already and, sadly, the Liberals and NDP voted against it. That’s what would have helped small business. That’s the kind of thing we needed. Instead, it got turned down. So there’s no real tax savings for the small business; there is one in name in \$75.

The next motion that we had—this is the one to kill this part of the bill that’s going to add \$9,000 in taxes to 5,000 businesses. Again, the motion that we brought forward, that our committee brought forward, is:

“... in which the employer,

“(a) has one or more permanent establishments in Ontario, and

“(b) is an eligible employer.”

That’s basically what we’re saying, that everybody should have this exemption. Sadly, of course, we saw the Liberals and the NDP vote down, strike down, a motion that would have stopped these family-owned businesses having a \$9,000 bill added to their taxes. Again, we already have the single greatest employee taxes in all of Canada at almost \$10,000 a year. That’s the single highest in all of Canada, and we’re about to double that for 5,000 of our businesses. How the heck can that be called a “saving taxes” or “lowering taxes” bill? That’s an area I’m very concerned with as well, Speaker.

To answer all these questions that I had—and much like the member from Beaches East–York mentioned earlier, we both received a letter from the finance minister on the weekend; Sunday, as a matter of fact. Here is my response, Speaker:

“Dear Minister,

“Thank you for your letter regarding Bill 105.

“Minister, it’s my hope that you will personally take part in third reading debate on this legislation, as you need to explain to Ontario’s family-owned businesses why you are raising taxes on them and creating yet another deterrent for them to create jobs and expand their businesses here in Ontario.

“You also need to explain to them how this eyedrop of relief could possibly come close to counteracting the matrix of devastating anti-business policies and decisions your government has undertaken over the past decade, including tripling of hydro rates with plans for another 42% increase over the next five years, the new WSIB and College of Trades taxes, your refusal to lower corporate taxes as part of your budget sellout to the NDP, and the billions of dollars wasted in scandals such as eHealth, Ornge, gas plants and Pan Am Games, just to name a few.

“Minister, it is also my hope you will come to the Legislature to answer even one of the series of questions we’ve posed in our finance series regarding your flawed fiscal plan, such as, how can you possibly tell Ontarians with a straight face that you are still going to balance the books by 2017-18 when you planned to save \$6 billion on wage freezes, but gave wage increases to eight out of every 10 contracts you negotiated over the past three years?”

I ended by saying, “I am looking forward to hearing from you in the chamber during third reading debate.”

Speaker, we are very concerned with this bill. I have said several times that the Supporting Small Businesses Act should actually be called the Raising Taxes on Ontario’s Family-owned Businesses Act, because that is truly what we’re seeing happen here.

1700

Only the PC caucus has a real plan to put people back to work in Ontario, to restore economic growth and bring us back to our rightful place as the economic engine of Confederation. That’s the Ontario that you and I both grew up in, when you never, ever heard your parents talk about their hydro bill and how it was a decision whether to pay their hydro bill or something else. You would imagine getting your Visa bill in the mail and being afraid to open it. Now they’re afraid to open their hydro bill.

Mr. Bill Walker: Energy poverty.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My seatmate calls it “energy poverty,” and it’s—I’d like that on the record. That is what has happened in Ontario, Speaker.

Only the PC Party has a plan to free businesses from the tax and regulatory burden this government has placed on them so they can invest and create the jobs that Ontarians deserve.

Speaker, I was in business a big chunk of my life and did business all over the world. I can tell you the three things that would worry me today: high taxes, high energy rates and red tape. Any of those three will strangle businesses. Any three of them together will kill business. You heard me reading a long litany of businesses. These businesses aren’t going bankrupt, these businesses aren’t

closing up, because the economy is bad. These businesses are picking up in Ontario and moving to a place where they can actually get business done. They're moving to Quebec. They're moving to the States. They are moving; they are not closing up.

This legislation is more proof that this government and their NDP coalition partners simply aren't willing to take the decisive action that's needed to get our province turned around and headed in the right direction again, Speaker, to the Ontario that you and I grew up in. When you look at this bill in the overall context of the direction of the government, it simply isn't close to going far enough. That's why we need change, the change of team here at Queen's Park. The only thing that's going to change the direction of the province of Ontario is to change the government.

I thank you for the hour, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I will give the member from Nipissing full credit for filling a full hour. I want to comment on what he said. He said very little about Bill 105 in its essence. We did hear a fair amount about the Fedeli Focus on Finance. I thought I just might introduce Fife's finance facts, just for good spirit.

Corporate tax cuts have not created more jobs, as evidenced by the last 10 years of the Liberal government. Job creation tax credits work. In fact, if you incentivize job creation and then you reward those job creators, you attract jobs, you hold jobs; you reward those companies that are loyal to the employees that they have within their businesses, and they do not leave for Indiana, Wisconsin, Michigan and Ohio, which are the very states that the PC caucus hold up as the epitome of what kind of economy we want to create in the province of Ontario.

Interjection: Heinz.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Heinz went to a state that had a job creator tax credit, and they received almost \$500,000 for doing so.

Fact number 3: Small businesses are significantly different than large corporations and should be treated as such. Small businesses—the member from Nipissing has decided not to mention this—have actually received the relief that this Bill 105—they have actually received it positively, because they lobbied for some tax relief, and we listened to them.

Now, I'm going to be able to speak a little bit more a little bit later on, but it was my pleasure to share Fife's finance facts.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, we had really hoped for a discussion on a bill to reduce taxes for some 60,000 small businesses in Ontario. Instead, the first three quarters of the member for Nipissing's dialogue were devoted to basically a self-promotion effort for what appears to be a blog. Now, it's parliamentary convention, Speaker, that a member is not allowed to use the name of another member, but the convention is actually silent on whether

the member can use his own name. One actually wonders about that. Though I was tempted to call it the focus on fiction, I think I'm going to stay within parliamentary convention and I'm going to call it the Nipissing notes on nothing.

While we listened to the meanderings, we talked about something that was completely off-topic. In that spirit, I would remind the member he cannot complain about the competitive edge of the Federal Republic of Germany. Now, according to today's Globe and Mail, "Germany's electricity costs are among the highest in Europe, approximately 40 cents per kWh compared to 10 cents in Ontario."

Let's come back to this bill. This province needs these reforms to keep Ontario the most competitive place in North America in which to do business, and that's right. Although the member incorrectly asserts the opposite, Ontario has the lowest tax rates in the Great Lakes and Midwestern States and the optimum cost of doing business right here in North America's industrial heartland. We want 60,000 Ontario businesses to get a tax reduction; clearly, he and his party do not.

Speaker, thank you very much for the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I found this hour by our finance critic captivating, explaining how Bill 105 removes the tax exemption for family business. I realize that Bill 105 does nothing for some very bad news that we have received today in Norfolk and Elgin. Trillium Railway will cease to exist December 20. Their clients include Cargill AgHorizons, Norfolk FS in Courtland, the Growmark fertilizer plant in Delhi, the ethanol plant in Aylmer and Tillsonburg businesses, including Johnson Controls, Wellmaster Pipe and Supply, Kissner Group, International Beams and Future Transfer Company.

This is very bad news for our area. This was a short-line railway. Short-line railways were fostered and breathed new life about 20 years ago. We're debating Bill 105. It will do nothing for these companies, especially those companies that are losing the exemption. Given the urgency of this matter, I do ask this government, I ask the Minister of Transportation to pick up the phone and talk to the federal level of government. See what you can do to not only maintain this rail line, but we wish that we could see an enhancement of the main line to bring it up to the 285,000 required by many of these businesses to raise the—285,000 pounds, the weight that could be carried. A lot of these cars are running on a lower weight.

So very bad news today, Speaker, and it falls hard on the heels of our area just recently losing Georgia-Pacific about a week ago and the Bick's Smucker's operation in both Dunnville and Delhi.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My big concern about this bill, Bill 105, is not the content, in the sense that we have been for a long time asking this government to consider not exempting companies that are making \$5 million in

payroll or more. That idea was something the NDP has promoted and supported.

The issue I do have with this bill, though, is, when it says “small business act,” it purports to be something far greater than it really is. The act does only one narrow thing: It provides a recognition that small businesses are different than large businesses, but only provides a way to address that in one narrow fashion with the employment health tax. What we really need to see happen, in a meaningful way, to acknowledge the difference between a small business and a multinational corporation is that we need a concerted effort to create policies broader than one singular exemption. We need to create policies that would create a climate that allows small businesses to flourish. We need to do more than one tax exemption and look at a broader way to encourage small businesses, which we know are the primary drivers of new job creation.

1710

What we really need to see is a true small business act which would actually create strong incentives to support the entrepreneurs in our society, that would create incentives for small businesses and that would support family-owned businesses in our communities, because they drive our economy. We need to do something to assist them, and we need to make a clear distinction between those multinational, billion-dollar or multi-million-dollar corporations and the very successful mom-and-pop shops and smaller businesses in any field, whether it's technology, health, law or business. We need to encourage them and support them in a meaningful way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's it for questions and comments. I return to the member for Nipissing to reply.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I would like to thank the members from Kitchener–Waterloo, Mississauga–Streetsville, Haldimand–Norfolk and Bramalea–Gore–Malton for their further contribution to Bill 105.

Earlier, we heard from the member from Beaches–East York. In his summation, he talked about being accused of delays and that type of thing. I, too, want to weigh in on that, because we have indeed seen a delay here. The Liberal government sent this to a committee that they knew was chock full. It delayed this bill by two weeks as they kept tinkering with it being at that wrong committee, when the finance committee was free and able to hear what you would actually expect—a finance issue.

Instead of finance, they sent it to another committee that was seized with hearing the Pan Am scandal. The purpose of that was to try to jostle the Pan Am scandal off the agenda and get this in. They lost—wasted—two weeks of time, and now they're scrambling, so when I hear this disingenuous comment that, “Oh, you're wasting our time,” that type of thing, I have to say that I take umbrage with that, because it is indeed the Liberal Party that has wasted the time by sending it to a committee to try to block the Legislature from dealing with yet a different important issue, the Pan Am scandal.

Speaker, I wanted to talk to you about that in the two minutes that I had here, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the member for Nipissing to withdraw his unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I withdraw, Speaker.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to speak briefly to Bill 105's third reading. This has already gone through committee. I must say—many of you in this room would not know this, but it was not a particularly effective committee session that we had with regard to Bill 105. We had no delegations speaking to this, which was somewhat disappointing and a little bit surprising.

Actually, the member from Nipissing—before I forget this point, he made mention that the Liberals were delaying it a bit. There were some games played, but actually, when the member from Nipissing came to the committee session, he was outraged that the committee was meeting on Monday; usually we would meet on a Thursday.

That outrage turned out somewhat misplaced, primarily because the House leaders—I guess the Conservative House leader—had pushed this forward. They wanted Bill 105 to come to the floor. They wanted this debate at the very end, and yet we've seen very little support for it, which is unfortunate, because there are good pieces in this bill.

I did actually want to speak to the bill, for a change. The bill says that currently there is an exemption for paying the employer health tax on the first \$400,000 on an employer's payroll. This applies to a business with one employee or to the Royal Bank of Canada. The NDP has long argued that, while the exemption is appropriate for small companies, there is no reason to have that first \$400,000 of a large employer's payroll exempted from the employer health tax. Therefore, one of our budget demands was to have companies with \$5 million in payroll or more no longer eligible for the exemption. This was partly included in the bill.

However, I do want to point out that the government half-listened to us on this. They said, “Okay, the big guys aren't going to get any more, and we're going to put the ceiling up to \$450,000 on the little guys.” I do think that the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton actually made a very good distinction. When people talk about small businesses and then medium-sized and large businesses, the lines were fairly blurred, as you could tell from the member from Nipissing's exchange. But they said, “No, 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 made would have saved the treasury some \$90 million. We thought the \$90 million was far better spent on either paying down the deficit or on some social programs around housing or welfare costs or people in poverty or some other good purpose it might be used for. We hear the good causes each day during

question period, when we don't get any answers on these issues. There are developmentally challenged citizens in our community who don't have the resources they need; they certainly don't have housing or transitional supports. There are special education needs in our education system. This \$90 million, we thought, could be used to either pay down the deficit or address some much-needed investment in our communities.

To my friends from the Conservative Party who say this is primarily just our idea, really it isn't, because the bill that's before us is not the bill we proposed. Our bill would have been stronger. That said, when we did actually go out and consult on this, we heard from small businesses that they welcome any kind of support, because things are fairly dire. We are desperately trying to hold those businesses in our communities. We are also trying to demonstrate to them—because small and medium-sized businesses are the key drivers in the economy, so they do need some support.

Some of our concerns originally were that by increasing the amount of the exemption from \$400,000 to \$450,000, the new threshold doesn't raise any new revenue, so one would wonder, "Is it enough? Is that \$945 a year enough of a break for small businesses?" Again, those small business—the very small ones—welcome any relief. That said, there's still a lot of work before us as the Legislature.

The government must be sure it also has closed off all the possible ways of segmenting the workforce for payroll reporting purposes, which has been a problem in the past. This is definitely a concern going forward for us. We have seen some flaws in the thinking around implementation. We have seen some failed implementation strategies from this government on everything from full-day kindergarten to green energy to chemotherapy drugs in the health sector.

So we are going to be making sure, as this legislation moves forward—and it should come to a vote this Thursday; there's absolutely no reason for us not to get this done before the House rises. In a minority government, there's all the more reason to get things done and to show and demonstrate to the people of this province that we are actually serious about the economy and that we are serious about supporting small businesses, even if Bill 105 really could be called the Slightly Supporting Small Businesses Act.

I thought that was funny, but, apparently nobody is listening.

Mr. Michael Prue: I liked it.

Ms. Catherine Fife: A little bit of humour. Come on. It's a long afternoon.

We also use this opportunity to have a broader conversation and debate about taxation. There is a range of other tax loopholes that could be changed that we'll be pursuing.

The Liberals claim that the provincial government needs to hit household budgets with new taxes to raise \$34 billion for transit infrastructure by 2031—we have some serious concerns about that—yet at the same time,

the Liberal government has committed to a series of new corporate tax loopholes and giveaways to Ontario's largest corporations and highest income earners that will cost Ontario's treasury over \$35 billion by 2031. You can see where that money is coming from and where that money is needed. Just as an example, beginning in 2015, the government will open a \$1-billion corporate tax loophole that will give Ontario's largest corporations an HST rebate on expenses like high-priced restaurants and box seats. This is completely misplaced. It should not be a priority for this government. We've seen that corporate tax breaks do not generate jobs. They are an ineffective tool at creating confidence in the economy. Thus, we have a lot of corporations holding on to that money and not reinvesting it in expansion or even staying in the province.

1720

Another concern that we have around tax loopholes is, beginning in 2018, planned cuts in corporate tax rates from 11.5% to 10% will cost the treasury \$800 million per year—again, misplaced. Beginning in 2018, planned tax cuts only for individuals earning over \$500,000 per year, at a cost of \$470 million a year—and you will remember that this was one of the concessions that we negotiated in our first budget. When we came to this place, as a minority government, we decided to be respectful of the fact that the people of this province sent a minority government here to Queen's Park. We decided to try to put the priorities of people forward throughout the budget process. Certainly, in that round of budget, we were able to secure transition funding for child care and, obviously, the planned tax cut only for individuals earning over \$500,000. It's going to be reversed as of 2018—again, another loss of revenue for the province.

This is about finding some balance in the way that the province works with regard to taxation. We really do think that there is room for improvement, from a fiscally responsible perspective, to ensure that there is some corporate tax compliance, which obviously connects to Bill 105, in that we are making a slight change in the employer health tax.

Over the years, the Attorney General and Drummond—Mr. Drummond also made these recommendations—and other commentators have pointed to a number of problems with Ontario's tax collection system. The greatest challenge to the province relates to the ability of corporations to eliminate or decrease payment of provincial corporate income tax through creative mechanisms, including the shifting of profits and losses across Canada to avoid or reduce taxation in the province where income really was earned, which is where it is supposed to be taxed. We haven't seen the vigilance and the oversight that the Liberals have promised for a number of years in this regard. We haven't even seen them make a true commitment to controlling public sector CEO salaries or bonuses or perks or what have you. They missed an opportunity last week to support Andrea Horwath's private member's bill in this very regard and to demonstrate that they have a shared concern, as we do, in those

skyrocketing benefits and salaries of CEO public sector employees—and I tell you, the public at large has no patience for it whatsoever.

Moving on, just again on corporate tax compliance as it relates to Bill 105, currently corporate groups can use complex transactions to transfer losses among subsidiaries and across provincial borders. This should be a concern to all of us. These transactions can also be used by corporate groups to shift income from Ontario to lower-tax jurisdictions than Ontario, even though corporations benefit from public services in Ontario. There has to be some oversight in this regard. We are nickel-and-diming small and medium-sized businesses and families, and yet we're letting huge corporations not pay their fair share. This is not something that should be too onerous for FSCO or for the Minister of Finance to put in play. People just need to pay their fair share, especially when they are benefiting from the current infrastructure that this great province has to offer. We have noticed, over the years, that this government seems to be losing focus in this regard.

We've seen today, actually, this announcement that has come forward around capping CEO public sector salaries—that they're going to share it in the spring, and yet they make the announcement today, and certainly, earlier on, the media had some good questions about the timing of that. They are the government. They can introduce whatever they want, *per se*, today. If they really, truly cared about reining in public sector CEO salaries, they could do so today, just as they promised two years ago that they would do. With regard to future direction and the way that we are looking at the way that we generate revenue, certainly, small and medium-sized businesses in my riding are extremely concerned around the confidence of this place. By signalling to those people across the province that indeed the province is serious about reining in those costs, that would go a long way, I think, personally.

In the committee, it was also really interesting because the PCs introduced a number of amendments. Obviously, we're not going to support an increase to an \$800,000 exemption because we originally proposed \$400,000. So we didn't even think they would try to come to that committee with a rational or reasonable motion. And certainly, when they introduced the “robbing Peter to pay Paul,” the new title of Bill 105—of course, they were ruled out of order because it was deemed making a mockery of the process.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes, I didn't even think there was a ruling that involved deeming an amendment a mockery to the parliamentary process. I can only assume that this is the same team, who came up with “robbing Peter to pay Paul,” this title—it's the same creative writing team that has their leader and other members of their caucus get up and pretend that they are defenders of the middle class.

Certainly, when you dig deeper and read the white papers, their right-to-work—

Mr. Steve Clark: Discussion papers.

Ms. Catherine Fife:—discussion papers or conversation papers—another panel; I don't know. But their right-to-work direction that they hope to take this province—which is definitely an aggressive attack on the middle class if you do value the history of this province and you can acknowledge how much the labour movement has contributed to the economy and to those strong middle-class jobs which support the entire economy of this province. So it has never made sense to me that you attack the very people who are supporting and strengthening the economy.

Their right-to-work paper, for me, is just another reason to bring in their overall goals of lower wages, less-safe working conditions, no benefits and no pension. It is essentially a race to the bottom. In fact, actually, recently I had a member come into my office. She is one of those highly paid union workers. She makes \$36,000 a year; she works in the education sector. She said to me that she has a genuine fear of that direction. When members of the PC caucus get up and they talk about the great economy of Wisconsin, Michigan and Ohio—

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Oh, good. I needed a break.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I think the member for Kitchener–Waterloo is not speaking to Bill 105. She's rambling on about other matters.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would acknowledge the member's point of order. As I said with the previous speaker, I remind the member for Kitchener–Waterloo that her comments have to revert back to Bill 105.

The member for Kitchener–Waterloo has the floor.

Ms. Catherine Fife: So what she said actually was that she wants to invest. She wants to buy a house. She'd like to buy a car. She is genuinely concerned around the harshness, the aggressive talk again about the labour movement. I think those small and medium-sized businesses that will benefit, if not slightly—maybe not as much as we would want them to. They want that worker to go to their store and buy their products. They want the community at large to have enough disposable income to actually help them stay in business. It is a cycle. You cannot take these issues in isolation.

Of course, one of the reasons that we brought forward Bill 105 is to motivate this government to think more broadly about the values of small and medium-sized businesses and to make sure that we do give them some relief. Certainly, if they had followed more of our advice, the job creator tax credit, which has proven to be an effective tool, would have also made a lot of sense, especially for small and medium-sized businesses. When you reward the job creators, they pay it forward, and we've seen that time and time again.

1730

As I was listening to the member from Nipissing earlier in his Fedeli Focus on Finance, I was really thinking about—

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: There was a lot of talk about how you could use those acronyms.

But I'd just like to go back to Fife's finance facts: Corporate tax cuts have not created more jobs. The Liberals have tried again and again and again and cut, cut, cut corporate taxes. It has not worked, and you need a rethink on that, which is why we definitely want a refocused attention on the taxation system in the province of Ontario, and around compliance. I mean, there are literally billions of dollars to be found if this government did their job on oversight on compliance around taxation.

As I mentioned, the job creator tax credit does work and it should be used. We have seen companies go south of the border to be rewarded with a job creator tax credit. Small businesses are different than large businesses, and you have to acknowledge that as you look at the taxation model.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 105 has been through a long journey. This government has had since last spring to bring it forward. We're going to rush it through this week. But you know what? We have had extensive debate on it. We have certainly not held it back at all. We want to make sure that the people who have small and medium-sized businesses recognize that this place is actually doing something in their interest. Some of that committee talk may be inside baseball, but it just shows you that people in their respective parties need to refocus their attention back out to the rest of the province.

We, of course, are pleased to support it. We're going to make sure that it's held to account, that there is some transparency to it. We can only hope that, going forward, we can find some consensus on other ways to support small and medium-sized businesses. It's a full-time job getting the Liberal government to do what they said they were going to do in the first place, but we keep showing up to work and hoping for the best.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for her comments. Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, is a nice and good piece of legislation. Sixty thousand small businesses in Ontario will benefit and will have their taxes cut starting on January 1, 2014. We on this side of the House do share some concern that if things don't sort of settle down in the Legislature this week, this piece of legislation may not get passed and, as a result, those businesses would not see this tax reduction beginning only about two or three weeks from now.

I've been in the Legislature this afternoon for a little while and I've listened to some of the previous speakers, and I have heard, I think it's fair to say, an attempt to marginalize the legislation a little bit in some ways, to make it sound small, short and insignificant in terms of the impact it would have. Of course, as I've said before, this is not the only piece of legislation that our government has brought forward over the course of the last 10 years that has in a very significant way supported small businesses in the province of Ontario.

People have heard about the job numbers. We all know about the recession, but the reality is that not only

have we recovered all of the net jobs lost since the pre-recession peak, but we've actually increased them by about 200,000. Since coming to government in 2003, there are about 700,000 more jobs in Ontario than in 2003, and 70%-plus of those jobs are full-time jobs. Those are facts that nobody quibbles with in the Legislature. I've never heard anybody challenge those numbers.

The point is and the reason a lot of that has happened is that it is not just this piece of legislation that we've brought forward to help small businesses. There is the capital tax elimination that we brought in. There is the reduction of the small business tax rate, from 5.5% to 4.5% and I think down to 4%, if I'm not mistaken, significantly beyond the 20% tax reduction for small business; the corporate tax reductions; and the biggest single thing to help businesses in the history of the province of Ontario, the single tax rate, which the official opposition voted against, which we on our side of the House are still trying to figure out.

So this is one piece of a comprehensive suite of tax reduction measures that we've brought forward over the course of the last several years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to have a couple of minutes of questions and comments for the member from Kitchener-Waterloo on her speech. I know that some of our previous speakers today, especially our critic, the member for Nipissing, spoke about the small measure that the bill would provide small businesses. I believe he used the figure of \$75 a month that it would provide. You have to give credit where credit is due; it does provide a small break.

I think a lot of times we're not talking about the other consequence, and that's the exemption threshold for businesses with payrolls over \$5 million. The minute this bill gets royal assent, they're going to have a tax increase. I think the member for Nipissing called them out for who they are in our communities. They're the people who run our businesses like Canadian Tire, like our Independent Grocers in our community. Those are the people, I suggest, who are the job creators. I just went through a number of business-of-the-year awards through our local chambers of commerce, and those were the people who were creating jobs, who were expanding in the communities. And now, with royal assent, the tax hindrance that this will cause those businesses—again, I think that we're missing the boat.

Last week, I stood up for a small cheese maker and a pancake house in my riding that was being terrorized by MPAC. There was a newspaper story in my local daily newspaper about 730 Truck Stop, a business that supports about 100 jobs in Edwardsburgh/Cardinal township. The MOE had their application for expanding for eight months. They cashed the cheque back in August; they now tell me they're not going to get an answer until the spring. That's the type of impediment we need to cut, and we need to make sure that we stand up for local businesses in our communities and not beat them down, as this government has done time after time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's my pleasure to stand up here and give my comments on the member from the Kitchener–Waterloo, who described very well the committee process. That's something I think we forget when we're debating bills in the House. Absolutely, our voices are heard in the House and people are watching, but a lot of the times, constituents don't watch the committee channel. Oftentimes that's broadcast, and that's where the real work is done on bills.

It's disappointing to hear that during that committee process the Conservatives were playing games with regard to the bill. Just making the insinuation that you rob Peter to pay Paul—that's not what committee work is intended for. Committee work is intended to strengthen these bills and to give good, productive feedback so that when this bill comes back to the House, it's the best that it can be. Then we can debate it further, and then hopefully that streamlines the process so that we can vote on this bill and make small business thrive a little better.

Though this is a small bill, it is going to help small business. It does give them that employer health tax, so I'm glad that the committee work was done on it. I'm glad it's back here for third reading, but I don't think delaying the bill is really in anybody's interest, since it is going to help small business in our communities. We all know, as we've said many times before—many members—that small businesses are our driver of jobs in our neighbourhoods, so we need to make sure we do support the bill. This is a small step forward, Speaker, into doing that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Scarborough–Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise in support of Bill 105. Mr. Speaker, we heard from my colleagues from Thunder Bay–Atikokan and London–Fanshawe. Both talked about the importance of passing this bill before we recess for the holiday.

Most of us in this chamber also recently, on November 30, supported what we call “Shop the Neighbourhood.” So if those of us stood up and supported shopping locally—this is what this bill is all about, Mr. Speaker. At the end of the day, this bill, if passed, would enable small businesses an opportunity not to be paying the employer health tax.

More importantly, if we do support local businesses, we are also supporting our neighbours. Many of us have these local neighbours owning local businesses, and through this bill we're providing an opportunity to make sure that small business continues to thrive and prosper.

1740

I'm encouraging members from all three parties to move this bill forward because it already passed second reading. It's gone through the committee's clause-by-clause. I keep hearing today that people want to amend certain clauses of the bill. Well, that's just really funny, because we've already done that through the committee. Why are we having criticism of the bill when we already went through committee?

Before I conclude my remarks, I want to encourage each one of us to do the right thing for every small business in Ontario because this bill is the right thing for all of us to support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's it for questions and comments. We return to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you to the members from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Leeds–Grenville, London–Fanshawe and Scarborough–Agincourt.

I think we need just a few facts on this because there's some rhetoric around what this actually will accomplish. There is an employer health tax exemption on the first \$450,000 of payroll, which applies to all employers, large or small. Employers pay the employer health tax as a percentage of the payroll. While this exemption is arguably legitimate for small businesses, it makes no sense to exempt larger employers with thousands of employees, like banks and large corporations, from paying the tax on their first \$450,000 in payroll, and the new payroll exemption threshold will be set at \$5 million. With that threshold level, you're likely looking at continuing the exemption for all employers with 100 or fewer employees.

This will benefit small businesses—60,000. We do need to signal that we are supportive of those small and medium-sized enterprises, and we do need to get this passed before the House rises.

Certainly the amendments that came through committee, I absolutely agree with the member from London–Fanshawe that they were not helpful amendments. There was no true effort on the part of the PC caucus to effectively change or improve this piece of legislation. Just like the two budgets before them, they essentially just sat on the sidelines and made jokes about changing the title, “robbing Peter to pay Paul,” written primarily by their creative writing team, the same team that says it supports the middle class when they do not.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: One problem we see with Bill 105 is that this government seems unwilling to take this far enough. They're unwilling to really take any decisive action with respect to tax relief, not only for Ontario businesses but for customers of those businesses and communities that those businesses operate in.

What we see in this legislation, if anything, is a bit of tinkering with tax rates and exemptions, but it's not going far enough to solve what I consider not only an economic crisis but also a jobs crisis and the attendant deficit and debt crises. Ontario's economy is in trouble and this government's budget is in trouble. We've got well over 600,000 people unemployed. We've heard this time and time again in this Legislature. So many others have given up looking for work, and so many others are presently on the Ontario Works program. So it's going to take some very bold action to get people back to work because we're losing so many businesses in the province of Ontario.

The bad news continues. This is an issue that affects not only my riding but the member for Oxford and the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London. This is news that came out in the media today. Trillium Railway, which is also known as the St. Thomas and Eastern Railway, will cease operations December 20. This hits our local area very hard. It reverts back to CN Rail. Trillium clients—and again, there's quite a list of industry and businesses here. I mentioned this earlier in this House. Clients of the railway include Cargill AgHorizons and Norfolk FS. They're both located in Courtland. The Growmark fertilizer plant of Delhi is also in my riding. The ethanol plant in Aylmer—this is of concern, obviously, for our member from Elgin–Middlesex–London. Integrated Grain Processors Co-operative's ethanol plant set up not that long ago actually, Speaker, and again, an industry dependent on this rail line.

The member for Oxford has been informed about what's happened in his town of Tillsonburg. I'm the former MPP for Tillsonburg and certainly maintain an interest in that particular town. Tillsonburg businesses affected: no more rail service for Johnson Controls, Wellmaster Pipe and Supply, Kissner Group, International Beams and Future Transfer Company.

Again, my question to this government, to this Minister of Transportation, most specifically—we need advice. We are asking for any options that are available, most particularly, any action taken by this government to maintain this short-line railway. It reverts back, as I mentioned, to the CN Rail line now. It runs from St. Thomas to Delhi. It's known as Trillium Railway; that's the St. Thomas and Eastern Railway. There are problems with the railway trestles.

We hear so much about government grants from the other side. No money is forthcoming that I'm aware of. In fact, the owner of the short-line railway had requested assistance to actually raise the capacity of the main line to 283,000 pounds, again, to allow expansion for those industries, that list of businesses that I just walked through.

Agriculture and agribusiness, as represented by the ethanol plant and these fertilizer plants down our way, is key to our local economy. It was an economy actually once anchored by tobacco. Regrettably, Dalton McGuinty destroyed our tobacco economy. We have seen the destruction of our cucumber economy and everything that goes with that. The farm labour, the fellows who come up from Jamaica and from Mexico, as well as the German Mexican Mennonites: They're now out of jobs with the demise of the Smucker's Bick's plants located in Dunnville, and also the Delhi tank farm, the brine farm.

We're not growing pears or peaches anymore in Norfolk; we've lost CanGro down in Niagara. Just a week ago, the announcement that Georgia Pacific—this is the gypsum mine in Caledonia. Not many people realize that mines exist in southern Ontario. Both Caledonia and Hagersville are mining towns. At Georgia Pacific, 67 employees have been idled. We don't know if and when that company is going to come back.

We have a situation, Speaker: Despite prolonged unemployment, the loss of companies—even with that—this province uncannily, oddly, faces a skilled-labour shortage, and some of these ineffective economic development programs we hear so much about are not helping any of these industries. They're certainly not going to help those industries that found out this weekend that they have lost their railway. You really don't see any concrete evidence from these economic development programs. You really don't see any results. You get the odd announcement from the other side.

We've also got to take a look at non-productive corporate welfare as well.

It doesn't end there, Speaker. More troubling trends over the past decade: Ontario has experienced a net loss of leading global companies. I mentioned Smucker's; I mentioned Georgia Pacific, just in my riding alone. I think, obviously, of GM Diesel in London, the electro-motive plant. That's the one that went to Muncie, Indiana.

Yes, Indiana is a right-to-work state. The question out there now is, how many other companies are moving to states like Indiana or to Michigan, also a right-to-work state? Very clearly, Ontario is in trouble. The economy is in trouble. Their budget is in trouble.

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It took over 60 years for Detroit to lose 270,000 manufacturing jobs. Ontario has just lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs in the last 10 years. As with the devastation in the bankrupt city of Detroit, those lost factory jobs aren't coming back. We've got to work very hard—we have to go beyond Bill 105—to create 300,000 new jobs to replace those that are lost in the factories. What has this government done? They've put 300,000 extra people on the provincial government payroll.

So closed plants, lost jobs, families struggling to survive—it's an inevitable outcome of a number of factors not addressed by Bill 105—runaway power costs, out-of-touch labour legislation, over-regulation and a failure of government to understand what entrepreneurs need to succeed. In the last few years, Ontario has truly lost its way. We've become a province of smaller dreams, bigger government—obviously; our economy is limping along, and government spending is racing ahead.

It's been 10 years. We're experiencing what I consider an extraordinary economic decline. The facts speak for themselves: 600,000 people are out of work, rapidly escalating energy costs, historic deficits, a doubling of the provincial debt. I know down my way, Mr. McGuinty is known as Dalton the Debt-Doubler, and he comes by that reputation honestly. You double a provincial debt, it stifles job creation, puts a burden on future generations and it subtracts money away from investing in infrastructure, whether it be subways or roads or bridges or railway trestles. You subtract that money from infrastructure, and, again, it raises some other questions that I have for this government.

We have a situation in Caledonia. It really doesn't matter which way you go from my riding—to get to

Toronto, for example—you've got to cross the Grand River. In the vicinity of Caledonia, in Haldimand county, there's a big question mark out there. We have one bypass bridge used by trucks; it's not used by townspeople. We have a very old, very beautiful, beautiful bridge. It's really the trademark of Caledonia. It has been neglected for the last 10 years. There's a call for another bridge downstream. We have to find out from this government what the status of bridge maintenance is, or perhaps future bridge construction in Caledonia. Hagersville, just down the highway on number 6, is a trucking town. It's in Haldimand county. All the trucks go through the centre of town; they go down the main street. Again, the question remains, the outstanding question: Does this government have a plan to build a bypass around Hagersville? Do they have any money left? This is the concern.

It has been 74 consecutive months now that this province has had a higher unemployment rate than the national average. Again, I'm not sure if Bill 105 is going to help in this regard. Our credit rating has been downgraded. Will legislation that takes away that tax exemption from family-owned businesses help with our credit rating? Once-mighty Ontario is now considered a have-not province; it receives equalization payments from the federal government, as we all know. Again, we're experiencing a net loss of not only small business, not only the medium-sized family business; we're losing leading global companies. I mention Georgia-Pacific, right in my riding, right in the mining town of Caledonia; John Deere, one of the largest farm equipment companies in the world; the Heinz corporation; Hershey's; Siemens; Caterpillar—global companies—once with plants in Ontario and, in recent years, they've gone overseas or more particularly, gone to states like Indiana and Ohio, and, I expect in the future, on the way to Michigan.

We can't afford that. We can't afford a future where the money that's desperately needed to invest in infrastructure, productivity and in job creation is being directed to pay for electricity bills, to pay for high energy bills.

A lot of good jobs are going unfilled. We still have these outdated apprenticeship rules, in contrast to other provinces across the Dominion of Canada.

The current tax system, again, which we're debating this afternoon in Bill 105, is complex. It consists of arbitrary rules, and it seems designed—certainly with respect to the business taxes we're talking about today—to discourage any effort towards enhancing productivity. There's really no encouragement to invest in a higher rate of productivity. We're obviously losing that battle, in particular with the United States. Manufacturing is coming back in the United States.

It's not only tax policy, as we discussed this afternoon. There are a number of broad areas to address. It's not only business taxes. We have to address income taxes. We have to address consumption taxes, the HST. We have to deal with outdated labour legislation. We have to deal with the rising cost of energy. We have to deal with

the plethora of rules and regulations and forms to fill out, the bureaucratic red tape that not only suffocates business; it takes the fun out of doing business. It takes the fun out of running a farm.

Government regulations have become the growth industry now, and it's one that almost seems designed to create jobs for bureaucrats—300,000 new government jobs, 300,000 people added to the government payroll. At the same time, we witnessed the loss of 300,000 well-paying, by and large unionized, factory jobs, jobs where you make the big money and you're not doing it on the taxpayer's dime.

Why do we see 300,000 new government jobs if we don't see the private sector jobs? There's a serious problem here. Not everybody can work for the government. In fact, 80% of the people in Ontario don't; eight out of 10 jobs are found within the private sector. Granted, unionized or non-unionized, they make considerably less money than a government job when you look at total compensation. In fact, if you look at wages, salaries, pensions, perks, gym memberships, early retirement and levels of absenteeism, it's a much better run if you've got a government job, by about 30%. I think we need something in this Legislature to deal with this unfairness. We hear other parties talk about pay equity. Where's the pay equity between private sector jobs and public sector jobs?

Better roads, better rail, rapid transit: They're all required in the GTA, Hamilton and across the province of Ontario. As I mentioned, we're losing a railway in Norfolk and Elgin and Oxford. Hagersville is a trucking town; all the trucks have to go down the main street of town for lack of a bypass.

There are actually barriers to trade that continue within this province. We stand out as far as looking at the rest of the country. Every province, for example, seems to have their own rules and regulations for trucking. I know that the western provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, for example, are harmonizing these rules and streamlining them. It's something we have to take a look at as well.

We really shouldn't have to be debating—it's almost like we're debating whether we're going to have a manufacturing sector or not, whether we're going to have agribusiness, whether we're going to have mining or forestry. We must have this primary industry. We need petrochemical. We cannot lose our steel industry.

We've lost our coal-generated electricity generating industry. That's primary industry. I'm very proud of the fact that for the last 40 years, the Nanticoke generating station, the largest coal-fired generating station in North America, operated in my riding. Our government cleaned it up. We put in the selective catalytic reduction units. We used low-sulphur coal. Lambton put on the scrubbers to take out the scrubber, and also put SCRs on their units.

This government came in. In 10 years, not one move—not an inch—towards cleaning up the coal plants that were providing very inexpensive electricity in the province of Ontario. When this government was elected,

the price of electricity for the consumer was 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour. Coal was producing it for about two or three cents a kilowatt hour.

We need jobs; we need real jobs. Granted, we know about the 300,000 government jobs. We have to create that demand for additional real jobs.

This legislation is a bit of a baby step, a bit of tinkering around a tax exemption for small business. If you're running a small business with that kind of tax exemption, there's a temptation to remain as a small business, because if you go to a payroll of over \$5 million, you lose that exemption. This is an unintended consequence of a piece of legislation like Bill 105 that clearly hasn't been thought out.

Under Bill 105, very simply, it means that Ontario businesses, the family-owned businesses that our finance critic was talking about recently, those with \$5 million or more in payroll, will no longer—

Mr. Phil McNeely: A point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): A point of order: The member for Ottawa–Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Mr. Speaker, I think we should be following the discussion on what we're supposed to be on, this bill. The coal discussion didn't seem to me to be pertinent, that they want to bring back coal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): To be relevant, the debate has to be respectful to the bill that we're debating. We are debating Bill 105 and I heard the member for Haldimand–Norfolk mention Bill 105 just before he was interrupted.

I return to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes, I'll just finish that sentence: Bill 105 means that Ontario businesses with \$5 million or more in payroll—it was about here that I got interrupted. There was a bit of a time delay there; we see this on satellite images coming from other countries. But anyway, Bill 105 means that Ontario businesses with \$5 million or more in payroll will no longer be able to claim a tax exemption on the first \$400,000 of their payroll, thus increasing taxes on family-owned businesses.

We have to get manufacturing back on its feet, Speaker. We've got to bring back mining; we've got to bring back forestry. We're heading in the right direction here, but to tinker around with something that is relatively insignificant as far as the big picture I just find kind of regrettable, Speaker.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1803.

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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