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Mercredi 11 décembre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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Wednesday 11 December 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 11 décembre 2013

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING SMALL
BUSINESSES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À SOUTENIR
LES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 10, 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 Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke still has the floor.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I believe I get another 20 minutes—oh my goodness, I'm down below two. I do not have as much time as I expected. I finished the debate yesterday, but I wanted to start it today.

Of course, we saw the auditor's report yesterday, and that doesn't give us a whole lot of solace as to the kind of mismanagement and blindness that's going on in this government.

I think at the end of the day, when it comes to the electricity bill, this government is going to regret their arrogance, is going to regret the way that they treated the people of Ontario, particularly last week, when it was the government's position that they as much as scoffed at the public, saying, "What's the problem? So we blew \$1.1 billion on some gas plants. Don't worry about it. Don't worry about it. It's only a cup of coffee a year." First of all, the numbers are wrong. But, Speaker, it's the attitude of those people over there that somehow \$1 billion should just be forgotten.

Let me put it to you this way, Speaker. If the Royal Bank is robbed—a guy comes in and steals \$1 million from the Royal Bank; let's say \$1 billion—across all the depositors, it may not mean much to each depositor. There's a lot of money in that bank. But I'll tell you this: When they catch that crook, he's going to jail.

What happens to the people in this government when they take \$1 billion and put it onto the ratepayers? Apparently nothing. They laugh and say, "Don't worry. Be happy. It's a cup of coffee a day." I think they will rue the day that their arrogance got the better of them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Questions or comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always an honour to speak in the House and to follow the whip of the Progressive Conservative Party, whom we affectionately call "miracle whip."

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's cool whip over there.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Cool whip, here.

In speaking about small business, what I would remind my friends to the right here is that, really, what we want to do is see this bill move along at this point, so we're happy to do questions and comments. We will not be putting up other speakers to it; we would like to see this put into action before the break.

If this Liberal government really wanted to do something for small business, there's a whole lot of things they could do, this bill being a very tiny step in that direction. In fact, small businesses are hurting way more than they ever have. All you need to do is speak to small business to discover that simple fact. We had pushed for a lessening of the business education tax. They met us halfway on that. But certainly more needs to be done. MPAC assessments on businesses are now completely outrageous and through the roof. That is an agency that needs overhauling. Other agencies do as well.

This is a government—and of course the Progressive Conservatives are in league with them—that can quickly get together their forces to pass a bill like the EllisDon bill. That can happen in a couple of weeks. But when it comes to doing anything for small business, of course it takes months, if any action is taken at all. We know this is a government of the mall and not of Main Street. We know that the Progressive Conservative Party says they are for small business but actually support big business; i.e., again back to the EllisDon bill. What we would really like to see is somebody standing up for Main Street, and that's what we in the New Democratic Party stand up for.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I'm pleased to comment on the honourable member's speech. I unfortunately did not hear the first part of it yesterday, but listening today, what I didn't hear him mention was the fact that if this bill is passed, 60,000 small businesses in Ontario will have their taxes cut starting January 1, 2014—it actually seems to be a cry that I hear from the opposition all the time, to lower taxes, particularly for small businesses. So I'm standing here a little bit confused as to why the PCs are not wrapping up third reading debate.

We've had several hours of third reading debate. I stand to be corrected, but I believe there were 16 hours of debate at second reading and the bill has not been amended at committee, so it's essentially the same bill. My question to the honourable member is: Can we wrap this up? Can we pass this bill and allow small businesses to have their taxes cut?

I totally respect the fact that the opposition may have more things to put on the record in debate, which is why I gave them an opportunity on Monday night and Tuesday night, and indeed, I will give them an opportunity tonight to sit till midnight, with a commitment that we will call this bill so that every member of the PCs can put their thoughts on the record about how important it is to cut taxes.

With that, Mr. Speaker, questions and comments: My question is, why can we not either let this bill pass or allow us to sit till midnight so they can all speak and then allow the bill to pass?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I was here for the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke yesterday, and he was, to some extent—there was so much yelling back and forth that he was distracted, unfortunately. I hope I didn't participate in that, although he did give me a little slap on the wrist on my way out.

But he did make the point that if this reduction in the onerous taxes on small business in Ontario was that good, our position was that they should have increased the threshold. Our critic Mr. Fedeli said it in committee. We moved eight amendments, all of which were turned down. One was to increase the threshold. This bill does \$400,000 to \$450,000. Our suggestion: If it's that good, increase the threshold to be exempt up to \$800,000.

But the really punitive measure in this—it's very important for the viewer to understand this, because most of the Liberals don't understand it—is that once you reach a threshold of \$5 million in payroll, you don't get any of the exemption. So it's actually an increase on the upper scale. Now the reduction in taxes they're talking about is about \$60 a month, which won't pay for the global adjustment on their electricity bill. So it's a tax on a tax that they're doing in the first place.

I think that even the NDP, in all fairness, realize that small business in Ontario is the only business left. I looked at the media today. The latest headline—important, if people get their Globe and Mail; a good article here—talks about “Kellogg Plant a Casualty of Changing Tastes.” Well, the changing tastes are the taste of this government's punitive action on business in Ontario. That's the story.

The electricity bill—electricity is non-discretionary consumption, meaning you have to use it. Now they've increased the price to the extent that it's putting people out of business. That's the reality. It's putting people out of their homes, potentially, and I'm quite disappointed. Bill 105 should pass if, for instance, they'd just look at some of the amendments we put forward.

0910

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

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's always great to stand here. I've listened with some intent here this morning to the comments made by my fine whip, Mr. Yakabuski, from the great riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, and of course Mr. O'Toole, from the great riding of Durham. We had a lovely breakfast this morning, and I want to thank him for his companionship on that.

The NDP pointed out that our party, the Progressive Conservative Party, is against small business; we're for big corporate business. Mr. Speaker, I want to put on the record that the Progressive Conservative Party is for all business. We're for employment; we're for getting good jobs back here in the province of Ontario. The policies that the Liberal Party is putting forward are detrimental, and I'd like to say what the member from Durham pointed out: that the high, skyrocketing price of electricity is driving manufacturing out of this province. Our leader, Tim Hudak, made the very good point that these are not jobs that are going to Indonesia, China, Brazil or developing economies; these are good, middle-class, paying jobs that are going to Ohio, Michigan, New York, stateside, into the province of Quebec and elsewhere.

This Liberal government shows no responsibility, no accountability to the taxpayers. We've seen scandal after scandal come forward in this House, whether it's Ornge, eHealth or the gas plants. Mr. Speaker, this government needs to go.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has two minutes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member for Parkdale–High Park—the whip of the third party, who I affectionately call cool whip—and the government House leader, as well as my colleagues from Durham and Northumberland–Quinte West, for their comments.

I want to respond most directly to the House leader, who didn't hear the address yesterday, but we talked about it extensively. First of all, we made an offer to the government to pass this bill yesterday. The government turned us down. We understand that. So we offered yesterday. The other thing is, we also brought amendments to clause-by-clause when it was in committee—government House leader, you must be aware of that. We were going to raise that threshold not to \$450,000 from \$400,000, where you're changing it by \$50,000, but to raise it to \$800,000 so that all payroll up to \$800,000 would be exempt from your punitive health tax—which, by the way, you brought in as the biggest tax increase in the history of Ontario.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I remember that.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I remember when you promised not to raise taxes.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You have a very selective memory, I say to the House leader.

We brought in that amendment. You know what happened? The government said no. They turned us down.

We brought in a further amendment—because they made a change here so that everybody who has a payroll over \$5 million—which is like those folks who are losing all the jobs at Heinz and Kellogg's etc. They're going to lose any exemption for the punitive health tax that the McGuinty Liberals brought in so many years ago, after promising not to raise taxes.

So if you're going to have a memory, I say to the House leader, you can't be so selective. Your record in supporting business of all sizes in this province is deplorable, and they're voting with their feet. Shame on you.

It's about time to bring a jobs plan into this province. Tim Hudak has one. Why don't you take a look at it?

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I stand today to speak to Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act. Of course, that's the tax that the McGuinty government imposed in their first term in office, as was mentioned by my friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. When they were just elected, they imposed this tax on the people of Ontario.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member for Nepean–Carleton.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Explain it outside.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I spoke to this bill during second reading debate. At that time, I spoke about the wide array of problems with this bill. Sadly, through the whole process—and we had hoped this would happen in committee—nothing changed; no amendments were accepted.

For instance, first the government has not addressed the new limit on exemptions. With this bill, any company with a payroll over \$5 million will no longer be eligible for the employer health tax exemption. Mr. Speaker, can you imagine a company that's looking to expand and their payroll is \$4.5 million? They can't afford to expand because at the point they get over \$5 million, they now have to pay the employer health tax for all their employees, and that increases their cost of production. Again, that was an amendment that needed to be made and nothing was done. In other words, it's a tax increase for companies that employ many Ontarians. The more they employ, the higher the tax rate.

Just yesterday, we saw another 500-plus jobs lost at Kellogg's in London. That is on top of the Heinz closure in Leamington, devastating a town and costing nearly 1,000 jobs because the climate for doing business in Ontario was not conducive to keeping those plants there. The closure of CCL Industries in Penetang, costing another 170 jobs—and just last week, we lost another 650 in Bradford with the closure of the Faurecia auto parts plant. Again, all these plants are closing and the production is going somewhere else, south of the border. These are all large employers that would see their taxes increase with the passage of this bill. If these large companies are

leaving now, imagine what will happen when we increase their taxes again, Mr. Speaker.

When policies like this are combined with increasing hydro costs and red tape, it's amazing any of these businesses can survive in Ontario.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sit down, please.

I don't get it. They're quiet; the third party's quiet. Your gentleman's standing up doing it, and to three people I've had to say, "Be quiet." Let's have a little respect for the person speaking. Come on, you guys know better. You can go outside and talk about this. I can't even hear him for you two are right beside him—and he's in your own party.

Carry on.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I very much appreciate those comments because I do believe it's an important issue, and I would hope that my colleagues would be listening.

I just want to say that when policies like this are combined with increasing hydro costs and red tape, it's amazing any of these businesses can remain in Ontario. We should be encouraging growth and creating policies that welcome investment and business to our province, not new taxes like the ones in this bill that drive companies away.

I just want to point out, as was mentioned by the government House leader about not talking enough about the benefit in this bill for small business—I want to say that I do support the bill based on it will help small businesses. But I'm pointing out the challenges we are facing with businesses that are not small or small businesses that are trying to become larger businesses.

A few weeks ago, when I spoke to this bill at second reading, I brought up the story of Dale Hurley, a local entrepreneur in Oxford. He started off by sorting pop bottles and then opened his own grocery store in Ingersoll. That store grew into a superstore that employs 185 people. With the new limit on the employer health tax exemption in Bill 105, Mr. Hurley would no longer be eligible for the tax credit. Why? He employs too many people.

Our province is in a time of need. We've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs under this government and had the lowest wage growth of any province in Canada. Instead of encouraging local small business owners to become successful like Mr. Hurley, we're telling them, "Grow, but not too much." Mr. Speaker, this bill will cost a lot of jobs.

To fix this, we proposed an amendment to eliminate the \$5-million cap on the tax exemption; however, the government voted down that amendment in committee. The government voted to raise taxes on our province's largest employers.

The second major problem with this bill is that the increase in the employer health tax exemption is so small. It will only raise the exemption by \$50,000. At a decent job, that's one employee. That is not significant to

help people stay in business; that's not enough to help Ontario's companies. This bill is not a plan for revitalizing the economy; it's just grandstanding.

The exemption was created to help ease the tax burden on small businesses. If a company is on the brink of closing, this increased exemption will do very little to help.

0920

The non-taxable \$50,000 in this bill wouldn't have kept Kellogg's in London; it wouldn't have kept Heinz in Leamington, CCL in Penetang, Xstrata Copper in northern Ontario, Faurecia in Bradford, US Steel in Hamilton, Caterpillar in London, E.D. Smith in Seaforth or CanGro in St. Davids. Not one of those would have been saved by this bill or would have been positively impacted by this bill. Every one of those would have been negatively impacted by this bill. Sadly, they're not there anymore to be impacted at all.

If a slight increase in tax exemption is the best this government can do to keep jobs in Ontario, sadly, we'd better get ready for more closures. Instead of just pointing out problems with Bill 105, our party put forward solutions. Instead of a meagre \$50,000 increase, which may save some companies a maximum \$1,000 a year, we proposed an increase of the exemption to \$800,000. By doubling the exemption, thousands of additional businesses would experience savings. Imagine how a small business would benefit from a \$400,000 increase.

We are not just putting forward bills with nice names. We're not just focusing on public relations. We're not just holding conversations. We are putting forward concrete proposals that would help businesses grow and create jobs. Our party continues to bring forward policies that have a meaningful, positive impact on Ontarians. We have released 14 white papers with detailed plans for improving our province, including the manufacturing sector. Businesses agree with our position on this bill. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business wrote in a letter that "Ontario's employer health tax 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." That's from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Despite our efforts to help strengthen our manufacturing sector, the Liberal members voted down our amendments in committee.

So let me sum it up. This bill will tell small businesses that growing is a good thing, unless you grow too much. This bill should be renamed. This bill should be called the "supporting small businesses unless they become too successful act."

I ran a small business in Oxford for nearly 30 years. I never had to operate a business with all this unnecessary red tape and today's skyrocketing hydro costs. The average Ontario household will see their hydro bill increase by \$30 a month, according to the Minister of Energy. That's \$360 a year for the average home that uses 800 kilowatt hours a month. Businesses and manufacturers use far more than 800 kilowatt hours a month; Heinz used more, CCL Industries used more, Kellogg's used

more. For the few companies that qualify for this exemption increase included in this bill, the minimal savings will not be offset by the extra hydro costs.

I've heard from many farmers in Oxford—some of our very small businesses—about the rising cost of hydro. They are affected by these burdens, too. Some 97% of Ontario farmers reported that they are affected by the recent hydro increases, and 60% said that the impact was going to be significant. The point is that increasing a tax exemption for small businesses by \$50,000 is nowhere near enough when the government is still increasing operating costs for those very same businesses.

The Premier has told the agri-food businesses that they need to double their output, yet she is doing nothing to address the challenges that they're facing. Some 70% of them told me in our survey last year that they are significantly impacted by rising hydro rates. One of those, incidentally, was Heinz in Leamington. They filled out a survey and said they had problems with red tape and they had problems with the escalating hydro costs and it was becoming harder and harder to maintain their status in our community in Leamington.

When asked about the closure—and this is to Heinz—Warren Buffett, who owns Heinz, said, "It's really a question of having an unprofitable plant and concentrating production in a more profitable plant.

"The tomatoes are going to go to the plants that have the low production costs."

Since it wasn't Leamington, again, we must remember why it was that they left. It was because of the burden that government puts on that plant.

Ontario hydro prices are too high and still increasing. That is directly responsible for the loss of jobs in our province. Despite this, the government wants to raise taxes on large employers with this bill. It just doesn't add up.

Another burden small businesses are facing is the increase in red tape. As I mentioned, that was one of the things Heinz said was problematic for them. There are over 380,000 regulations on small businesses. There are countless government forms to fill out. For small business owners, every minute they spend filling out government forms is a minute they spend losing money. This bill does nothing to address these problems.

The Alliance of Ontario Food Processors recognized this when they wrote in their October report that the regulatory burden "often obstructs growth initiatives, investment, and speed to market."

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business agreed. In fact, this January, they will be promoting the fifth annual red tape awareness week. Red tape suffocating small business is a massive problem. The CFIB reported that 68% of farmers and 62% of small business owners are discouraged from growing their businesses.

The increase of a tax exemption does not address the fact that small business owners are being tied up in red tape. On average, an Ontario farmer spends nearly four standard 40-hour workweeks on government forms. The employer health tax exemption should be raised because

the businesses are having to hire people just to fill out this paperwork.

Red tape and hydro costs are two of the major burdens hurting small business. Although the tax exemption may help, it is far too little. It's a band-aid solution to a significant problem.

The PC caucus recognized this. We tried to fix this bill through amendments by doubling the exemption from \$400,000 to \$800,000 and eliminating the cap on larger employers. Both of these amendments were rejected by the government, at the expense of our small business owners. Bill 105 does not address the larger core problems business owners are facing every day. Before any more businesses close their doors, this problem needs to be solved today. Standing here talking about making these small changes is not going to help save the businesses that are on the verge of going out of business.

The act may have a good name, but it's not good policy. Ontario's small business owners and taxpayers expect more from this government. They have a right to expect more from any government. They have to have a plan, a jobs plan that will help them not only maintain—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Mississauga—Streetsville—a little loud.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman:—maintain their status as of today, but to create more jobs. As was mentioned in a number of the other ones I've already mentioned, if we have an environment in this province that is not conducive to investment, not only will we not get new investment to get more jobs here, but we will even lose the investment that we already have.

Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is the last day this Legislature will be sitting before Christmas, unless of course the government agrees to extend the session, as we've asked. For many people this is a happy time of year, but not for the families in Leamington who are facing unemployment; not for the families of those who work at Kellogg's—people like the woman who tweeted yesterday, “My dad amongst 600 fathers/mothers who just lost their job announced in the holiday season from the billion dollar company—Kellogg's,” people like the single mom who said yesterday, “We were told a month ago there would be some layoffs and cutbacks but everything would be ok. Now they tell us right before Christmas. Where are we going to go? There's no jobs around here.”

They're wondering how they are going to pay the bills by this time next year. These are the people who got their notices this week at Kellogg's. They don't want to spend money on Christmas presents because they don't know if they need to save the money to keep the lights on or to keep the house heated.

0930

It's not just the employees; it's the small businesses that are suddenly seeing that customers aren't coming in and aren't spending money, and wondering if they will survive. It's the farmers who no longer have a market for their tomatoes. It's the many suppliers to the plant—this is, of course, to the Leamington plant for the ketchup fac-

tory. This bill does nothing, absolutely nothing, to help those people.

Instead, I want to repeat the request our leader, Tim Hudak, made yesterday: Let's extend the session for a week so that this government can finally table a real jobs plan, one that will help those families.

Every week, it seems that we hear of another plant closing, another business leaving Ontario. The government has said that Bill 105 will help these companies but, Mr. Speaker, I have not heard from a single company that has said, “I was going to close my doors, but now that the government is increasing the exemption just a tiny bit, I'm going to stay.” It just isn't happening. Instead, I'm hearing from businesses who are saying, “With these high hydro costs, with the red tape, with the cost of doing business in Ontario, I just don't know how long I can keep going.”

One of the Kellogg's employees said yesterday, “There will be a trickle-down effect on the whole area. There seems to be a mandate to bring a lot of business back to the United States.”

I heard from one food processor who said he and his wife are struggling to keep the company going, and that he hasn't been able to buy a new suit in years. That's the sacrifice that our hard-working small business owners are making, Mr. Speaker. They deserve more from this government. They deserve a real plan to help grow business and create jobs. They deserve a government that is willing to make the tough decisions, put off Christmas break, and for once put the interests of the people first.

Red tape and hydro costs are two of the major burdens hurting small business. Although the tax exemption may help, it is far too little; it's a band-aid solution to a significant problem. The PC caucus recognized this. We tried to fix this bill through amendments by doubling the exemption from \$400,000 to \$800,000 and eliminating the cap on larger employers. Both of these amendments were rejected.

Bill 105 does not address the larger core problem business owners are facing every day. Before any more businesses close their doors, those problems need to be resolved. The act may have a good name, but it's not good policy. Ontario's small business owners and taxpayers expect more from government; they expect a plan.

I would hope that my presentation will have helped further the mindset of the government, that they will consider making sure that we stay for another week and they come forward with a jobs plan that will actually address some of the challenges that we're facing—not only to have a plan that will help the people who have already lost their jobs, but to do everything we can in this place and in the province of Ontario to make sure that we stem the tide of the ever-increasing speed by which our plants—particularly our food processing plants—are closing in this province of Ontario. I would hope that we can work together to help those people so at the very least, next Christmas season is a little brighter for the people who will be losing their job between now and then.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to have a few words on Bill 105.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to speak in this House on behalf of my constituents in Timiskaming–Cochrane. And for myself, it's an incredible honour to be able to follow my uncle. Over the years, I have often asked my uncle for advice, and I've listened intently to his words—some of which I agree with, some of which I don't. But I'm going to ask a few questions.

He said several times that this bill is not good policy. Yet yesterday, his party moved a motion to pass it, and because they put a couple of other things in, the unanimous consent motion didn't go through. If they are intent or satisfied to pass this bill, why do they continue to put speakers to it? Perhaps he could explain the procedure to me, but if they quit putting speakers to it, debate would collapse and we could have a vote.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, they are saying they have to debate the bill, but yesterday the party was willing to let the bill go through without further debate. Yet today, we are back to debating.

Mr. Michael Harris: John, nobody cares about the process.

Mr. John Vanthof: And obviously, some of the members of the Conservative Party say that no one cares about process. Some of us, who actually take this Legislature seriously—the New Democrats do take this process seriously. And I also believe that my uncle takes this process—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sit down.

It's getting a little loud in here. I'm going to yell order, then I'm going to start getting a little serious, okay? So cut it back a bit, and no cross debate. You know to go through me. Okay? Continue.

Interjection: You're out of time.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh. Sorry, Speaker.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to agree with the member for Oxford. He made a very important observation. He was talking about Kellogg's, and he said—and he's absolutely right—that one of the big factors in the closure was government red tape. And I have to agree with him. Government red tape is a huge problem. It's interesting: In the *Globe and Mail* today, in the business section—it's page B10, second paragraph in the bottom article. Mr. Myers, the senior executive at Kellogg's, describes Ontario as very competitive and fairly competitive on all fronts. He said that we're one of the best jurisdictions to do business in in the world. When asked about why Kellogg's was closing, he pointed to the federal government.

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Now the Tories hate to hear this, but let me say why he's closing. It is the federal government's red tape at border crossings and foreign affairs and international trade that is obstructing—the third paragraph, the president. So it is the federal Con-

servative government's border regulations that are causing the problem. He then identified the second reason why they're closing: the higher Canadian dollar and federal fiscal policy and monetary policy.

So if you are so possessed and you think—and you're right. Why don't you phone your federal cousins? These people in the opposition want us to adopt the American policy—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Northumberland–Quinte West.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: A 7% reduction in Kellogg's US operations, a closure of a plant in Australia—we have twice the job creation rate of the United States: a 173% recovery compared to 85%. What they're producing and what their federal cousins have already caused is a growth job rate that is half of what ours is. They want us to go back and adopt the policies of Mr. Bush and the right-wing Conservatives that plunged us into this recession.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You're right. It's all about your red tape.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The minister, when I say “thank you,” knows what he has to do, doesn't he? Thank you.

The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened carefully and respectfully to the member from Oxford, and I have great regard for his concern and his understanding of the agricultural or agribusiness sector, having served for some time as the Minister of Agriculture for the province of Ontario and worked, indeed, with the federal government on many of the risk management programs that we do enjoy in Ontario today. But he does make the relationship for jobs in agriculture, when he's trying to tie it in to the unfortunate Christmas decision at Kellogg's.

I would say the Minister of Infrastructure had part of the story—it was two lines in this half-page article, which I'm reading. This is the article in the *Globe and Mail* that he referred to—and I have great respect for him. Now the headline in the paper—the minister should be listening to this, through the Chair, of course. It says, “Rising Energy Costs a Concern for Ontario Manufacturers.”

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: He skips over the real evidence from all of the businesses in Ontario that we're hearing.

We're fighting over the newspaper. I read as well as you do and have great respect—and I think he's ignoring—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister had his time, and now he wants to take the member from Durham's time. So we'll be quiet, won't we? Thank you.

Continue.

0940

Mr. John O'Toole: I think, really, another point that was made here was the sort of thoughtless response by the Minister of Energy. The Minister of Energy, when

asked about the 42% increase in energy costs, in his response to the poor people at that time—I'll read it here shortly. It says that "Minister Bob Chiarelli said last week that for the average family, the \$675-million cost of cancelling the Oakville ... plant works out to a cup of Tim Hortons coffee—or a 'miniscule' \$2 a year...." That's how they think of things—

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

Mr. John O'Toole: —and that's why we're still talking about this bill.

Thank you for the extra couple of minutes—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you for stretching it another 10 seconds.

The member from Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I did listen to the speech made by the member from Oxford, and one of the points that he and many of his Conservative members have proposed is that we increase the exemption of the employer health tax from \$450,000 to \$800,000. This is the party that eliminated \$13.4 billion of corporate tax cuts in an eight-and-a-half-year period, including income tax cuts to the very wealthy, and they are now pursuing the same course by saying that the exemption should move from \$450,000 to \$800,000, which would be a loss to the treasury of half a billion dollars every year.

Now, I know these folks believe themselves to be good fiscal managers. They haven't been, in our experience in this Legislature, and they're proposing to add half a billion dollars to our debt without any evidence that in so doing we would be creating jobs. There has been absolutely no evidence that in having lost \$13 billion under their watch by their former Premier Mike Harris, it created any jobs whatsoever, and they continue to pursue a logic that simply hasn't worked and doesn't work.

I wonder whether the member from Oxford could cite any evidence that could show us that perhaps they're moving in the right direction with that proposal, because we New Democrats believe it's wrong-headed. We think that keeping the threshold at \$450,000 is a good thing. We had proposed \$400,000; the Liberals decided to move it up to \$450,000, but to do anything more than that, we believe, is not reasonable, sensible or practical, and I wonder whether the member from Oxford could speak to that.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, the member from Durham and the member from Trinity–Spadina for their comments.

Obviously, the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane was very generous in his comments on a personal basis, so we will have a pleasant Christmas dinner at least over that. But I just want to point out that he mentioned the fact that we should quit debating because everything had been said. As I said in my presentation, I will be supporting the bill when it gets to third reading, but I think

it's really important, I've learned over the years that I've been here, to talk for the people who are negatively impacted by this bill and who would be losing their jobs or have lost their jobs and to talk about what we could do to prevent that from happening. That's why I think it's so important that we have this debate and continue to have this debate, so that every member who wishes to speak to it has that opportunity to speak on behalf of their constituents and the constituents that are affected by these things. So thank you very much for your kind comments, but I thought I should explain that.

The member from Trinity–Spadina asked a question, too, and I would ask him, in turn, to point out where tax increases on business have ever created a single job. I can say and I can assure you that your number will be lower than where tax cuts have created jobs—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Oxford might want to talk through me.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: —and a comment to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: I think it's rather interesting that he did miss the main part of the story, which is the ever-increasing cost of doing business in Ontario. In the Heinz survey I got back, that was the number one thing they said was going to make it difficult for them to maintain their business or to grow their business in Ontario, and obviously the end result of that was, it didn't happen.

The other thing I would just point out to one of my colleagues—and I just want to put it on the record. He talked about the exchange rate. I want to point out that in 1977, the Canadian dollar was worth \$1.15. Both Heinz and Kellogg's—

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: —survived that—

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: —and they can't survive this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you means thank you.

Point of order from the member for Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'll ask for unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Oakville has asked unanimous consent to move a motion regarding Bill 105.

Is it the pleasure of the House that it carry? I heard a no.

Now we have another direction to go in: Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I'm now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Yes, debate should continue.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: The government has asked for more debate, so we'll give them that.

It's an honour to stand here and speak to Bill 105. I think, as my colleagues have previously stated this morning, including the member from Oxford, it's our opportunity to actually speak on behalf of those folks who are affected by the bill. I'm glad I have the opportunity to stand and speak to this bill, as it actually does impact many of the folks in my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga in a variety of ways. Obviously, the bill would propose to increase the exemption amount from \$400,000 to \$450,000 for the 2014 to 2018 calendar years, with the amount to be adjusted each year starting in 2019.

It was interesting, though: The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure talked about the fact that he's blaming the federal government for some of the previous plant closures we've heard about this week. It's quite sad. Over the last few weeks, in fact, we've heard about the plant closures of Heinz, putting some 400 people out of work in Leamington, Ontario; and yesterday, of course, the 500-and-some hard-working Londoners who will be displaced at the Kellogg's plant. That announcement came right before Christmas, obviously, throwing a wrench into hard-working families' plans as they come upon the Christmas season, a season of spending time with family. I know the member for Oxford had an opportunity to dialogue with his family member here, and I'm sure there will be more vigorous debate over the turkey and stuffing in his household with regard to this bill.

I find it interesting: In fact, I believe we were to debate Bill 91 this morning, the Waste Reduction Act, but that was pulled for some strange reason. I really do believe it's the cumulative effects, such as Bill 91 or Bill 105 or the Green Energy Act, that actually are driving businesses out of Ontario into other jurisdictions. The member for Toronto Centre talked about the fact that it's the federal government's fault.

You know what? I'll give you an article that was posted by Chris Vander Doelen on Saturday: "Who Really Killed Heinz?" It talks about Bill 91. "Was Ontario's blue box recycling program the final blow that killed Leamington's Heinz factory and its 740 jobs? It was at least a factor in the company's decision." We've talked about Bill 91 being a massive new regulatory scheme that will impose massive new costs on food producers, manufacturers and consumers, just like Ontario's Green Energy Act killed potentially four jobs for every job it created, according to former Ontario—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, folks, here we go again. Your member's up, and we've got three sidebars. The member from Halton, the member from Burlington and the member from Durham, we've got three sidebars when your member is speaking. I can't even hear him. It just seems to be a pattern. Can we please keep it down? If you want to have sidebars, go outside. It would be nice to hear your member speak. Thanks.

Go ahead, member from Kitchener-Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker. It actually gave me an opportunity to notice the clock. I initially thought I was speaking for 10 minutes, but I'll take the 20 for sure. I know my colleague from Durham is always looking for more time, so he did pass off a few articles here. Hopefully, I'll get a few of those on the record for him.

0950

What I was really going back to was an article by Chris Vander Doelen in the Windsor Star on the weekend, talking about the unfortunate loss of 740 jobs at the Heinz plant and a new bill that was potentially to be debated this morning, Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act—that cumulative impact, adding a new regulatory burden on perhaps manufacturers, especially within the food and processing segments of our economy. We heard the devastating impact of more jobs being lost out of Kellogg's yesterday in London.

Chris Vander Doelen goes on to write here, "As I wrote about Bill 91 back in August, 'It will probably cost thousands more Ontarians their jobs in the private sector when its full effects finish cascading through the economy.'"

It goes on to talk about the fact that the government hasn't performed a cost-benefit analysis on particularly Bill 91. As I had mentioned earlier, the auditor stated in his report on the Green Energy Act that there was no cost-benefit analysis done.

You look at Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act. It's those cumulative effects that eventually—businesses look at their overall expenditure in each jurisdiction and say, "Hey, listen, we're no longer competitive here compared to plants elsewhere."

Look at some of the local manufacturing facilities in my area of Kitchener-Conestoga. Long-time, entrenched employers in my community like Kitchener Frame, formerly known as Budd Automotive, just down the street from my place on Homer Watson—you drive by, and the plant is levelled; there are heaps of concrete and rebar. They're ripping that place down. At one time, it employed 3,000 people. They shut down April 23, 2009.

You look at the BFGoodrich plant around the corner from my house as well. It made tires for years, employing thousands of people. Where did they go? They moved to the United States.

Just recently also, just down the street, Knappe and Vogt, formerly Waterloo manufacturing—over 230-some people—the plant has relocated. Where? Grand Rapids, Michigan.

We're shedding these jobs left and right out of our province, and why? Well, of course, the minister will blame it on the federal government, but we have to take into consideration high hydro rates and the regulatory burden on employers.

Bill 105 actually discriminates against or impacts employers with a payroll over \$5 million. These folks are the ones employing people in communities like London or Leamington.

So back to the bill: We talked about the fact that the Ontario PC caucus is the only party with a real plan to

free businesses from the tax and regulatory burden this government has placed upon them so that they can actually create new jobs and make investments—not only creating new jobs, but retaining the ones we have. Sometimes we hear about creating new jobs, but what are we doing to retain the jobs that are here? Time and time again, we're hearing small, little announcements here and there, but what is the government doing to retain those good jobs in communities like Leamington, Windsor, London, Kitchener–Waterloo, Belleville and northern Ontario?

We need an actual plan. We've actually called for the House to continue sitting next week so that the government can bring forward a jobs plan that addresses the real concerns, the real issues that employers in Ontario actually are facing—not symbolic bills that do nothing, like shutting down the coal plants, which is already happening by the end of 2014, to make sure Al Gore and his friends are happy. That's a symbolic move that isn't really required. They already have the tools necessary. We don't need symbolism; we need action—today, now.

As I said, this bill—we obviously have some issues with it. We'll be addressing it as we continue on further.

As my colleague from Nipissing stated in his time, he rephrased the bill and called it the “supporting small business while we stick it to them in a hundred ways act.” That's what I would officially call the bill. I know the government likes to throw these fancy names on the bill, but that's what I would call it.

This government, day in and day out, dreams up new revenue tools. This is a tax-and-spend government or, more precisely, a “spend first, tax later” government. This government in the last 10 years has doubled our debt. It took 20 Premiers and 136 years to reach a debt of \$139 billion. Today, in just 10 years, our debt is \$273 billion. That's more than double, Speaker.

I know the temperature dipped quite low this morning on my walk in to work, so folks will have their heat, no doubt, fired up right now at home. We naturally expect our energy bills to rise, but this government decided to tack on an additional cost to our energy bills, starting back on November 1. How is this government supporting small businesses when actually, they're taking two blows to the knees, in the month of November, for businesses' energy bills?

Ten years ago, we paid just 4.4 cents a kilowatt hour. With the global adjustment, we now pay double that at 8.72 cents a kilowatt hour. You know what? It's like telling mom or grandma to do their laundry at 2 in the morning. We can't go to our manufacturers and say, “Hey, put everybody in the lunchroom during peak hours and we'll come back and make the cereal at off-peak hours.” It just doesn't make sense. In fact, the government is using our electricity sector to support a range of shifting policy objectives without credible examination of whether burdening the electricity ratepayer with the cost of such initiatives is economically efficient.

Just yesterday, we heard about the waste at OPG, top executives making an absurd amount of money. The pen-

sion ratio of 4 to 1 or 5 to 1 is insane. I mean, hard-working Ontarians having to foot the bill for that is absurd. They come to me and say, “What the heck is going on? No wonder my hydro bill is going up.” These guys are making crazy amounts of money. They reduce their overall employee base by 8.6%, yet the pay for these high-paying executives goes through the roof. The waste is unbelievable.

The power plants: People say, “A billion dollars to not even generate one kilowatt of power? What is that going to cost me?” Somebody should be in jail, yet not one person was demoted or fired; yet you, the taxpayer, will continue to pay.

I talk to a lot of folks, small business people. When we bring up the health tax credit, we talk about the College of Trades. This is another government priority that, unfortunately—they should be encouraging good job creation and stimulating economic growth, not creating new fees and more barriers for our workforce. Instead, the Liberals created yet another organization with additional fees for small business called the College of Trades. This trades tax has driven up the cost of doing business for professionals working in more than 155 skilled trades. Barbers, hairstylists, they're like, “Why do I have to pay this? This is crazy.”

WSIB premiums—this was last January: WSIB coverage for independent operators, sole proprietors, partners and partnerships, and executive officers of corporations is no longer optional; it's now mandatory. Bill 119 captured more small business people to pay mandatory premiums, who would be unlikely to ever claim for injuries. It's small business people who have construction companies. Office employees, who will never go to the site, are now forced to pay this. Many of them complain, saying that they've already calculated this risk into the cost of their business and have their own insurance to cover them, should there ever be an incident.

We talk about Bill 91. Of course, we heard earlier this year about the tire tax, another tax targeted onto hard-working Ontario farmers—the massive tax hikes this year that we've seen, the Drive Clean program continually gouging Ontarians when they go to renew their licence. I mean, the cost goes up and up.

But Speaker, I want to go back to Bill 105. The proposed bill, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, just doesn't do the job of fixing the last 10 years of wasteful spending and the price we've had to pay on countless Liberal scandals. Perhaps the Liberal government should be more interested in helping small businesses than in putting their own interests first.

Apologies do not get us out of the red. Unfortunately, the Premier has had many of these to give, but I don't see our credit rating going up each time she holds another press conference to say sorry. Instead, a culture of entitlement has been fostered by this government at the cost of hard-working Ontarians—as I had mentioned, the \$1 billion-plus cancellation of the power plants, but also the \$1 billion wasted over at eHealth to fund flights around the country and PhDs, and the hundreds of millions of

dollars wasted over at ORNGE. We've heard more about that, and I'm sure we're going to hear more about ORNGE this morning. This is truly disturbing, when people are dying because of improper decisions made by executives, who shouldn't be spending our tax dollars on lavish Christmas parties or fancy boats or Harley-Davidsons. Speaker, this is not only backwards, but it's just plain wrong.

1000

As I mentioned, the Auditor General reported yesterday on the waste over at OPG. But her first opportunity to speak before the Legislature was a report that she had done on the cancellation of the Oakville gas plant, the seat-saver program that cost roughly a billion dollars, tacking it onto the hydro bill of Ontarians and those small businesses and employers across Ontario who will eventually have to foot that bill.

Speaker, overall Bill 105 hurts the ability of businesses to compete in the global marketplace by adding to their input costs. It supplies special rules for registered charities and for a group of employers associated with the registered charities. It allows the minister to make regulations providing for special rules that apply to employers who are or are associated with registered charities. We have concerns, of course, about the minister's ability to make subjective changes through regulations around these charities when they cannot properly manage the public purse.

It's similar to Bill 91. We asked the government to table a cost-benefit analysis, or asked them if they'd done one before tabling such legislation. We have not been able to get an answer, of course, on that, and that's probably why the bill was pulled today: a lot of negative publicity with regard to adding more costs to manufacturers, especially in the food processing industry, which we've heard has shed some major jobs this past week at Kellogg's and Heinz just a few weeks ago. To do these cost-benefit analyses, to do the proper research—they're like, "Hey, don't worry. We'll figure this out later." Well, that's not good enough.

Businesses need certainty. The uncertainty of new regulations is truly what's frightening employers across the province. It's that uncertainty that could come at any time—hydro rates, regulatory burden, administration and paperwork—that's all involved in this.

So we talked about those concerns. This bill, like hundreds of Liberal self-serving policies, doesn't support small business like it should. We talked about the changes—in fact, we asked for the bill to be passed yesterday, but we talked about the changes that we felt were necessary to bring that threshold up much further so that we're not penalizing those employers who actually pay the bills and support hard-working families in Ontario. By bringing it from \$400,00 to \$450,000, you're actually hurting the folks that have payrolls over half a million dollars. It's crazy to think.

The member for Oxford mentioned some comments from some folks within the riding and some of the comments on the hard-working folks at Kellogg's who have

worked for decades at the plant and who will, unfortunately, have to weather the storm and will be out looking for new jobs. In fact, London, Ontario, is one of the jurisdictions that has one of the highest unemployment rates within Ontario. We hope for the best for those folks to ensure that they're able to support their families throughout the year.

Again, we've called for a jobs plan. We're asking the government, let's sit another week. Let's see what they've got. Instead of tabling symbolic legislation, we've asked for a credible jobs plan. We've even said, "Hey, steal ours." We've talked about this. We've proposed our ideas through our recent white papers. I encourage the government to have a good look at those, and we're happy to have them steal our ideas.

Now is the critical time when we need the government to act. Far too often, we read headlines: in Windsor, talking about the departure of Heinz from Leamington's; just yesterday, the Kellogg's plant in London; Bick's pickles, gone; Knappe and Vogt, from Kitchener; Kitchener Frame, formerly Budd; Schneiders Foods, a major local employer in my area, and more than 1,200 hard-working folks within the Kitchener-Waterloo area will be affected by that; John Forsyth Shirt Company; as I'd mentioned before, BFGoodrich, which made tires; E.D. Smith; Sunoco; Lance Canada; Ledco in my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga, just around the corner. These folks are packing up, not to ever be back.

You drive down Homer Watson Boulevard in Kitchener and you see the old Budd plant that employed up to 3,000 at one time. I remember the guys just packing the Tim Hortons in the morning, going for coffee; they're nowhere in sight. It's being ripped up, and they're putting a commercial plaza in. Those well-paying jobs will never be back there again, employing some 3,000 people at one time.

That's why we're asking the government to bring forward a plan. We'll give them an extra week to see it. They can steal our ideas all they want, but we have to act now. To sit there and blame the federal government on border crossings and the high Canadian dollar—as my colleague stated, in the 1970s the Canadian dollar was over \$1.15. Did you see Heinz and Kellogg's running out of the province then? What is the dollar today? It's below par and yet they're departing. That argument is not valid.

Interjection: It's moot.

Mr. Michael Harris: It's moot; you're right. It's a moot argument.

What's more important is the regulatory burden that we hit to our businesses; the high hydro rates; the labour policies that we have in Ontario that are archaic. It's just a cumulative effect that eventually drives these businesses out of Ontario.

I'll wrap it up there. I look forward to hearing comments from my colleagues, and we'll go from there.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's a pleasure to rise in this House on behalf of my constituents in London West and respond

to the comments from the member from Kitchener–Conestoga.

I've only been in this House since September, so a relatively short time, and I have to say, I've seen some wonderful things happen. I've seen members from all three parties join together to identify priorities and to move forward to make sure that there's legislation in place to address those priorities.

But I have to say, I am somewhat confused by the process, by the political games that have been played on this important piece of legislation. We've all agreed that it needs to move forward. The member from Kitchener–Conestoga has commented that this Legislature should be focusing on jobs. My community has been devastated by the loss of jobs at Kellogg's. We need to make sure that the business of the House is moving forward. Instead, despite all the debate that has taken place, we see the PCs continuing to put up speakers to this legislation when we have all agreed that it's important, that small businesses need it and that it should move forward.

I'm learning a lot about what goes on in this place. I'm not too sure about the strategy that's behind this, but I really think that we have identified something that would help small businesses in this province and that we have an obligation as MPPs who represent our communities to try to move forward and take action when we can. This legislation should be passed now.

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this important matter in response to the member from Kitchener–Conestoga.

There is an article from the *Globe and Mail* that has frequently been mentioned as it relates to Kellogg's. Let me read the entire paragraph for fairness' sake, so that we're not picking and choosing a sentence here and there. This is what this very important, critical paragraph says: "Energy costs, which are relatively high in Ontario and going up, are a concern in Ontario, Mr. Myers said." That's Jayson Myers, the president and CEO of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. "So are labour costs, though he said the province is fairly competitive with other jurisdictions. The bigger factors are the still-elevated currency, which has put companies at a competitive disadvantage, and regulations surrounding border crossing that drive up costs for businesses."

That's the quote, Speaker. I just wanted to let you know that even the business groups are saying that federal jurisdictions around border crossings is a major concern.

Now, this is comments and questions, so I do have a few questions for the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, through you, Speaker, and also to the other members of the PC caucus who have been talking about this issue of taxes in Ontario.

1010

I want to know: How did the PC Party vote when it came to Ontario reducing its corporate income tax rate

from 14% to 12%, and then to 11.5%? I would like to know how the PC Party voted when we reduced the small business corporate tax from 5.5% to 4.5%. I want to know how the PC Party voted when the Ontario government totally eliminated the small business deduction surtax from 4.25% to zero. I also would like to know how the PC Party voted when we totally eliminated the capital tax on all businesses, whether they make money or not.

I would like to know the answer to these questions, because the answer is "no" every single time. I would like to know why they voted against those tax cuts that would help businesses in our province.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I did listen respectfully to the member from Kitchener–Conestoga. He did speak and tried to relate the impact on families at this time of year, not just at Kellogg's but Heinz and other people who employ good-paying jobs in Ontario. Let's keep it at that level, because, quite honestly, the Minister of Labour just spoke; he doesn't realize just how hard it is for the people of Ontario.

It's not just the electricity price. It's not the cup of coffee that the Minister of Energy said. Even your remarks are inaccurate. You actually had promised to reduce the corporate tax rate and backed away from it. You should understand your own policies. It's a failed experiment. They actually have no consistency and certainty in their policy. That's the real issue here: Consistency, certainty and stability would encourage investors in the province.

The member from Kitchener–Conestoga, in fairness—and, I thought, with a very positive tone—talked about the 15 white papers that we have out there. We've actually cleared the decks legislatively, as has been said many times. Yesterday, a couple of bills put forward by our House leader, Jim Wilson, and our deputy House leader, Steve Clark—in all good sense, these were bills that the government had messed up administratively.

On the law society reforms, they should have had that in here and done with long ago. They left it to the last minute because they're managing in chaos. That's the lack of stability and certainty here, and that's what's driving investors out. That's not specific regulatory issues; this is a government that has no plan.

Our leader, Tim Hudak, raises the question every day. In fact, he has offered, as you know, Speaker, to sit an extra week to work on the jobs plan for Ontario, yet they won't even give us the time of day. On this bill, we moved 10 amendments to increase the threshold. They turned them all down.

I can't trust this government. That's the problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments. Questions and comments. Seeing none—you just made it under the bell, the member from Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Speaker. I will try to get up a little bit sooner next time.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: His knees are bad, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Yes, I'm having some difficulties.

I have this report in front of me this morning. It just tells the people of Ontario how well this government is doing—all the waste and all the scandals they've been involved with, and it just keeps growing. They have no jobs plan, and certainly this Bill 105 doesn't help that situation at all in Ontario.

I don't know what the definition of a small business is. My friend who sits to my left here said that if you want a small business in Ontario, you start with a big one first, because under these policies you're going to get a small one.

I want to tell you about a business that I know a lot about, that was started in 1993 and had as many as six employees working for this small business at one time. It was just a mom-and-dad business. When 2008 came along, it was the first time they ever had to lay off their employees—the first time.

Now, I'm not blaming the government for the recession of 2008-09. However, I must say that every year since, these employees have had to be laid off. Thankfully, they come back, and this business is very thankful for that, but the business still has to lay these employees off, because some of the bigger businesses that this company used to do business with are cutting back. There's no incentive to spend any money for this small company to work for them, because they're trying to save their dollars.

There is no confidence in the economy of Ontario right now with all these plant closures going on, so that trickles down to these smaller companies. I know this company rather well because it's the company that we have; it's the company that my wife runs right now.

I need to sit down. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener–Conestoga has two minutes.

Mr. Michael Harris: I do appreciate the comments from the members from London West, I believe the Minister of Labour chimed in, of course the honourable member from Durham—always thorough with his questions and comments—and of course the member from Perth–Wellington giving a real-life example of a long list of scandals that this government has had happen over the last 10 years. I said, “Randy, you've only got two minutes. The list could go on and on and on.” But I think it's important.

I know I had an opportunity to speak to Bill 105. I know Bill 91 was up for debate this morning, but I'll give you a bit of an insight as to the type of legislation these folks are bringing that actually impact businesses. I'll go back to the article written by Chris Vander Doelen in the Windsor Star on the weekend. That's got a lot to do with Bill 91. In a letter that was actually written to the environment ministry from Heinz—and I'm going to quote the managing director of Heinz. He called it “‘unacceptable’ that the Wynne government intends to pass Bill 91 before its new regulatory powers are defined, and before the industry can figure out its significant effects on production, operations and their legal obligations.

“Basically, Bill 91 throws food producers into a complex and expensive new regulatory world that nobody yet understands. As an example of how vague the law is, he points out that it even lacks the definition of a food ‘producer,’ and does not define who will be affected by its powers.

“While the government says it will set those definitions after the bill passes into law, ‘the process of consultation cannot proceed without knowing clearly who is obligated by the act...’”

So they're always, like, “Let's legislate first, ask questions later.” No, that's not how it works. That's how you're affecting businesses. The member from Windsor should be concerned about this. It is concerning that the government has no intention of considering those economic effects before they bring in such legislation.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. It being 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1017 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to introduce my nephew, Liam Bradford, who has joined us in the gallery today and is a constituent from the great riding of Parkdale–High Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? I'm guessing maybe the member from Parkdale–High Park? No? Okay. The member from York South–Weston.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted to welcome to Queen's Park today Constable Jim Lambe, crime prevention officer at 12 Division in Toronto; and Barbara Spyropoulos, head of the community police liaison committee at 12 Division and resident of York South–Weston. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to welcome to the chamber this morning my executive assistant, Merv Richards. Although Merv has worked for the party in various capacities for over 20 years, he's never attended question period in the chamber. It's his first time today and I want you to give him a big welcome.

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to again welcome Harold Wilson here from Thunder Bay. He made the trip in from Thunder Bay to be here in the Legislature today and is sitting in the members' west gallery.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to welcome a number of young people from the Iranian Canadian Youth centre in Richmond Hill and Thornhill. They're students at Richmond Green and Thornhill secondary schools: Shahab Ghayumi, Milad Eghdami, Amir Saman, Saeed Eghdami, as well as Arshia Rahimi, Sohrab Esmaeil-Pour, Kiana Esmaeil-Pour, Mahnaz Zandvakili and Alborz Arshak, as well as Shahram Saremi.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome the family of the Ottawa–Centre page, Amy Falkner: Amy's mother,

Julia Martin; grandmother Elizabeth Martin; and aunt Kathy Lacroix are here in the chamber. They were here earlier in the morning. I'm sure they'll be back for question period.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'd like to welcome to the chamber today Joell Ann Vanderwagen. Thank you for coming and welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Jeff Leal: In the members' east gallery today we have Olga Radchenko, who's with the government relations firm of Hill and Knowlton. We want to welcome her to Queen's Park today.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je voudrais présenter à l'Assemblée aujourd'hui M. Denis Vaillancourt, qui est le président de l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, avec Peter Hominuk, qui est le directeur général.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It gives me great pleasure to welcome kids from the Iranian Canadian Youth Organization, sitting in the gallery. The organization provides a forum for youth to come together and to engage in community work.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: As I look around, I notice that these people aren't here yet but I would like to mention them. We're having Rondeau day here at Queen's Park with Dr. David Colby, Dr. Mike Newell, Keith Graham, Brian French, my executive assistant from Chatham, Larry Landry, and the president of Union Gas, Steve Baker.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to welcome students from Langstaff Secondary School in my riding of Richmond Hill sitting in the west gallery.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I know they're not in the chamber yet, but they will be here momentarily. I'm proud to welcome my aunt and uncle to Queen's Park today, Karl and Joey Nevin. Karl served formerly as a warden in Middlesex county.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I also would like to welcome Byron Behnke, who is the father of my legislative intern Jessica Behnke. I'm just delighted to welcome you into the chamber today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the member from Mississauga-Erindale, for page Spencer Johne, mother Marjo Johne is here in the members' gallery today. We welcome you.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, as leaders, we're judged by the decisions that we make and the standards we set for those around us. As Premier, that sends a signal to job creators and investors about what it's like to do business in the province of Ontario. For those who are desperate to get a steady job, they look to the Premier for leadership. I've asked you

day in and day out; I've suggested extending the sitting for at least an additional week so we can come up with a jobs plan. You've decided not to do that. But I also want to talk about the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I will have order today.

Leader.

Mr. Tim Hudak: But this is more so on the standards that you set—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Sudbury will come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: That Auditor General's report last night should keep you awake at night—the grotesque waste in our hydro system. This is about your leadership and your standards. After that kind of abuse, no wonder hydro bills are going through the roof. I've just got to ask you, what's going to happen to your energy minister when you see this kind of debacle on his watch? How can you set that standard? Where is the bar? What's going to happen to Bob Chiarelli after this incredible mess at Ontario Power Generation?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My desire for quiet is for all of the House. I would remind the Leader of the Opposition to use either titles or ridings, and that goes for anyone who decides to interject. I will be strong on that issue today.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, I want to thank the Auditor General for her report. I think it's a very important part of our system, Mr. Speaker, that we have the oversight and that we have the analysis of government organization. The Auditor General has done a very good job, and the OPG and the government take very seriously the findings that she has outlined.

As the Leader of the Opposition knows, when we learned of the auditor's findings, we expressed our concern to the OPG's board chair and CEO. We informed OPG that a plan of action had to be implemented to correct all the issues that have been identified in the report. It's clear that Ontarians should expect better and can expect better.

The board has terminated the employment of its chief financial officer; the executive vice-president, strategic initiatives; and vice-president, internal audit. OPG will reduce the eligible amount—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Very respectfully, hold on a second here. This report, you had in your possession for months; the energy minister has been there for 10. These jobs don't pop up like mushrooms in the dark. These are jaw-dropping figures: 8,000 people making \$100,000 a year or more on the hydro system; 60% of the workforce are in middle and upper management. It just makes no sense to those people who are struggling to pay their hydro bills to see this kind of scandalous mess.

1040

The only time you react is when you see there are issues of management. Once the horse is out of the barn, once the report comes out, you've got to respond to the newspapers, and you make something up.

Why wasn't something done sooner? Some 8,000 jobs don't pop up overnight. Was he asleep at the switch? This is the guy who famously said: "Don't worry about the gas plants. It's all just a cup of Tim Hortons coffee," in his own Marie Antoinette moment last week. Premier, the standards you set send a signal to investors and job creators about who's in charge here.

So let me ask you: Who is in charge, and what are you doing with your hydro minister for the incredible mess at Ontario Power Generation?

Interjections.

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

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We have taken action, and I know that the Minister of Energy will want to speak to the specifics.

But let me be clear: There has not been a government in Ontario that has had the controls that I believe need to be in place to control overcompensation in this agency. There has not been a government that has put those controls in place—not the party opposite, not the third party. We are putting those controls in place. It is very important to me that Ontarians can expect better, and the culture that has developed over subsequent decades—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order, the member from Northumberland–Quinte West will come to order and the Minister of Rural Affairs will come to order when she's answering.

Please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The challenges with energy sector compensation existed when the Leader of the Opposition's party was in government. He didn't change it. He was in cabinet. His leader didn't change it. I'm not making excuses for the behaviour. What I'm saying is: We are changing it.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Honest to God, only the Liberals would give this kind of incredible waste a standing ovation.

You've been there for 10 years. Again, Premier, this is about the standard that you set for your leadership team. How can they get confidence in the province? Energy is one of the most crucial ministries when it comes to job creation. It's a scandalous mess, and it's costing us jobs like Kellogg's, like John Deere.

Your health minister, similarly, is failing a very crucial test. I just find it absolutely—I'm incredulous that

the health minister didn't know that Chris Mazza had a \$10-million salary coming his way. She said she left it sealed in the report. I actually find that hard to believe. I think it's probably easier to say that than to say that she didn't act. Either way, it's inexcusable.

Energy is critical to jobs and investment. Health is critical to our most vulnerable populations. If you see this happening—I know you're close; I know you're friends, but that's not what decisions should be about. It should be about competence: Who is doing the best at watching out for taxpayers in the province of Ontario. What are the standards you have for your ministers when you see this type of scandal, and you're looking the other way?

Interjections.

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

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm not surprised that the Leader of the Opposition would want to move off energy because he knows full well that government after government has not taken action in terms of making sure government has the mechanisms and the levers to pull to take control over those compensation packages. We are taking that action.

In terms of taking responsibility and taking action, every situation that the Leader of the Opposition has spoken to, we have dealt with. We have learned from those situations and we have put in place a new regime, whether it's in the specific situations in health care or whether it's in energy. But the Leader of the Opposition needs to accept that the culture that he is talking about in the energy organization is one that has been in place for decades.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. The health minister this morning, when asked what the budget of Ornge was and whether she knew what the annual payments were for the \$275-million bond offering, responded by saying "Is this a quiz?" It's actually very serious business.

I want to know from the Premier, does she think it's acceptable for her health minister not to know what the annual budget of Ornge is and not to know about a \$20-million annual payment that Ornge now has to make on a \$275-million bond offering? Is that the kind of competency, transparency and oversight that she expects from her health minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite has been a minister of the crown. He knows what's entailed in doing that job. He has not been the Minister of Health, which is a \$48-billion ministry, so he actually doesn't understand what it takes to transform a system like that. He actually doesn't understand what's necessary in terms of the ability to evaluate evidence and understand—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment will come to order. The member from Cambridge will come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I think he does know is that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has a responsibility to make sure that we have a health care system that is sustainable over the long term. In order to do that, we have to make changes, and those are the kinds of changes that this Minister of Health is making so that the member opposite's children and grandchildren who live in Ontario will have a health care system when they need it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Well, I think the first change that should be made is a change of the Minister of Health because for the Minister of Health not to even know what the annual budget of Ornge is—this is an agency, an organization, that has been under the scope of the public accounts committee for two and a half years. One would expect that, at the very least, she would know what's going on in that agency, but she doesn't.

So I'm asking the Premier one more time to transform the health ministry of the province of Ontario. How can she count on a minister who doesn't know the fundamental issues relating to Ornge? How can she expect that minister to do her job when she demonstrates that kind of incompetence every day, every hour of the year? How can she possibly expect transformation to happen?

Interjections.

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

Premier.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings will come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Because the fundamental issue that this Minister of Health and Long-Term Care had to deal with was to make sure that the changes were in place so that there would be the appropriate oversight at Ornge. That's why we reintroduced Bill 11. That will mean that Ornge is more accountable, that there is a system in place that makes sure that the correct monitoring is there so that that situation won't arise again. That's the fundamental. That's the policy issue that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is responsible for, and that's the policy issue that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is dealing with. That's why she reintroduced Bill 11. The member opposite knows full well that it's support for that kind of oversight that he should be putting forward.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: It's interesting that that bill has not been called back for the Legislature to deal with. Why not? There has been lots of time. We haven't seen this bill in this House—if that bill is so important. Again, why isn't the Minister of Health doing her job? Why isn't that bill in the House for debate? Why hasn't that bill been passed if, in fact, it's going to make the difference?

I'm going to ask the Premier to refer this question to the Minister of Health. Can the Minister of Health tell us if, between the public accounts hearing this morning and now, she has found out what the budget of Ornge is for this fiscal year? Can the minister tell us?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I believe that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care gave the number. She said \$152 million in committee. My understanding is, if you check Hansard, you will find the number there.

1050

The member opposite talks about bringing a particular bill forward. What he doesn't talk about are the procedural games that are being played in the Legislature. It's very difficult from the outside to look at what's happening within House leaders' meetings and across the floor, but the reality is that there is procedural wrangling going on. It's very unfortunate. We are working very hard to make the minority Parliament work. It would be fabulous to have two partners in that, in the opposition and the third party.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Last March, the sunshine list showed hydro executives receiving massive compensation that broke the million-dollar mark by a mile. Did the Premier bother to even look at that sunshine list?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said many times in this House, we are introducing legislation, we are acting on our commitment to put controls in place on executive compensation, but we are going to do it in a way that recognizes the complexity of the various sectors, that recognizes that there need to be ranges in place, including hard caps, and recognizes that we have to look at the total compensation packages.

As I have said, subsequent governments have not put in place the mechanisms and levers to make sure that government has the control over those compensation packages. I'm not talking about a 10-year situation. I'm talking about decades, tens of years where those controls have not been in place. The parties opposite did not make those changes. We are, Mr. Speaker. We will put those controls in place.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound will come to order. Thank you.

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, while most people were reacting with shock to those reports of sky-high salaries last March, the Premier mused about raising the reporting threshold, and there's not any evidence that she did much else. Did she call the head of the OPG or any hydro agency to ask on behalf of ratepayers what was going on with these sky-high salaries?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The very point I have been making is that government after government has not put the controls in place to be able to ask those questions

and get that information. I'm not excusing that, but I'm saying that there is a culture that developed that needs to be changed. Government after government did not make that change.

I've been in this office since February. We're going to make that change so government will be able to have direct control over those compensation packages.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: May I remind the Premier that for 10 years there has been a Liberal in the Premier's office and a Liberal at the Ministry of Energy.

The OPG has one shareholder; it's the province. The Premier's job is to be a voice for the people who are paying sky-high electricity bills. That's part of her job. People have watched the salaries and the perks grow for years. Is she telling the people paying the bills that she didn't place a single call to find out what the heck was going on?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report was over a period of 10 years. It's important to note that in 2007, in response to the Agency Review Panel report, the ministry reduced OPG's executive salaries by 25% to 30% for new executive contracts. They couldn't change existing contracts.

In addition, the OPG executive compensation envelope has decreased by 9% since 2010 and is continuing to replace exiting executives at a lower cost. Base pay for OPG executives, including vice-presidents, has been frozen since 2010 and continues to be frozen. And through their business transformation plan, between 2011 and 2015 there will be a reduction of 2,300 full-time employees, with 1,500 FTEs already happening.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. OPG is owned by the people of Ontario. It's the job of the Premier to speak up on behalf of people paying the highest electricity bills in Canada. Instead, the Premier defended the same old policies. People have watched year after year as CEO salaries grew and grew and grew. The Premier knew what was happening; she just chose to do absolutely nothing about it.

Is she ready to admit that, once again, the Liberals completely ignored their responsibility to the people who are stuck paying the bills in this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The premise and the substance of the leader of the third party's question is just not accurate, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister of Energy has just outlined, there have been actions taken, but as I have said, I believe that there need to be more controls and there needs to be more authority on the part of government in order to take control of those compensation packages.

From my perspective, this is an issue that has developed over decades—not over the last 10 years, but over decades—and that means that there have been sub-

sequent governments that have not taken action. We have taken action; there have been changes made. But the fact is, there's more that needs to be done. That's why we're going to change it. That's why we're going to put controls in place so that government will have more direct control over those compensation packages, and I would expect that the leader of the third party would support that change, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: While the Premier and her party were letting OPG executive pay skyrocket and helping executives buy million-dollar homes, people have been watching their bills go up to pay for the sky-high pay and perks.

Ron from the Niagara region writes this: "I live in an apartment which is heated with electric heat. My [old age security] and [Canada pension plan] have increased by less than 1%. [The government has] no concept of what their hydro increases do to the average senior.... The management system in hydro is so far away from the reality others live under...."

What does the Premier have to say to folks like Ron?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: There is pressure on prices; however, when it comes to Ontario Power Generation, they have received no rate increase since 2008. In 2011, Mr. Speaker, they made an application for an increase of 6.4%. The Ontario Energy Board gave them a reduction of 0.8%.

Ontario Power Generation produces 40% of the power in Ontario, and their rate base is less than the other 60%. In addition, over the course of the last eight years, they have generated \$7 billion in net transfer dollars to the province of Ontario to help pay for schools, hospitals and colleges.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario families are paying the highest electricity bills in Canada, and instead of taking action, the Premier has turned a blind eye. People are tired of being stuck with sky-high bills because the Liberals simply can't be bothered to give a damn. New Democrats have been calling for a hard cap on CEO salaries for years. Is this Premier ready to admit that the Liberal government is responsible for driving up the hydro bills that people in this province are paying?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Is the leader of the third party prepared to accept the fact that she has no plan for hydro rates in the province of Ontario? She has no policy with respect to renewables. She's refusing to say yes to not going ahead with nuclear. And speaking of nuclear, Mr. Speaker, we have taken some very significant steps to moderate rate increases for the next 20 years. That includes deferring new nuclear, which—the Leader of the Opposition would invest \$15 billion on hydro that we don't need.

We have a 20-year plan. It projects an increase of 2.8% over that period. And for the short number of years leading into that 20 years, we have created mitigating

programs for energy consumers, including the 10% discount, including the energy tax credit, including the seniors' energy credit.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to rise on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus today to ask a question of the Premier regarding OPG. Obviously, OPG has just made the Senate of Canada look like good stewards of the taxpayers' dollars.

Here we are today. I have so much material and questions that I don't know which to ask. The first question I might ask the Premier is: How could she let handsome pension plans like those that are occurring at OPG still continue? Another question I might ask the Premier today is: How could she only fire three executives when the rot and the corruption at OPG have gone so deep into that organization? I could also ask her how she could allow nepotism to occur to the level that it has at OPG, but, Speaker, I won't.

1100

The question I'm going to ask is on behalf of the Ottawa Council of Business Improvement Areas. Nineteen business improvement areas in the city of Ottawa have asked the Premier this question: "We urge you to please work on the side of Ottawa retailers, on the side of job creators and on the side of Ottawa employees and reconsider your ... crippling hydro increases." Will you do it?

Interjections.

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

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, when the Leader of the Opposition was asked if he would freeze or lower rates, he said, "No, I cannot do that." That's for starters.

But let's talk about his policy with respect to Ontario Power Generation. His policy is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've got them up here.

Carry on.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —he would privatize Ontario Power Generation, and the Toronto Sun said—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds-Grenville, come to order—last time.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: "Hudak should keep in mind the last Tory government in Ontario that tried to do that with electricity generation, promising it would lead to lower hydro rates.

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

His policy is to privatize, to try to do what he did last time, and that's what his Toronto Sun says about his—

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This minister has a lot of nerve, on a day after what was I think the most damning Auditor General's report since I have been in this chamber, three terms, to stand in his place and talk about a public policy initiative a decade ago, before his government was in office, before the taxpayers of this province were paying for their boondoggle—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The Minister of Energy will come to order. Thunder Bay-Atikokan, come to order.

Finish, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Let's just stick with the facts, Premier, Minister, government over there. The people of this province are stuck with your energy policies. Last week, it was the long-term energy plan which is driving up rates. The week before that, it was the \$1.1-billion gas scandal. This week, it's the OPG—the new Senate of Canada—that is wasting taxpayer dollars and hurting the ratepayers of this province.

My question is, will he listen to the ratepayers in our city, the Ottawa Council of Business Improvement Areas? Will you listen to them? Will you scrap your long-term energy plan? Will you put OPG in its place and fire more than three people?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, first of all, to correct the record, the policy that I referred to was not 10 years ago; it was his white paper that he issued about 12 months ago.

The Tories' failed attempt to privatize the electricity system in the late 1990s led to a sudden price shock; in only a few months, the price increased by 30%. And it gets worse: The Leader of the Opposition's proposal could mean that OPG would have to sell off the Niagara Falls generating station, one of Ontario's greatest assets.

The last time they tried to privatize, top advisers were at the trough. Well-connected Tory insiders received nearly \$6 million in untendered contracts from Hydro One. That's from the National Post.

Tom Long, this leader's co-campaign manager, made off with \$1.3 million in Hydro One contracts—from the Toronto Star, June 10, 2004.

Leslie Noble: The firm of Hudak's other co-campaign manager—

Interjections.

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

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. In 2012, the government tried to kill the ONTC without any consultation, any planning or any policy. It claimed that it would save the taxpayers of Ontario \$265 million. What it didn't tell Ontarians was that in the same budget,

this government allocated \$325 million for divestment costs. Yesterday, the Auditor General's report outlined that if the divestment goes ahead, it will cost the taxpayers of Ontario over \$800 million.

Will your government once and for all admit that it was wrong and announce the halt of the divestment of the ONTC?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: My friend and colleague across the floor knows very well that the estimate of that large dollar figure is not an accurate reflection of our government's approach to transforming the ONTC. That is indeed an assessment of the potential associated liability. And may I say that the Auditor General says that herself. It assumes the worst—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The Auditor General said, "This estimate assumes the worst-case scenario for severance cost estimates and that no employees would be retained after divestment."

Mr. Speaker, that is not our government's approach. We are very clear about how important the ONTC is in terms of an economic development agency in north-eastern Ontario. That's why we are committed to a transformation of the ONTC.

Our minister's advisory committee has recognized that the status quo will not work. Everybody, I think, understands that the status quo will not work, and that's why we're committed to—

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

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again to the Premier: Let's talk about this government's approach to the ONTC. They announced the divestment, yet the Auditor General's report showed they didn't even bother to crunch the numbers for four months after.

Let's talk about this government's record on the ONTC. They're scrambling once again to come up with weasel words like "transformation," and you know who is left out in the cold? Northerners, seniors, the people who use the train, the customers, small business, big business.

The divestment is wrong. It could leave Ontarians with \$820 million in costs for a train that no longer stops anywhere. Is this government still planning on spending \$800 million to deny essential services to northern Ontario? Premier, is that your one Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We are absolutely committed to seeing a sustainable, efficient, well-run Ontario Northland Transportation Commission. May I say, Mr. Speaker, the members of our ministerial advisory committee are in agreement with us on that.

I've got some extraordinarily important quotes. How about this from Mayor Al McDonald: "We all agree, including the union, the management, the stakeholders, the business model is broken and it needs to be restructured. The focus is on transformation, not divestment."

Back in May, at the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities' annual general meeting, I publicly said that divestment was no longer the only option on the table. That's why we're working so hard to see the ONTC transformed. It has got a bright future if we make the right decisions. There are some tough decisions. We'd love to have your help in that regard as well, like all other people in northern Ontario.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. In the last three years, \$85 million in settlement funding to our province had been cut by the federal government. Settlement services play an important role in the lives of newcomers as they adjust to a new life in Ontario and start making valuable contributions to our society.

Federal cuts have changed the level of service that community agencies are able to provide for newcomers, and I have noticed the effects in my riding. York South-Weston is home to thousands of newcomers, and among them, many Somali Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you inform the House what kind of assistance your ministry is providing to help newcomers from the Somali community and the east African communities?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member for her question.

Here in the province of Ontario, we believe in one Ontario. We believe that everyone in this province should have the opportunity to contribute, connect and achieve their goals. We also believe in investing in people through settlement services.

Midaynta Community Services and the Community Action Resource Centre are located in the member's riding and provide services to more than 1,000 people of Somali background.

Midaynta is one of the eight settlement agencies in Ontario that are now receiving a grant to look at new and innovative ways to deliver settlement services to vulnerable immigrant populations and underserved communities. This organization's work focuses on the integration of Somali newcomers and youth.

This year, our government will invest \$7.6 million into newcomer settlement services.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Speaker, for that response, and thank you to the minister. The settlement services that are provided to newcomers are life-changing.

While many new Canadians continue to choose Toronto as a destination, others are choosing to settle in smaller communities across the province, communities like Essex county, Sarnia or the Niagara region. Newcomers who settle outside Toronto need access to the same services and programs provided in larger cities in order to participate fully in the economic, social and

cultural life of our province. They need places that will provide them with services like language training and employment counselling.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, what newcomer settlement programs are available to newcomers across Ontario, more specifically to those who settle in smaller communities?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member again for her question. This year, our government will fund 98 community organizations across this great province to help 80,000 newcomers here in our province. Province-wide, 89% of clients surveyed last year reported that they can make more informed decisions about their new life in Ontario after receiving such services.

I'd like to highlight one of the organizations that provides newcomer services here in our province, and that's the Fort Erie Multicultural Centre. Since 2009, we have provided over half a million dollars to this organization so that they can deliver newcomer orientation sessions. These important services are used by a broad range of clients, including permanent residents, refugee claimants and provincial nominees.

This government believes in helping newcomer settlement services in becoming a functioning part of what we do here in this province, because we know that, at the end of the day, when newcomers succeed Ontario succeeds.

SERVICEONTARIO

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. As you know, this is my first term in the House, but I can tell you that a lot of people have asked me how things are going and what I think of the management of the government.

Well, I can tell you that I'm taken aback. It's absolutely deplorable, the things that have happened in this term of this Legislature. I used to tell them at council that they could take a barrel of money and go down Bay Street and throw it in the lake, because that's what they were doing; here, you'd need a huge dump truck. You seem to have no idea of tax dollars and the value of them whatsoever.

Mr. Minister, ServiceOntario pays their employees an average of \$145,000 a year, and they take off 25 days, on average, sick. What this means is that, when you combine vacation days and statutory holidays—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. How about quiet? I remind all members, when I stand, you sit. Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: We appreciated the Auditor General's report. I had a chance to meet with the Auditor General, where she congratulated me on the good work that ServiceOntario has been doing. The Auditor General's report noted a number of areas for improvement; that's why we have the auditor. We accept those, and we're moving forward.

The fact of the matter is that ServiceOntario is a service, as it would suggest, which is across this province and which has been working over the past number of

years to bring more private sector involvement and at the same time to make sure that it offers efficient services to the people of Ontario.

I am pleased with the progress that we have been making. As I say, when I take a look at the Auditor General's report, she makes a number of suggestions that we will certainly be following up on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: ServiceOntario operates some of its facilities with private operators and some of it is operated by the government, but according to the auditor's report, the costs of the government operations are almost three times what the private operator pays.

Now, this again is another huge waste of money. You've got to remember the fact that we have a deficit of \$12 billion. We've got a debt of \$273 million. If we're ever going to get that reduced or eliminated, we've got to deal with things like this. We can't have this kind of over-expenditure and waste of money. It has gone on far too long, and I want to know when the government is going to put a stop to it.

Interjections.

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

Minister.

Hon. John Milloy: As I said, we're very happy to follow up on what the Auditor General said.

But the honourable member knows that there is a system of private sector offices which handle high volumes, high transactions. Yes, we have some that are run by the government, which are in small communities and offer a wide range of services, not all of them as popular and used as often, which causes higher costs.

Perhaps he wants to talk to some of his colleagues, because I sign letters all the time from his colleagues complaining about the fact that they don't have enough ServiceOntario in small, rural communities.

We are trying to find a balance here between making sure that the people of Ontario can access these services in their communities as well as finding efficiencies through an involvement with the private sector. Mr. Speaker, I think the honourable member should get his facts straight.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. In 2010, the government slashed statutory accident benefits—those are the benefits that accident victims receive—by 50% across Ontario and 70% in the GTA.

Now, in her report yesterday, the Auditor General confirmed that province-wide benefits were slashed by more than 50% in 2010 but added a new number. During the exact same time period, when our benefits were slashed by more than 50%, our premiums went up by 8%. Our premiums went up by 8%.

How does this government explain to the seven million drivers in Ontario why 8% more has been taken out of their pockets at the same time that their benefits were

slashed by 50%, all with the permission of this government?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite knows fully well that the cost of our premiums is something that our government has been addressing since 2003. We have taken measures, and a number of our members have been advocating and leading the charge, to find ways to reduce auto insurance premiums. It is why our government quickly took on the auto task force to clamp down on fraud.

One of the initiatives that the member is talking about is the increasing cost of claims. That has to be addressed, and that's why we've brought forward legislation, in cooperation with the member opposite, to ensure that we get those costs down and get those premiums down as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The reality is that in 2010, \$2 billion has been saved by the insurance industry: \$2 billion of savings, of which the people of Ontario have not even seen a penny of savings in terms of their premiums.

The Auditor General made it very, very clear that there has been an 8% increase in premiums at the same time that costs went down by 50% when it comes to the benefits that we receive.

Drivers are getting frustrated with broken promises. When will this government actually do something to bring down premiums, to give some relief to the seven million drivers in Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let's be clear: Ontario has some of the most comprehensive benefits anywhere in Canada. We have been taking extraordinary measures to support and help our drivers and those that are affected during these accidents.

But more importantly, it has also been very clear that these rising costs have affected our premiums. It's why they are too high, and it's why we've taken the necessary steps to clamp down and get them reduced, and they have started to reduce. We have competitors right throughout the system that are now advertising lower rates.

The strategy is working. We are bringing down those rates, and we're doing everything that we can to protect those drivers, and at times we do so without support from the opposition, and that is shameful.

1120

SENIORS

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is for the minister responsible for seniors' affairs. There's a very important statistic I'd like to share: In Peel, in the year 2017, there will be more people over the age of 65 than children under the age of 14. Think about that: more people over the age of 65 than children under the age of 14, in three years. So I really laud and applaud the minister responsible for seniors for showing such leadership on this file.

As the constituents in my riding age, the fact is that many of them do approach me and ask me for advice on

the various options when it comes to the issue of long-term care versus retirement facilities. They're looking for some valuable information that will help them make that decision.

Speaker, through you to the minister, my question is, what kind of information is out there that could help my constituents make this decision?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I'm very grateful to the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville for this wonderful question. I believe that she's not the only one with seniors looking for proper accommodation. I think every member has that particular problem.

In Ontario, we have some 700 retirement homes with some 55,000 residents, and every home offers different levels of care. They have the option and the choice of where and how to live. Also, through the Ontario Retirement Homes Act regulatory authority, we provide all kinds of information to anyone—seniors or family members—who wishes to look into aspects of a particular retirement home. We provide information on the web, through the Seniors' INFOline. We have the seniors' guide as well, and we provide that information on several levels.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I thank the minister for that answer. Once families have made that decision, what they are really looking for is peace of mind that their loved ones are safe. I'm wondering if the minister could respond and just tell me and my constituents what we are doing to make sure—what kind of oversight is there, especially when it comes to licensing? Who is issuing these licences, and what action is taken if trouble is noticed?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Again, I have to thank the member for a good question. I think this is a concern that every member of the House has when they have to look at a particular home and how they view and assess the particular house and where to put their loved one. It is the information that we provide and it is also the safety that we provide for the seniors when they look for a particular home. Through the Retirement Homes Act and the regulatory authority, we provide all the necessary information so seniors and families can make a choice: what they want to do, where they want to live and how they want to live.

Also, let me say that every resident is notified when a house may be in difficulty. We don't rest on our laurels, if you will, but we take immediate action. We notify the local authorities, the CCACs, the LHINs—the local health networks—the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Housing and make sure that the housing fits the needs of the particular seniors.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier.

Premier, yesterday, the Auditor General confirmed what we've told you from day one: There would be no

savings from your fire sale of Ontario Northland. In fact, as you now know, instead of saving \$265 million—the auditor dropped a bombshell—it will cost you \$820 million. That's a difference of a billion dollars.

When we first disclosed that you knew this last summer, you changed your tune. You then said, “Divestment isn't the only answer.” But it was only after you saw the draft of the auditor's report two weeks ago that you came up with a new phrase: “transformation.” Premier, why is it that you only change your direction on Ontario Northland after you get caught?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Is it parliamentary to say that's malarkey? The member knows very well that last May at FNOM's AGM, after a couple of months working with the Premier on this plan, we made a determination that divestment was not the only option, so we moved into the transformation phase of our approach at ONTC.

We're determined to find a sustainable, long-term future. We're absolutely committed to making that happen. The fact is, the member also knows very clearly that the figures that are cited are actual total potential associated liabilities; again, an approach that does not reflect the direction that we're going in. We are going to come up with some very good decisions, we believe.

The ministerial advisory committee—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: —work together. Mayor Al McDonald is on that, president Alan Spacek, industry leaders, First Nations and Métis nation leaders. We are determined to see a long-term, sustainable future for the ONTC, and we're doing some great work—

Interjections.

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

Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I think what “malarkey” is is trying to weasel out of \$820 million.

Let's look at the facts. The freedom of information showed us your goal was to divest Ontario Northland and, if that failed, liquidate pennies on the dollars. Through the gas plant scandal documents, we learned there would be no savings. Instead, there would be a billion-dollar hole in your budget, and it was only then that you began trotting out these weasel words.

But the auditor told us—

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I withdraw. “Wiggle words” is what I meant to say—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let's just continue with no other editorial, please.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: For 18 months, Speaker, this government has continued to leave, as the auditor said, uncertainty in the marketplace. You left 1,000 families in the north unable to make key purchases or life decisions.

Premier, how can you be so heartless to northerners? Will you do as we've asked in letter after letter to you and stop the divestment today?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: You know, Mr. Speaker, I think the member from Nipissing just might want to get off his high horse. The fact is, northerners have not forgotten that it was his party, when they were in government, that tried to sell off the ONTC. The member for Nipissing himself has said some pretty amazing things publicly. How about this, what he said to the ONTC workers who were gathered outside his office: “I'm going to be straight with you. I've always been straight with you,” said the member from Nipissing. “I can't tell you what you want to hear. I can't say I'm opposed to privatization”—

Interjections.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: —these guys are unbelievable.

We are determined to move forward for a sustainable, long-term Ontario Northland Transportation—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock.

New question.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, yesterday members of this House learned that more than 500 workers at the London Kellogg's plant are losing their jobs. As the Premier knows, these are good-paying jobs, family-supporting jobs, the kinds of jobs that generate tax revenues and that pay for the kids, the mortgage, the car and all the other expenses of daily life.

Workers at Kellogg's are devastated by this news and understandably angry when they see their plant shutting down. What they want to know, what my community wants to know, is, did this government take any action at all to prevent the closure of the Kellogg's plant and protect good jobs in London?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the questions being asked and I understand the anger and frustration of the employees in the community in London over this decision, a very regrettable business decision. Of course, almost the worst part, I think, is the timing of it, so close before the holiday season.

1130

Our number one concern, as a government, and mine as the minister responsible, is for the employees that unfortunately received this very bad news about the upcoming closure over the course of the next year. In fact, we've reached out to the community. I spoke with the mayor of London actually just several minutes ago prior to question period to offer my support, so that we can make sure we're providing every support. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities as well is providing, through their usual supports, all facilities, all supports available to support the employees, their families and the communities at this very difficult time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Back to the Premier: Too many companies are shutting down in southwestern Ontario. In the last several weeks, we have lost more than 1,000 manufacturing jobs under this government's watch. The Premier said she expected these closures. She said it would be unrealistic not to have these closures and some negative impact. Now, in London, more than 500 families will be losing their jobs. This will have a devastating impact on our local economy and in our community.

What is the Premier's plan to stop the jobs from bleeding away from southwestern Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the job numbers recently came out and they demonstrated that, last month, we created more than 12,000 jobs in manufacturing alone, many of those in southwestern Ontario.

I want to also reiterate that there are important investments that are happening in the London area, and I want to indicate that the unemployment rate in London fortunately—where we saw it back in March, the unemployment rate was more than 9%—it has come down in the last month to 7.5%, and that's a very important development. In fact, over the last year in London, 3,000 new manufacturing jobs, according to Statistics Canada, have been created in the London area alone, so we are making progress.

It is a very difficult time, and I don't want to underestimate the particular importance and very great disappointment I have in this government personally for the developments at Kellogg's. It's never good news for anybody or their families or communities important to London. I'm certainly going to work hard in the months ahead to see what we can do further.

TRAIL SYSTEM

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. In October the minister, the Premier and myself announced in my riding of Ajax-Pickering a \$3.5-million fund for the expansion of our province's world-class trail systems as part of the Pan Am Games legacy fund. Several organizations, such as Trans Canada Trail, share the road coalition and the Ontario Trails Council praised our government's commitment and support for Ontario trails.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could he please explain why this Pan Am Games legacy funding is so important, not only to the people of my riding of Ajax-Pickering but to all of Ontario?

Hon. Michael Chan: I thank the member from Ajax-Pickering for asking the question. Linking the Pan/Parapan American Games to expand our world-class trail system is, in my opinion, a smart thing to do. This will help complete 250 kilometres in gaps in Ontario's Trans Canada Trail. It will connect communities from Ottawa to Windsor, from Fort Erie to Huntsville, creating a continuous trail for more than 2,000 kilometres.

Speaker, investing in infrastructure for the 2015 Pan American Games is part of the Ontario government's

three-part plan to grow our economy: invest in people, invest in infrastructure and create a welcoming business environment. Investment related to the games will create 26,000 jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you for that response, Minister. With the Ajax Sportsplex ballpark also being built in my riding, the Pan/Parapan American Games is certainly bringing in many benefits and opportunities to Durham region and the entire province.

I know that the people I represent, and those across Ontario, will utilize these trails for years to come. The extensions will ensure our communities of Ajax and Pickering are connected like never before. They will get to enjoy year-round hiking trails, trout fishing and picnic and recreation opportunities. However, this cannot be the only opportunity our government has taken to support Ontario's trail systems, is it?

Mr. Speaker, through you again to the minister: Can he please tell us what else our government has been doing to support our province's trails?

Hon. Michael Chan: In 2005, we launched the Ontario Trails Strategy. It guides the development, management, promotion and use of trails in Ontario.

Since 2005, we have established the Ontario Trails Coordinating Committee to oversee implementation of the strategy and mapped 2,466 trailheads, representing over 38,000 kilometres of trails and 10,000 trail segments across the province. We also funded a variety of local and regional trail projects, improved accessibility for people with disabilities and developed an award-winning central website for trails.

Since 2009, the province has invested more than \$77 million to support Ontario's trails, and we are seeing tremendous results.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the Minister of Education. An audit at the Toronto District School Board released yesterday was a crystal-clear demonstration that your so-called wage freeze isn't a wage freeze at all. Our leader, Tim Hudak, has stood in this Legislature day in and day out and asked for an across-the-board public sector wage freeze. The idea was dismissed because your government was adamant that it already had one.

When board members, without approval, decide to give themselves a salary increase, that's not a wage freeze. In fact, TDSB officials told auditors that other school boards have also ignored the order to freeze pay. This is the problem, Minister: When your wage freeze isn't a real wage freeze, no one takes you seriously, and everyone feels entitled to grab whatever they want.

But it's not too late. Will you adopt the Ontario PC plan to adopt an across-the-board public sector wage freeze to rein in spending and stop the foolishness at the TDSB?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Obviously, the report from Ernst and Young which was released yesterday did raise a

number of areas of concern. I think it's important to recognize that the new director and the audit committee from TDSB are the people who asked for the forensic audit and that they have responded that they will in fact work with us to make sure that all of the recommendations are addressed.

But what I must point out, in this particular case, is that my ministry officials did tell any school board that checked in with the ministry, and made it very clear, that the broader public sector compensation act did apply to the senior administration. So it was very clear to everybody involved that the act applied.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Minister, it's clear you buried the report on the same day as the Auditor General's report in an attempt to pull the wool over the eyes of the media and Ontario taxpayers. On its own, the rules-don't-apply-to-me attitude at the TDSB is bad enough, but this is a culture of entitlement, and you have refused to do anything about it. This is the same TDSB where workers billed \$143 to screw in a pencil sharpener, where workers billed \$266 for seven hours of work to hang three pictures on a wall. It's no wonder that the audit found that 75% of the transactions in the director's office did not use a competitive bidding process.

Monitoring the situation is no longer enough, Minister. Ontarians expect action. Will you show some leadership and make these board members pay back the salary increases they should never had had in the first place? Will taxpayers get their Christmas refund, Minister?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Liz Sandals: Could we just please sort out here what we're talking about? We are not talking about board members whose salaries are not in compliance. We are talking about the members of the senior executive whose salaries are not in compliance. Now, that is very, very serious, Speaker, and I will demand—have demanded—that the board come into compliance with the broader public sector compensation act. They will come into full compliance, as will any other board.

In fact, we do a number of spot audits on school boards throughout the province every year, and I have asked my officials to add an audit of senior executive compensation to the boards that they are doing a spot audit on currently.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday's Auditor General's report provided us with the facts and figures to back up what families have been telling us for some time, that lengthy delays for diagnosis and treatment for children with autism mean that young people are not being given their best chance to succeed. Even when they get off the multi-year wait-lists, access to service remains uneven and arbitrary. Families have long been telling this government that the system of supports for children with autism is failing.

Today, there are more children waiting for services than those who are receiving them, and we know that children who would often benefit the most from a particular therapy are simply not eligible.

To make matters worse, the auditor tells us that this government has failed to collect information, assess program effectiveness and measure for the outcomes. Speaker, at what point is the government going to take—

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you for the question. I'd like to thank the Auditor General for her report and the discussions that we've had with respect to the recommendations. We welcome her input in terms of how we can further improve our services, but let me remind this House what this government and this party has done with respect to autism. We have quadrupled the funding that's available for autism services. We eliminated the age six cut-off for services, ensuring that services are available for children up to the age of 18, not only up to the age of six, which is where it was at prior to us taking it to government.

We will continue to increase our investments. We invested an additional \$5 million. As well, we have a clinical expert committee that is going to be bringing forward recommendations with respect to changes that we need to make with respect to autism. We will continue to work with our communities.

VISITOR

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to welcome Katie Stewart here, from my constituency office in London.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

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

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: I'd just like to correct the record. Apparently, I said that the debt was \$273 million. Of course, it's \$273 billion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I am seeking unanimous consent to move a motion in order to extend the sitting of the House to Monday, December 16.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice. Do we agree? I heard a no.

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

The House recessed from 1143 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to welcome some of the students from Dr. Norman Bethune, who are visiting us today: Marco Wong, Kevin Vuong, Cherie Wai and Sharon Xu, and the principal, Sandy Kaskens, who are visiting us in the chamber. Thank you. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I am very pleased to welcome for his first time to this House my best friend and husband, Dennis Schiestel. Here he comes. The door just opened. There he is.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That was a page.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is a pleasure for me to introduce a number of friends from the city of Ottawa. I'd first like to start with my good friend—long-time friend—Roxane Villeneuve Robertson, as well as her husband, Jamie, attending the assembly today, and also my good friends Peter Hominic and Dennis Vaillencourt. They are here from eastern Ontario as well. Thank you for joining us.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce my wife, Jane, but she's not here. She's with Dennis.

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: And they're back here somewhere, Speaker. Oh, there they are.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now, that's a controversy in the House.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHRISTMAS PARADES

Mr. Michael Harris: Speaker, I'll bring some of the festive spirit back to the Legislature, perhaps, and sanity. I'd like to take a moment to highlight some of the Christmas festivities in my home riding of Kitchener-Conestoga. In fact, Speaker, each year the towns of Baden, Elmira, New Hamburg, Wellesley, St. Agatha, St. Jacobs and St. Clements bring residents together to celebrate the season with the long-standing tradition of our region's local Christmas parades.

Over the past two weekends, I've had the good fortune to attend the parades in New Hamburg, Elmira and Baden. I'm also looking forward to attending Wellesley's on Friday night, St. Agatha's on Saturday afternoon, along with St. Clements' parade next Saturday.

I'd like to say, at this special time of the year, there's nothing quite like spending Christmas in a small town. All along the parade route, the children are out with their parents enjoying the festivities. It is really the spirit of an old-fashioned Christmas, where everyone comes out and enjoys the sights of the season.

It's been my pleasure and privilege to represent the good people of Kitchener-Conestoga over the last two years. As I've had the opportunity to attend all of the Christmas parades in my riding and the many more to

come, it's quite amazing to see the kids that are out looking for that little bit of candy and seeing the parades as they go by, whether it be the fire trucks and the good folks that volunteer in our local fire departments, or Tex, the Kitchener Ranger, coming out to say hi to the kids. I know they truly enjoy that time, whether it's a daytime parade or a nighttime parade.

Mr. Speaker, again, the spirit of Christmas is alive and well in Kitchener-Conestoga, and I'd like to wish everyone at home in my riding and here, of course, a very merry Christmas.

SUNFEST

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I rise today to recognize Alfredo Caxaj, a constituent in London West who was recently named one of the 10 most influential Hispanic Canadians by the Canadian Hispanic Business Alliance.

Alfredo, a musician who arrived in London from Guatemala in 1985, is well known in our community as the founder and artistic director of Sunfest, the second-largest music festival in Canada and a showcase of the world's best musicians. Each July, Sunfest draws more than 225,000 visitors to London and injects millions into the local economy.

Launched in 1995, the festival has grown over the last two decades into one of London's largest attractions. It has become deeply embedded in London's cultural and civic identity and enjoys ongoing support from a range of corporate and government sponsors.

But as Alfredo is quick to point out, Sunfest's real legacy is its social impact. The festival is offered free of charge, exposing visitors to Canadian musicians and performers from around the world and enriching the lives of those who might not otherwise be able to afford music and cultural events. It has even incubated future artists whose first experience with world music was at Sunfest.

Through his leadership, Alfredo Caxaj has not only put London on the map, but has also demonstrated the power of arts and culture as a vibrant tool for local economic development.

INSTALLATIONS SCOLAIRES

SCHOOL FACILITIES

M. Bas Balkissoon: C'est avec plaisir que je vous annonce l'ouverture de l'école Laure-Rièse dans ma circonscription de Scarborough-Rouge River.

Now that the doors of this new school are open, the needs of Scarborough students to learn in French will be expanded. The school will have 260 students from kindergarten to grade 6.

Speaker, I also recently attended the opening of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati Catholic School in the Morningside Heights community. This is a new state-of-the-art facility that will give Catholic students in the community an opportunity to learn much closer to home.

It is vital that we provide opportunities for all students, and in my riding of Scarborough-Rouge River, I'm

pleased that new facilities like this have been built to ensure students can live, play and learn in their home community.

The opening of these facilities not only demonstrates that more people are choosing Scarborough–Rouge River to live in, but represents the community's diversity. In each of the schools mentioned, you will see students from every race and cultural background together sharing the opportunities that our province offers.

I'm happy and proud of the construction of these new facilities but also of the fact that they represent the future of Ontario.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Ted Arnott: The case for building the Highway 6 Morriston bypass has been strengthened by a new economic study initiated by Mayor Dennis Lever and the council of the township of Puslinch. The study was led by Dr. Clarence Woudsma of the University of Waterloo, and it confirms what we in Wellington–Halton Hills have been saying for years: The traffic bottleneck at Morriston, on Highway 6 south of the 401, is not just a local issue, but affects a whole region of the province and the economy.

The current traffic logjams through Morriston are costing commuters tens of millions of dollars every year, and the commercial traffic costs are in the millions annually, Dr. Woudsma's study indicates. He also confirms this corridor is a key link in our trade with the United States. It's an essential link between a large portion of the Lake Huron and Bruce region and the Hamilton-Niagara region and the eastern seaboard of the United States.

When we met with the former Minister of Transportation in May of last year, he inquired about the views of the local business community. This study answers that question directly, and I quote from the study: "There is unanimity from the business community that the construction of the bypass would reduce their costs significantly."

We are united in our call to get the Highway 6 Morriston bypass on the Ministry of Transportation's southern highways program, their five-year plan for new highway construction, consistent with my private member's resolution, the very first one listed on the Legislature's order paper. I urge the Minister of Transportation to agree to meet with township officials and industry leaders in the new year to discuss the report and how we can work together to get the Morriston bypass on the five-year plan.

NANCY MUTCH

Mr. Michael Prue: I stand today in sadness and in joy to talk about the passing of my friend Nancy Mutch. She died yesterday after a very brief illness. She was a resident of the Beach. She was a charming and funny woman. She was a volunteer for all good causes. She worked in Jack Layton's office as a volunteer, in my colleague Peter Tabuns's office as a volunteer, and occa-

sionally with me. She was a member of the cancer society, and she was constantly in and around this very building, along with her husband, Paul. She had amazing humour.

1510

She was in the community at the Easter parades, the Christmas parades; everywhere she went, she literally lit up the place.

When she died, her husband Paul sent the following, and I think it's absolutely fitting to read this. He wrote: "As for tributes, if you wish to do something, instead of flowers or donations, do something nice for someone with no expectation of return. It's how Nancy lived her life—there could be no more fitting tribute.

"If you'd like an example of her generosity, consider this—she gave her wedding dress to a drag queen because, in her words, 'he looked better in it than me.'"

She asked that there be no funeral, just to remember her and do something unselfish. She leaves behind her husband, Paul, and her dog named Boo. In the phrase of the old song—and she loved rock 'n' roll and all music forms—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Sing it, Michael.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, no.

Paul and Boo back on the road again.

SANTA'S PARADE OF LIGHTS

Mr. Phil McNeely: Each year, families in my community of Orléans are treated to the annual Santa's Parade of Lights. Anyone is allowed to participate so long as they meet the one requirement: have a well-lit float.

I'm pleased to stand today and recognize the efforts of the Ottawa Professional Fire Fighters Association for organizing the 2013 Ottawa–Orléans parade. I also want to thank the 82 participants for their hard work and charitable spirit for participating in this year's parade. All proceeds from the parade go to help the Salvation Army's Toy Mountain, a toy drive to help less fortunate children in Ottawa have the sort of Christmas morning that many of us take for granted.

The parade's route goes along St-Joseph Boulevard, the heart of the Orléans community, and is the best-attended Christmas parade in Ottawa, drawing out thousands of families throughout the city. Over 100,000 people attended this year's parade.

Since becoming an MPP in 2003, I've participated every year with a horse-drawn carriage, but this year was special for me, as I was joined by my son, James, his wife, Erika, my grandsons Keegan and Logan, and my granddaughter Macey, who enjoyed her first Christmas parade behind the two big Clydesdales, Sparky and Wilson.

I also want to thank those who helped prepare my float and distributed candy during the event: Nathalie Monpetit, Anick Tremblay, Shawn Kalbhenn, Frédérique and Charlotte Hébert, Karyne Jolicoeur, and Andy Singh. And a special thanks to Navandale Farms and the McWilliams family for providing the horses and carriage every year.

Again, congratulations to all those organizers and supporters for making this tradition bigger and brighter every year.

IDIOPATHIC PULMONARY FIBROSIS

Mr. John O'Toole: I rise today to bring attention to the fact that we, in Ontario, are failing idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis patients in Ontario today. Last week, I asked the deputy minister to review the funding process and begin funding Esbriet for those who desperately need it to save their lives. There are thousands of Ontarians suffering from IPF whose lives can be improved and prolonged today. This is not a political issue. It's really about access to health care in Ontario today.

Bryon Miles of Northumberland, Barbara Skinner from Wellington-Halton Hills, Virginia Koury from my riding of Durham, and Hugh Detzler from Bruce-Huron, all deserve access. They are but a few Ontarians who can be helped immediately with approved funding for Esbriet.

Earlier today, my colleague PC MPP Ted Arnott wrote to the Minister of Health to express the benefits that his constituent Barb Skinner received by taking Esbriet. Without Esbriet, Ms. Skinner believes she might not have lived long enough to receive a double lung transplant.

The reality is, Mr. Speaker, that many Ontarians cannot afford Esbriet. The treatment cost is \$3,800 every 28 days, or \$50,000 per year, for every IPF patient. And that countless patients die while waiting for organ transplants.

The government must take the responsible course of action and admit that the EAP process is broken and begin funding Esbriet for IPF patients across Ontario. This is the right thing to do and it's the right season to do it. Do the right thing and fund Esbriet.

DANFORTH GARDENS PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise in the House today to address a number of concerns some of my constituents have brought regarding Danforth Gardens Public School in Scarborough Southwest.

I'm proud the Minister of Education has made it a real priority to make Ontario's school system, especially at the primary level, a key priority. Since 2003, we've increased funding for the Toronto District School Board by over 30%, to a total of over \$2 billion, even while enrollment has declined by 13%. Mr. Speaker, more needs to be done.

Madrimooto Subramani and Mr. Shahid Mian, two active constituents, have informed me that a number of facilities at Danforth Gardens Public School are in serious need of attention. Both the lunchroom and the gymnasium have failed to accommodate the ever-growing population of the school. Parents have noted that the size and age of the school's gymnasium fails to provide optimal space for the students' physical education classes.

I was disappointed to learn that the Toronto District School Board did not include Danforth Gardens in their capital priorities; that was their submission to the min-

istry for consideration for funding. I will continue to work with the TDSB on behalf of my constituents to ensure that Danforth Gardens becomes a priority for the board.

Mr. Subramani and Mr. Mian have managed to compile over 700 signatures of concerned residents and parents in the neighbourhood who wish to see more funds available for the school's renovation.

I take great pride in how far we've come in providing extra education services in Ontario, but more needs to be done, and this is a key issue in my riding.

OUTSTANDING CITIZEN AWARDS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm proud today to stand up in this House and acknowledge 11 Huron-Bruce citizens who have been nominated for Outstanding Citizen awards. These awards celebrate people who have distinguished themselves as community leaders and who have made valuable contributions throughout the riding. These citizens were recognized this past Friday, December 6, at a special concert in Teeswater at the town hall.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend sincere appreciation to the individuals who took the time to nominate people who have made a difference in their local communities. This is a way to celebrate volunteers and hard-working community members. Our community is such a wonderful place to live and work, and these exceptional citizens were all present for this special evening.

I'd like to congratulate them: Rick McMurray from Lucknow, Jo-Ann McDonald from Brussels, Jim and Fran Farrell from Ripley, Vicki Carter from Bluevale, Quincy Bridge from Auburn, Ed Payette from Goderich, Hugh Mason from Huron Township, Doreen McGlynn from Teeswater, Tim Mancell from Walkerton and Laurie Dykstra from Exeter.

In recognition of their outstanding community involvement, I will be making a donation to Wes for Youth, an online support network for young people.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate all these citizens. It was somewhat serendipitous in the sense that, that afternoon, a wonderful gentleman by the name of Wally Ballagh had passed. He was an amazing champion for the town hall in Teeswater, and we dedicated all the awards that evening to his memory.

ANNUAL REPORT, OMBUDSMAN

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have laid today upon the table the 2012-13 annual report from the Ombudsman of Ontario for the open meeting law enforcement team.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

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

Bill 88, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act with respect to children 16 years of age and older / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille en ce qui concerne les enfants de 16 ans et plus.

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

Report adopted.

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

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): Your committee begs to report the following bill, without amendment:

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to finish the report, please.

Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

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

Interjections.

1520

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have three points of order at the same time.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All things being equal, in terms of who caught my eye after the report was submitted, it would be the minister.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

TRAVAUX DE LA CHAMBRE

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice respecting Bill 106, An Act to amend the French Language Services Act with respect to the French Language Services Commissioner.

M. Gilles Bisson: Point d'ordre là-dessus.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On the same point of order?

M. Gilles Bisson: Oui.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will acknowledge the member from Timmins–James Bay on the same point of order.

M. Gilles Bisson: Je pense que puisque c'est pour le commissaire des affaires francophones, j'aimerais qu'on prenne cette motion et qu'on se prononce en français aussi.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I appreciate the member's request, and I will defer to the minister to decide whether or not that's appropriate, because it's her decision on the point of order.

I would now clarify: The minister is seeking unanimous consent. Do we agree? Okay.

Minister.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je propose la troisième lecture du projet de loi 106, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services en français en ce qui concerne le commissaire aux services en français, et que ce projet de loi soit accepté immédiatement en troisième lecture, sans débat et sans amendement. Merci.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The unanimous consent is to put it here. So do we agree with that? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister will now move her motion for third reading.

FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT (FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES COMMISSIONER), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS (COMMISSAIRE AUX SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS)

M^{me} Meilleur moved third reading of the following bill:

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

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed.

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

Third reading agreed to.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the minister.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je m'en voudrais de ne pas souligner la contribution exceptionnelle de mon adjoint parlementaire pour m'avoir aidé à faire adopter ce projet de loi. Mon adjoint parlementaire, Grant Crack.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay on the same point of order.

M. Gilles Bisson: J'aimerais souligner la contribution de M^{me} France Gélinas, qui a introduit ce projet de loi à beaucoup de reprises à cette Assemblée, et finalement

que le gouvernement a cédé à cette motion. On est très fiers, comme néo-démocrates, que c'est arrivé.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe North on the same point of order.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will do this in English.

Interjections.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: As Chairman of the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, on Bill 106, I want to thank the minister and I want to thank our critic. I want to thank all members of the committee who sat in and who supported this bill, and all the people who made deputations—not only the four people here today, but in fact for 400 or 500 groups across the province of Ontario. Thank you very much for the support as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to try for the third time to get the government's Bill 105 passed.

Interjections.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Oh, sorry. The fourth time. We did one last week too. You're going to like this one.

I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act; Bill 58, An Act to proclaim Meningitis Awareness Day; and Bill 56, An Act to prohibit certain restrictions on the use of aggregates in performing public sector construction work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe–Grey is seeking unanimous consent to put a motion without notice on Bills 105, 58, and 56.

Do we agree? I heard a no.

Hon. John Milloy: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order: the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put a motion without notice on Bill 105.

Do we agree? I heard a no.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

STRENGTHENING AND IMPROVING GOVERNMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE RENFORCEMENT ET L'AMÉLIORATION DE LA GESTION PUBLIQUE

Mr. Milloy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 151, An Act to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 151, Loi visant à modifier diverses lois.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. John Milloy: During ministers' statements, please, Mr. Speaker.

FUNCTIONING MUNICIPAL COUNCILS ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE FONCTIONNEMENT EFFICACE DES CONSEILS MUNICIPAUX

Mr. McDonnell moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 152, An Act to amend the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 152, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

1530

Mr. Jim McDonnell: The bill amends the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, to change the date on which the term of the offices governed by the act begins from December 1 to the second Monday in November in the year of a regular election. The time frame within which recounts of votes must be completed would also be reduced.

The act is also amended to change the penalties for candidates who incur election campaign expenses exceeding the permitted amount, who fail to file the required documents regarding campaign finances or who fail to pay amounts required in relation to campaign surpluses. If a candidate incurs expenses exceeding the permitted amount, the candidates forfeits any office to which he or she is elected and is ineligible to be elected or appointed to office until after the next election. For the other defaults respecting campaign finances, the candidate is given 60 days to comply with the filing or payment requirement. Failure to comply results in forfeiture of the office and ineligibility to be elected or appointed to office until after the next election.

COMPLYING WITH INTERNATIONAL TRADE OBLIGATIONS ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 DE CONFORMITÉ AUX OBLIGATIONS COMMERCIALES INTERNATIONALES

Mr. Chiarelli moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 153, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 with respect to a World Trade Organization decision / Projet de loi 153, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité en ce qui concerne une décision de l'Organisation mondiale du commerce.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'll make my comments during ministerial statements.

MOTIONS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader seeks to put a motion without notice. All agreed? I heard a no.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to present a motion without notice on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. Do we agree? I heard a no.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. John Milloy: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Select Committee on Developmental Services.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice on the Select Committee on Developmental Services. Do we agree? We agree.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Select Committee on Developmental Services be authorized to meet for up to eight days during the winter adjournment, such days and locations to be determined by the committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy moves that the Select Committee on Developmental Services be authorized to meet for up to eight days during the winter adjournment, such days and locations to be determined by the committee. Do we agree? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(ii), the House shall meet from 6:45 to 12 o'clock midnight tonight, Wednesday, December 11, 2013.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy moves that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(ii), the House shall meet from 6:45 to 12 midnight tonight, Wednesday, December 11, 2013. Do we agree? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, 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 1535 to 1540.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Can I get some quiet?

Mr. Milloy has moved government notice of motion number 37. All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Fraser, John	Meilleur, Madeleine
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Milloy, John
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoskins, Eric	Moridi, Reza
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hunter, Mitzie	Murray, Glen R.
Chan, Michael	Jaczek, Helena	Naqvi, Yasir
Chiarelli, Bob	Jeffrey, Linda	Oraziotti, David
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Piruzza, Teresa
Crack, Grant	Leal, Jeff	Qaadri, Shafiq
Del Duca, Steven	MacCharles, Tracy	Sandals, Liz
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Sergio, Mario
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Wong, Soo
Dickson, Joe	Mauro, Bill	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	McMeekin, Ted	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McNeely, Phil	

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

Nays

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

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 40; the nays are 51.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): 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 to 9:30 p.m. tonight, Wednesday, December 11, 2013.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy moves that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 to 9:30 p.m. tonight, Wednesday, December 11, 2013. Do we agree? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

Same vote?

I heard a no.

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

The division bells rang from 1545 to 1550.

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

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McNeely, Phil
Balkissoon, Bas	Fraser, John	Meilleur, Madeleine
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Milloy, John
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoskins, Eric	Moridi, Reza
Chan, Michael	Hunter, Mitzie	Murray, Glen R.
Chiarelli, Bob	Jaczek, Helena	Naqvi, Yasir
Colle, Mike	Jeffrey, Linda	Oraziotti, David
Crack, Grant	Kwinter, Monte	Piruzza, Teresa
Damerla, Dipika	Leal, Jeff	Qaadri, Shafiq
Del Duca, Steven	MacCharles, Tracy	Sandals, Liz
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Sergio, Mario
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Sousa, Charles
Dickson, Joe	Mauro, Bill	Wong, Soo
Duguid, Brad	McMeekin, Ted	Wynne, Kathleen O.

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

Nays

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

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 42; the nays are 51.

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

Motion negatived.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion in order to extend the sitting of the House till Monday, December 16.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion. Do we agree?

I heard a no.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the people of Ontario rely on government to help deliver services that impact their lives each and every day; services like health

care, post-secondary education, justice and transportation. To meet the needs of Ontarians, these public services require a solid foundation, and that foundation is put in place right here in this Legislature.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

I would ask members to shuffle themselves quickly.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like some help from the members. Thank you.

Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I often have that effect on this place.

I'm very pleased to stand today to introduce the Strengthening and Improving Government Act. We've heard from Ontarians about the need for updates and changes, and we're taking action through this new act to strengthen the bricks and mortar of existing legislation, legislation that governs a variety of sectors in this province. These amendments will improve efficiency and responsiveness for Ontarians, and that's a priority for our government and for this assembly.

There are five components to the Strengthening and Improving Government Act. First, the act proposes to amend the Courts of Justice Act to help spouses who were married in Ontario but reside outside of Canada to get a divorce in the province if they are not able to get a divorce in their home jurisdiction. These changes would allow Ontario to effectively implement the new federal Civil Marriage Act. What's more, these changes would also help to uphold personal rights and freedoms for non-residents in Ontario.

The second element of the proposed act would provide greater certainty to pension members and plans. Amendments to the Pension Benefits Act would, if passed, clarify spousal entitlements to pre-retirement death benefits as well as joint and survivor pensions. They would also provide clarity about who is eligible to consolidate their pension benefits. These changes are a prudent step for pension members and plans in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, the third piece of the proposed act would help strengthen partnerships with the Ontario Medical Association. Individuals in this organization represent the diverse interests of Ontario's medical profession and key components of health care delivery in the province. The act proposes to amend the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act to better support representatives of the Ontario Medical Association. An immunity provision would prevent legal action against representatives of the association for acts done in good faith during negotiations with the government.

The fourth component of the act would better inform decision-making in our post-secondary education sector by amending the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act to allow the government to collect more meaningful information about post-secondary students' enrolment and transfer activities. This would improve the evaluation and development of educational policies and programs by providing access to high-quality data that

would enable more thorough analysis and research. These changes would benefit Ontario's students and, ultimately, our economy.

The fifth and final piece of the proposed Strengthening and Improving Government Act would enhance the quality of non-emergency transport services for medically stable patients who require a stretcher in Ontario, through amendments to the Highway Traffic Act. New regulations would require proper inspection, certification and registration standards for vehicles, drivers and businesses. Together, these amendments would ensure greater accountability for stretcher transportation service providers and greater peace of mind for Ontarians who require these services.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed Strengthening and Improving Government Act will bolster Ontario's post-secondary, health care, justice, pension and transportation legislation. This act is an important and necessary step forward. By supporting the passage of the Strengthening and Improving Government Act, the members of this Legislature can help strengthen public services and respond to the changing needs of our citizens.

ENERGY POLICIES

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Today I introduce the Electricity Amendment Act, 2013. The bill, if passed, makes modifications to the Electricity Act, 1998, that would bring Ontario into compliance with the World Trade Organization ruling on domestic content provisions and the feed-in tariff renewable energy program.

The bill would also continue our policy of lowering prices for renewable energy in Ontario. The changes the proposed bill would set into law are consistent with the rate mitigation actions taken in Ontario's updated long-term energy plan. Unveiled last week, the new long-term energy plan details the important steps Ontario has taken in the last nine months to mitigate electricity rates, including reduction in domestic content requirements, which would save ratepayers \$1.9 billion.

Other measures include renegotiating the green energy investment Samsung agreement, which reduced contract costs by \$3.7 billion; deferring the construction of two nuclear reactors, which would remove \$15 billion from the rate base; introducing new rules for wind generators that would reduce costs by up to \$200 million per year; and related Ontario Power Authority contract amendments, which would save ratepayers up to \$65 million over the next five years.

1600

Further to those steps, the changes proposed today would remove the need for the government to set domestic content requirements related to the Feed-In Tariff program. This will ensure the program complies with the World Trade Organization's General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Investment Measures. The government had previously reduced the FIT domestic content rules by 50%.

One of Ontario's objectives in establishing the Feed-In Tariff program was to kick-start the development of a new clean energy manufacturing and service sector. Ontario's clean energy initiatives have created 31,000 jobs and generated \$24 billion of investments in the province. The domestic content requirements in our Feed-In Tariff program were always intended to be temporary while our local industry was established—and approximately 7,000 megawatts of renewable energy contracts received the benefit of domestic content rules.

Today, Ontario boasts a strong renewable energy sector, with over 30 manufacturing firms currently supplying materials for local renewable energy projects and starting to export many, too.

Today, Ontario's wind and solar manufacturing facilities are poised to help supply the world, and Ontario remains committed to expanding renewable energy integration into our supply mix.

Earlier this year, the government committed to making 900 megawatts of new renewable capacity available between 2013 and 2018 for the FIT program—systems larger than 10 kilowatts and up to 500 kilowatts—and microFIT programs. Starting in 2014, FIT would have an annual procurement target of 150 megawatts, with a 50-megawatt annual target for microFIT. These projects are expected to create more than 6,000 jobs while producing enough electricity each year for more than 125,000 homes.

Further, through a new competitive procurement process, Ontario plans to make available for procurement up to 300 megawatts of wind, 140 megawatts of solar, 50 megawatts of bioenergy and 50 megawatts of hydroelectric capacity in 2014.

In 2015, the targets would be up to 300 megawatts of wind, 140 megawatts of solar, 50 megawatts of bioenergy and 45 megawatts of hydroelectric.

Any capacity that is not procured under these procurements or not developed under existing contracts would be reallocated for procurement in 2016 for each renewable technology.

The government has brought predictability and stability to renewable energy procurements, and the legislation introduced today would help ensure that price reduction is a core requirement of our upcoming renewable energy procurements.

I look forward to working with the opposition to see this amendment passed.

FIRE SAFETY

SÉCURITÉ-INCENDIE

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I am pleased to stand in the House to support the Ontario fire marshal's campaign to make this December the safest on record.

The holiday season is a special time of the year. It is a time to gather together to celebrate and enjoy the people in your life who are most important to you. It's a time to share meals, to help those less fortunate and to recognize

the higher functions of society: caring for one another, supporting each other and working towards a better world. It is an important time, and we should all take extra precautions to make sure it remains special and to ensure our loved ones are safe from fire.

C'est pourquoi il importe aujourd'hui de reconnaître que le mois de décembre est l'un des mois où les risques d'incendie résidentiel sont les plus grands. Nous devons unir nos efforts pour faire en sorte que les Ontariennes et les Ontariens célèbrent les fêtes en toute sécurité.

Last December, there were 60 injuries and eight tragic, unnecessary deaths due to fire. Unattended cooking, careless smoking and unsafe use of heating equipment are the top causes of fatal fires in December, with cooking fires accounting for nearly 20% of all home fires for the month. These fires are preventable.

Yesterday, the Ontario fire marshal, Ted Wieclawek, launched the 12 Days of Holiday Fire Safety campaign. On his website, there is a list of tips for Ontarians on how they can prevent fires, such as staying in the kitchen when cooking, smoking outside and extinguishing candles before leaving a room. It's also important to make sure that smoke and carbon monoxide alarms are properly installed and have fresh batteries.

L'an dernier, dans 35 % des incendies évitables, soit il n'y avait aucun détecteur de fumée, soit les détecteurs ne fonctionnaient pas.

Last year, in 35% of preventable fires, there were either no smoke alarms or the alarms were not working.

Mr. Speaker, I am also asking all Ontarians who have Christmas trees and other decorations to keep them away from fireplaces and heaters, and to discard any damaged lights before decorating. These are simple but important precautions that we can all take that will help us keep our loved ones safe in our homes.

J'aimerais demander à toute la population ontarienne de garder ces conseils de sécurité à l'esprit et de collaborer à faire de ce mois de décembre le plus sûr de l'histoire de la province.

I also invite all Ontarians to visit the fire marshal's website to learn more about community and fire safety.

I wish everyone in the chamber and across the province a merry Christmas and a safe and happy holiday season.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Responses?

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'll be splitting my time with two of my colleagues in the opposition, who will be addressing the other ministers.

I'll be addressing the Minister of Energy, and I simply want to say this: This is a sort of "told you so" moment. On the eve of the passage of what was then the Green Energy Act, which is still a monstrosity in our view, we warned this government that their Green Energy Act would create some problems. We have been talking about this for literally years: that there needed to be changes. Now, of course, in the backdrop, looking at some of the

issues we have faced in the last few weeks—a \$1.1-billion gas plant scandal, a request for a 30% rate hike from OPG, the long-term energy plan that says our rates will go up between 33% to 50% as an increase and, of course, yesterday, what I thought was probably one of the most appalling Auditor General's reports I have seen since I have taken my seat in this place, with respect to the energy sector—this government comes here and says, "Oh, this bill is going to save us money." Not so, Speaker.

Had they not proceeded the way they have with the Green Energy Act, with OPG, with the gas plants, with their previous long-term energy plans, we would not be in the mess we are in today.

I will look at this piece of legislation. We will consult with our advisers, particularly the legal advisers that we have, but let me be very clear to the minister: This is a government that has lost a lot of credibility with respect to the energy sector, and we are going to continue to hold their feet to the fire.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: Mr. Speaker, I look on this as just an attempt to distract from the alarming record of this government. I think it's really just an attempt to turn the page and get people's attention away from what's really happening here, and that's really unfortunate.

Jobs are fleeing Ontario daily. It's not just a matter of not having a plan to keep those jobs; they have no plan to attract new jobs. Our leader, Tim Hudak, brings this matter up daily and challenges them to come forward with their plan, and we had hoped that by the end of this session they would do just that. But unfortunately, here we are, stuck with what we see today: nothing to do with jobs.

I'm not saying that there isn't any good in what they've put forward, because there are always good things in most things put forward. Nevertheless, it's not what we need here. We need something to enhance the economy of this province, and they're not willing to deal with those issues. I think it's time the people of Ontario had a say in the government of this province.

1610

FIRE SAFETY

Mr. Steve Clark: The holidays are a special time, as Ontarians gather with family and friends to celebrate the spirit of the season, but we know that a moment of inattention during the hustle and bustle this time of year brings with it can lead to a fire with tragic consequences. As the Ontario PC critic for community safety and correctional services, I rise on behalf of our caucus to urge everyone to make this a fire-free season.

To help make this the most fire-safe December ever, the Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council has put a fire prevention spin on the classic Christmas carol The 12 Days of Christmas. The 12 days of fire safety offer On-

tarians a dozen tips to practise not only over the holidays, but all year round. Let me use this opportunity to wish Ontario's firefighters and all first responders a very merry Christmas and a happy holiday season.

Remember, as we're enjoying time with our families over the holidays, our firefighters, police and paramedics are on duty, ready to answer the call to help someone in need. If we do our part to be safe, we'll help ensure that those brave first responders get to go home and celebrate with their families when their shift is over.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A quick response to the Minister of Government Services—three quick points, actually. I want to thank him for being so charitable that in the spirit of Christmas and in the spirit of clarity, transparency and plenty of notice, we had a briefing at 2 o'clock. So that was good.

The second point is that, as all of you know, omnibus bills have become a growing menace at the provincial and at the federal level, but at least I can say that the government hasn't brought in the usual omnibus bill, which is usually this thick, and has decided to go through the Minister of Government Services and present a bill that is much, much smaller. So that's a positive thing that I can give you for your presentation of these changes you're making to five ministries.

And the third point is, we'll have a chance to review them. They don't appear to be that controversial, and we'll deal with them as they come up.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I rise to respond to the introduction of the bill by the minister and his commentary. With regard to the bill, we'll read it, we'll consider the consequences, and we will be coming back with further commentary. Most of the minister's time was spent patting himself and the government on the back for the job they've done on the electricity file.

I was extraordinarily angry when I read the long-term energy plan, and frankly, my constituents across the board feel the same way. This government blew \$180 million in preparation for building nuclear power plants at Darlington that were never going to go ahead. Consultants got wealthy. Contractors got wealthy. A whole bunch of lawyers probably did pretty well. But that plant wasn't going to be built, and we blew \$180 million. No wonder people are angry.

This government continued the Progressive Conservative program of private power deals. The privatization that Mike Harris started, these guys fell in love with. They went further. They continue to turn over our electricity system to the point where we're spending somewhere between \$600 million and a billion dollars every year, simply in profits, to private power companies. That is hitting people in their pockets. It is making it difficult for them to keep their homes warm in winter. That is shameful.

But they didn't stop there. They blew \$1.1 billion on gas plants that they were warned were risky, expensive and not needed, but they went ahead until the political pain became too great, until it became clear that they were going to lose votes, and then a blank cheque was their parachute, one that all of us have to pay on demand.

This is a government that had the opportunity to do exactly what it's talking about in its long-term energy plan: invest in conservation. But look at what the Environmental Commissioner has to say: a government that's not going to meet its targets, that in the Environmental Commissioner's words, in the past has had a performance that is underwhelming.

Speaker, we get stuck in the pocket, we get stuck environmentally, we get stuck with the undermining of the industrial base of this province, and this government pats itself on the back. It should simply be ashamed—ashamed of what it has done to this province and to our electricity sector.

FIRE SAFETY

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise, as the NDP community safety and correctional services critic, to respond to the minister's statement on the third annual 12 Days of Holiday Fire Safety campaign. In particular, I want to recognize the office of the fire marshal and the leadership of Fire Marshal Ted Wieclawek for developing, coordinating and implementing this very important public safety initiative.

At this festive time of year, it's easy to get caught up in the excitement of holiday shopping, decorating and entertaining, and to lose sight of the simple things we can do to ensure fire safety. The 12 Days of Holiday Fire Safety campaign brings attention to fire safety by reminding us of 12 fire prevention tips.

On behalf of my NDP caucus colleagues and our leader, Andrea Horwath, I wish all members of this House and all Ontarians a happy and fire-free holiday season.

PETITIONS

CELLULAR TRANSMISSION EQUIPMENT

Mr. Toby Barrett: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I see one signature here from local musician Fred Eaglesmith, who was on David Letterman just a while back.

"Whereas the operation of cellular transmission equipment on new or existing cell towers has been proposed or is occurring near residential areas in Haldimand-Norfolk and other communities across the province;

"Whereas Industry Canada has ultimate authority to approve the location of cellular communications transmission equipment under the federal Radiocommunication Act;

“Whereas the province of Ontario has no jurisdiction in the placement of cell communications equipment or services;

“Whereas many area residents and local elected officials have expressed concerns with the location due to its proximity to residential areas;

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

“That the province of Ontario request that the government of Canada review the siting of cellular commercial communications transmission equipment in residential areas; and

“That the province of Ontario request that the government of Canada place a moratorium on the installation of cellular commercial communication transmission equipment on new or existing towers within 1,000 metres of residential homes until an improved separation distance is established by the federal government.”

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, hundreds of signatures from 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, affix my signature and send it down with page Jeffrey.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

“Whereas virtually all legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

“Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

1620

“Whereas progressive record keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiple-

point data entry, and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

“Whereas as there is more to full exploitation of technology than having email;

“Whereas the Legislative Assembly has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

“Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

“We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal devices, maximize the many technology offerings and orchestrate a much-needed modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario ...

“In agreement whereof, we affix our signatures.”

I certainly support this highly eloquent petition and send it to you via page Spencer.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

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

“Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has indicated it will be making improvements to Highway 21”—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to interrupt the member and ask her to set down the sign. I’ll allow her to start again.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I’ve been receiving thousands of signatures, and I am pleased to present the following petition:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

the function of the highway while aligning with the active transportation needs of all interested parties who use the Saugeen Rail Trail.”

I agree with these thousands of people, affix my signature and send it to the table with Sarah.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again, I present a few hundred petitions.

“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 agree with this petition and present it to page Jonathan to bring down to the Clerk.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas virtually all legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

“Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

“Whereas progressive record keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiple-point data entry, and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

“Whereas as there is more to full exploitation of technology than having email;

“Whereas the Legislative Assembly has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

“Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

“We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal devices, maximize the many technology offerings and orchestrate a much-needed modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario....”

I certainly support this petition, will sign it and send it to you via page Najat.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): In the five minutes left I would ask the members to abbreviate their petitions.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the purpose of Ontario’s Environmental Protection Act (EPA) is to ‘provide for the protection and conservation of the natural environment.’ RSO 1990, c. E.19, s. 3.; and

“Whereas ‘all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local ecosystem.’—Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Health in Canada;

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

“That section 27 of the EPA should be reviewed and amended immediately to prohibit the establishment of new or expanded landfills at fractured bedrock sites and other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within the province of Ontario.”

I affix my signature. Thank you very much for that time, and I hope it got into my minute time.

DOG OWNERSHIP

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

“Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

“Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

“Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

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

“To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners’ Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and to instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types.”

On behalf of all the family pets that have been euthanized because of the way they look—hundreds and hundreds of them—I’m going to sign this and give it to Michaela to be delivered to the table.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas virtually all legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

“Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

“Whereas progressive record keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiple-point data entry, and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

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“Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

“We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal devices, maximize the many technology offerings and orchestrate a much-needed modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario....”

Speaker, I send this to you, signed, via page Sarah.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. John O’Toole: “Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Esbriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

“Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in lung function; and

“Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications;

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

“Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding.”

I’m pleased to sign and support this on behalf of the many people suffering from IPF, and present it to Jeffrey, one of the pages.

1630

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again, from hundreds of Ontarians across northern Ontario:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with this petition and present it to page Najat to bring it down to the Clerk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 30(c), I interrupt petitions and call orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CANADA PENSION PLAN

RÉGIME DE PENSIONS DU CANADA

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario call upon the federal government to recognize that there is a need to improve and strengthen the retirement income system in Canada and take immediate steps to implement enhanced Canada pension plan benefits for all Canadians;

Whereas the Canada pension plan is the foundation of the nation’s retirement income system, the maximum CPP retirement benefit for new retirees is just over \$1,000 per month or \$12,000 per year; and the percentage of new beneficiaries receiving maximum CPP retirement pension is only 6% and where the average Ontarian is receiving just under \$7,000 per year, or just 56% of the maximum benefit;

And recognizing the retirement savings challenge, the Ontario government has developed a comprehensive retirement income strategy and is leading the call for a CPP enhancement;

An enhancement to the CPP is critical to ensuring that Ontarians, particularly middle-income earners, have greater financial security in retirement;

The Ontario government has laid out and received agreement from other provinces on a number of objectives for strengthening the retirement income system,

including a CPP enhancement, focusing on today's workers, moderating the effect on the economy and improving the retirement incomes of those most at risk;

And while others will say we can put this off for another day, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario disagrees and encourages the federal government to agree to enhance CPP now;

And that this assembly agree that Ontario should pursue its own solution to enhancing retirement security should the federal government not respond in a timely fashion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Ms. Wynne has moved government notice of motion number 40. I recognize the Premier to lead off the debate.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm very happy to be able to speak to this motion, and I'll be sharing my time with the Minister of Finance. I will just say—and I'll speak to this later—that the Minister of Finance, the minister responsible for seniors' affairs and I had the opportunity to meet with CARP, the organization representing seniors across the country. I'll be interested to share their perspective, but they are very supportive of this direction.

Since being sworn into office almost a year ago, I've been travelling across Ontario. I've been travelling to every corner of the province. I've been to almost every riding in Ontario, and everywhere I go, I meet hard-working men and women who are doing so much for their families. They are working hard to make sure that in the immediate term their families have what they need and that in the future they have what they need. I know that they're facing challenges. One of those challenges that I have heard about and they have talked to me about is making sure that they can save for the future.

In October, I was lucky enough to visit the home of Tommaso Altrui and Serena Bird in Brampton. They have their own business and they're expecting their fourth child. They are very energetic young people involved in the community and in their business, but like so many people in this province, they don't have a company pension, so when they retire, they will depend entirely on their savings and their contributions to the CPP. They worry—so do I—that this will not be enough. They also talked to me about their employees; they are concerned for themselves, but they're also concerned for their employees.

As the Globe and Mail noted recently, three out of four eligible individuals did not contribute anything to their RRSPs in 2010, despite their generous tax deductions. I think that's important, because often what comes back when we talk on this subject is the notion that there are mechanisms; there are RRSPs. If we look at not contributing anything, that three out of four eligible people didn't contribute anything in 2010, I think it's an indication that there is an issue here. The burden of planning for retirement rests overwhelmingly on hard-working people like Tommaso and Serena. As government, I believe we need to do more to make sure they have the support they need as they get older. This is an issue that is confronting us at both the provincial and federal levels of government.

The Bank of Montreal recently released a study showing that more than half of Canadians are expected to retire with a mortgage. The fact is that many Canadians are unprepared for retirement, even as they continue to work hard and to contribute to the economy.

This is an issue that we need to address together. This is not an issue that can be dealt with in isolation from one another. It's our responsibility to make sure the people of Ontario can retire securely with comfort, dignity and confidence.

Il est notre responsabilité de nous assurer que la population de l'Ontario puisse prendre une retraite assurée, dans le confort, dans la dignité et sans souci.

This is a social imperative; yes, it is that. But it's also an economic imperative. If we don't address this looming crisis, we'll all have to contend with the consequences of that, of people not having access to the supports that they need, of people needing support after the fact, when there wasn't action taken before their retirement.

This is why our government is taking action, Mr. Speaker. This is why we believe that it's very important that we call on the federal government at this time to work with us. As the chair of this year's Council of the Federation of Canada's Premiers, I have been working with my provincial counterparts to advocate for an enhancement to the CPP.

When my fellow Premiers met in beautiful Niagara-on-the-Lake this past summer, this July, I made sure that this issue was on the agenda. My colleagues agreed that there is a need to consider options for enhancing the retirement income system, including the Canada pension plan, the Quebec pension plan and the pooled registered pension plans, the PRPPs. We agreed at that meeting that a modest, phased-in and fully funded expansion of CPP-QPP would increase retirement income for future retirees and that it's consistent with the efforts to improve labour mobility and enhance labour market efficiency. Those are obviously concerns, Mr. Speaker.

Our finance minister has been working with his counterparts, too. But what we have said is that if an agreement on enhancing the CPP cannot be found, then we are prepared to move forward with a made-in-Ontario solution. That is the degree to which we feel that this is critical, Mr. Speaker.

I don't think this should be a partisan issue. I hear mutterings from across the floor; I won't call them heckles at this point. But I really believe that this is something that we all should be concerned about.

In fact, in our country's proud history, we can see the demonstration that if we work together on this front, then we can make progress. When CPP was last in need of an overhaul, in the 1990s, as life expectancies continued to expand, federal and provincial governments worked together to return the system to a surer financial footing. I'm sure that members in this House will remember that and remember the degree to which there was collaborative action. We've done it before, and we can do it again.

I don't believe that we have time to waste. I think that we can't simply allow the federal government to reject a

CPP enhancement without any indication of how they will work to address this serious issue.

I think it's important to note that there is no one across the country saying that this isn't an issue. There is broad consensus that this is an issue. I think the reality of that means that we need to find a way to move forward. An enhancement to the CPP can bolster retirement incomes in a way that's fair, universal and efficient.

Une amélioration au régime de pensions du Canada peut augmenter les revenus de retraite de façon juste, universelle et efficace.

It promises good return on a stable income in retirement, it will help to protect our most vulnerable citizens, and it will encourage people to plan for their own future.

I reject the arguments of those who I believe wrongly characterize this planned savings as some kind of punishment, that there's a punitive aspect to it. That is not what this is, Mr. Speaker. Thinking about the future and making sure that we're all adequately prepared should not be something that we argue over, or an idea that diminishes or is put forward only for political gain. It is a chance for us to look at the future with confidence and, quite frankly, with vision. It allows us to stand together on an issue that will touch us all, and our children and our grandchildren. The population is aging, and we are making sure that we prepare our population for retirement and that that is our collective responsibility.

1640

I want to commend CARP. As I said, the Minister of Finance and I and the minister responsible for seniors' affairs had the opportunity to meet with representatives from CARP today, and there were representatives from across the country. There was a representative from British Columbia, from Nova Scotia, from Quebec and from Alberta, and they had come here specifically because they wanted to meet in advance of the Ministers of Finance from across the country getting together this weekend. I just want to note that they have done a survey of their members. They have strong support, and in fact political support, for this initiative. They noted today that their commitment to this goes to the parties that they will support in upcoming elections, because they believe that this is so important. Remember, these are people for whom this will not be a benefit. This will not have an impact on their retirement. These are people who are either into their retirement or about to go into their retirement, so this is a group that is advocating for future generations. I think, Mr. Speaker, they make compelling arguments.

Susan Eng, who is the vice-president of advocacy for CARP, says, "The politicians now have an opportunity to improve retirement security for a generation. But they have to take the first step now." That is the position of CARP, and I think it is a compelling one.

I had the opportunity to meet with Prime Minister Harper last week. I raised this issue. I'll continue to advocate on this issue in my capacity as Premier and as the chair of the Council of the Federation and in all of my interactions with my provincial colleagues. It is that important to us, Mr. Speaker, that we find a way to take action on this.

Our government has a plan to grow the economy and create jobs by investing in people. We've been clear that investments in infrastructure and the creation of a business environment that is dynamic are extremely important and are fundamental to our job creation plan.

Taking care of the people of Ontario, hard-working people like Tommaso and Serena and everyone like them, in their retirement is a major commitment that we are making, and that is why we're calling on the federal government to work with us on this and to work across the country so that we can find a consensus to make sure that we can move forward and that we can ensure that retirement for the people of the province and the country.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this motion in the House on an issue that will have a profound effect on all Ontarians and indeed all Canadians.

The Ontario government has recently introduced a three-part plan to grow our economy and create jobs, which includes investing in people, building modern infrastructure and supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate, as the Premier has just stated.

As part of our plan to invest in people, we want to help ensure that Ontarians and all Canadians can retire comfortably. Our government has been taking action over the last number of years with a multi-faceted approach to enhance the retirement income system. But we know that there's more to do, which is why we continue to advocate for an enhancement to the Canada pension plan, known as CPP.

The CPP is the foundation of the nation's retirement income system, and it offers tremendous advantages as a retirement savings vehicle. It provides benefits throughout the life of a retiree and helps ensure that people do not run out of money in their retirement. It operates at a low cost and has an excellent track record for investment.

Although this program has served generations of Ontarians well, we must make improvements now if we're to ensure that today's middle-income workers are able to save enough to ensure that they have sufficient income when they retire.

The maximum CPP retirement benefit for new retirees is just over \$1,000 per month, or \$12,000 a year. The percentage, however, of new beneficiaries receiving the maximum CPP retirement pension is only 6%. The average Ontarian is receiving just under \$7,000 a year. That's about 56% of the maximum benefit.

An enhancement to the CPP is critical to ensuring that Ontarians, particularly middle-income earners, have greater financial security in their retirement.

Recently, Premiers from across the country agreed to four objectives for enhancement to the CPP. These include:

- (1) a fully funded enhancement that focuses on today's workers;
- (2) undertaking further analysis and evaluation of the short and longer-term effects on businesses, families and the economy;

(3) improving the retirement incomes of middle-income workers who are most at risk of having insufficient retirement savings; and

(4) protecting lower-income workers.

These objectives should inform the design of a CPP enhancement.

Some have raised concerns that a CPP enhancement would harm the economy. However, a plan to enhance the CPP would include a two-year notice period and adequate phase-in for contribution increases that would give businesses, workers and the economy time to adjust.

There is also a significant economic impact to this enhancement. Additional CPP contributions would be re-invested, both domestically and internationally, creating jobs and economic growth. And over the longer term, higher retirement income would contribute to a greater quality of life for retirees and a stronger economy.

A recent Boston Consulting Group study found that defined benefit pension plans such as CPP would reduce costs to taxpayers and, through the benefits they pay out, contribute tens of billions of dollars to the economy and to the coffers of governments across Canada. In other words, it has economic benefits now and reduces costs in the long term. That, Mr. Speaker, is a win-win.

Yet, incredibly, the federal government has resisted calls to initiate these enhancements and these discussions on CPP. They say that we can put off preparation for an enhancement to the Canada pension plan for another day. We strongly disagree. We don't have time to waste. We must take action now, so that today's workers have more security in their retirement tomorrow. We all pay a heavy price for the federal government's inaction. Ontarians and all Canadians deserve leadership on this issue.

Ontario continues to work with other provinces and territories to find a Canada-wide agreement on CPP enhancement. Next week, at the federal-provincial-territorial finance ministers' meeting, we will continue our discussions, and if the federal government continues to block provincial efforts to help secure a better retirement, we will move to implement a made-in-Ontario alternative. We will protect future retirees, protect today's workers and invest in the people of Ontario.

Provinces across Canada have agreed that an enhancement to the CPP is necessary, and all agree and understand that we have a problem and an issue. Even the members of the federal government recognize that a problem exists. We are at the table, encouraging the federal government to ensure that we resolve that problem for the benefit of our future generations, and that is what seniors at CARP did today. They're not looking for themselves; they're looking for the benefit of our future, as we all should be.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to rise and speak to the motion before us today. I just want to say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

I think the first thing that comes to mind when you are looking at this—because when you look at the motion, it

says “to improve and strengthen the retirement income system in Canada.” It says “the Ontario government has developed a comprehensive retirement income strategy,” and it says the enhancement of “CPP is critical to ensuring that Ontarians, particularly middle-income earners ... ” and, finally, “that this assembly agree that Ontario should pursue its own solution to enhancing retirement security should the federal government not respond in a timely fashion.”

1650

Mr. Speaker, I've pulled these four parts to this motion, because what I notice, as I look through them, is that there's absolutely no indication of how this would happen or how it would actually be paid for. So what we're being asked, as an assembly, is to virtually sign a blank cheque to look at this, if we were to continue discussion. But this motion actually carries sort of a bit of a threat at the end: that Ontario will pursue its own solution.

I want to begin by saying that the issue of pensions is something on which governments have, in greater and lesser extent, in varying extent, come to the table in their own communities, in their own jurisdictions, to recognize the importance of looking, again, at pensions. When I say “again,” I mean that there have been models of pensions for many decades, but there are circumstances that many countries and provinces and American states recognize today as a new set of issues, where they might have identified, as many did, the tsunami of people who would be retiring now because they were the baby boomers. So the issues around that group reaching retirement age has been something that people have talked about for years, quite frankly.

Mostly, they've talked about the kind of pressures that that would leave on health care, on institutions, the kind of impact it would have when people left the labour force. We have all kinds of studies that have been done: the 25 jobs that have too many people applying for them, the top 25 that are crying out for people. We know that in agriculture the average age is 56 years. Truck drivers, I believe, are older. There is all kinds of work that has been done to try to build awareness that, as this group of people moved through their life patterns, there would be changes.

I certainly remember that it had a great deal to do with the boom in education, in building community colleges and increasing universities and things like that. But what's come to pass most recently in this ongoing conversation about the impact of such a wide group of people, large number of people, coming through in a relatively short time is just becoming better and better understood in terms of the question of pensions, because there are things we can't change about pensions. One of them is, as well as what I refer to as the tsunami of retirees, that those people now have a much longer life expectancy than their predecessors who went through the retirement process.

Years ago, those pensions were determined on the basis of retiring at 65, maybe working for 30 years or something like that, and then probably the expectation

was that the pension might need to be there for somewhere between three and five years, but nothing in the way that today's pensions have to look at life expectancy. People would look at the fact that now, for instance, teachers and many others who retire at an age of less than 65 work for 25 years and collect a pension for 30. This kind of thing, plus the changes in the numbers of people coming along behind, has created a sudden urgency on the part of the people who think about retirement plans and the kind of crisis that they see, because the third thing over which we have no control is a low return on investments.

For the last 10 to 12 years, people have been watching that particular part of the complex retirement problem and realizing that the assumptions they made years ago simply don't stand up to scrutiny today; they just aren't where we are. It was prudent to be looking at a return on investment a few years ago, before the decline, of 6% to 8%. That would be a very modest, prudent kind of expectation. But today that's something that you dream about, that you remember. We're looking at an entirely different framework in which to look at pensions: life expectancy, the number of retirees, the low interest rates. These are all things over which we have no direct control. There are things that can be altered, such as the retirement age, such as looking at career-averaging of income as opposed to the last five years, such as the question of basing a pension on 70% of your earnings. Those are the kinds of details that people can work with in looking at how to update pensions.

I think it's important to stop at this point and remind everybody that there are workplace pensions for only about 30% of the population. The other 70% do not have a workplace pension. So they look at the fact that as people in the community, as Ontarians, they of course are providing for the 70% or whatever is the amount on workplace pensions—because most of them are in the public sector—they are supporting those pensions. It has become obvious, when people look at the manner in which these have been structured, that because of life expectancy and the amounts of money we're talking about, we have the issue of the potential for unfunded liabilities. What that means is, quite simply, the fact that that kind of money has not been set aside. Where at one time the money that was collected by you and your employer would have tidily taken you into a fairly safe retirement financially, that's not the case. Because of those low interest rates, you're looking at a tear in that social fabric, of the amount of money collected for you. All of a sudden, it needs to be between \$1 million and \$2 million to provide you with what had been expected.

The whole area of pensions, then, is something that has taken up the interest of many, many countries and states, as I mentioned. Ontario has come somewhat late to the conversation, but the advantage to that is that you have other jurisdictions to look at. You have ones that have chosen to do nothing, in which case you have the public sector people in Detroit getting 10 cents on the dollar, and you have cities in California that have declared bankruptcy; or you can go to countries like

Holland and Britain, Rhode Island and most recently New Brunswick, where people have come together, understood the challenge of the day and worked on a process that would better suit the circumstances we have today.

1700

The government, in its motion—and I read out some of the key parts to that—failed to include anything about the cost. We know that public sector pensions are paid 50% by the individual, and the other half by the government, which, of course, indirectly is the taxpayer. I think anyone who looks at this motion today is going to say, "Well, this is interesting." Usually most of us want more money, so we might not be in disagreement with the notion of increasing, but there's no cost. Nothing here tells us what this would cost. Nothing here tells us how it would actually happen.

So I thought it was important to look about for the cost. The first thing that comes to mind is, of course, that it's paid for by employer and employee, that each has to pay an equal amount into the CPP. Well, there are a couple of things that are really important to understand about that.

The first thing is, obviously, you have to be employed. If you happen to belong to the long, two-and-a-half-page list of people who have lost their jobs in the last few months, you're not part of this conversation, because you're not in a position as an employed person. So the first thing we have to understand is that there are close to a million people in this province for whom this conversation is a waste of time until they get a job.

The other part of the equation is those people who are the employers who are paying in. Well, that is after they have paid the global positioning bill part of their hydro bill, the other costs to energy, the increase in municipal taxes, the burden of regulation, and the list goes on and on and on. We have the picture, then, of something that comes from a much earlier period: Atlas, the man with his back bent over, holding up the entire globe. The business people of Ontario are now like Atlas, bent over with the entire fiscal responsibility of all of these programs on top of them.

Sometimes people forget that the only way that government can extract any tax money, any licence, any fee, any of these costs, from business is when they make a profit. It becomes harder and harder for people to make a profit, and therefore more and more difficult.

When you start adding on—and this is, as I understand, to double the contribution to CPP—you are talking now about one more item put on that poor business person whose image you should see as Atlas bent over with the world on his back. As I say, people forget. They are always talking about, "Well, business can pay for this" or, "We'll make this opportunity," and regulations will continue to rise and the cost associated with them. But they have to make a profit. When we start looking at what the challenges are to making a profit, it brings me to the 12th annual report of Roger Martin. On page 19, it says, "Ontario remains in 14th place out of 16 peer juris-

dictions, even after years of improvements and recommendations from the task force.”

Now, I can tell you that as an elected member I have always looked forward to these annual reports, because they provide MPPs and obviously the public—because the booklets are online, they are available, they're public information—an analysis every year. So the statistics that are used are up to date. They concentrate. Their purpose is to provide a picture of Ontario in order to give not only us as MPPs but also the public at large the opportunity to have an in-depth look at what we are doing and how well we are doing.

I find it very discouraging that after, I think, 13 years—sorry, 12; the 12th annual report. I find it very discouraging that after 12 years of providing advice, obviously largely to this government, we are 14th out of 16. People need to understand how much that affects what we are able to do; what we are able to invest in; what we are able to do to provide infrastructure and future opportunities; what we are able to do encouraging entrepreneurship and investment in our community and providing jobs for our next generations—our children and our grandchildren.

So I have a problem. We have this motion; nothing to do with how it's paid for. I've suggested to you what the problems are, because the taxpayer is the payee. Then you have to wonder, well, who really wants this? If you start examining how difficult this would be, what are the kinds of problems?

I've suggested to you that the private sector is stretched to the max. They see everything coming at them as an increased cost of doing business. The regulatory burden is costly for people, and sometimes it's very difficult for people to actually conform. I have two stories from my riding. One is that MOE said a door should be hung a certain way, and the Ministry of Labour said it should be hung the opposite way—same door. I have another constituent who has the MOE saying, “This is the level of chlorine that's allowed,” and the Ministry of Health saying, “No, you have to conform to our needs,” which is a higher level of chlorine. So it's no wonder that people have difficulty being able to do this.

I waved, a moment ago, at the list of people in this province who have lost their jobs. In my riding last week, there was an announcement that 550 jobs would be leaving the town of Bradford West Gwillimbury. These are real people. These are people who have families. These are people who haven't done anything wrong, who find themselves in a precarious position with absolutely no idea how precarious or how difficult it will be for them to find another job. Are they in a position to be able to find a job? Do they have the right skill set? Are people going to look at them as experienced or as yesterday's person? I think it would be very difficult for them to be convinced that they should double their CPP contribution—and, of course, they can't until they get a job.

1710

There is the question, then, about why we are having this conversation. Well, one of the reasons is that the Canadian Labour Congress and other unions have strong-

ly supported the increase of CPP. At first, I didn't quite follow the line there, until I realized that by increasing the amount for CPP, that reduces the amount that they are responsible for in the amount of the person's pension. So by encouraging this government to suggest this and encourage others to do it, it would actually then help with the size of the unfunded liability. This is, I think, probably why we see specific areas then looking at supporting this.

I suggest to you that too many people are having trouble being able to make ends meet. You have all kinds of people who have small businesses who are obliged to pay both sides of their CPP, and they can't manage that.

The other thing is that I'm concerned about major companies, should this go forward, because we're talking about—I'm not sure; I have too many notes. But we're talking about \$3 billion that would be added to the burden of contribution. So it's a rhetorical question, but I ask, does this mean that companies like GM are going to stay when they have that kind of additional cost added to their bottom line?

I think that in many cases we've looked at—and I certainly have talked to businesses in my riding that feel they are making some progress, obviously not the one with the 550 people out of work, but others who feel that we have a very fragile economy, one that we need to be very careful with. When we look at that kind of burden, it doesn't matter if you are a small business or a big business. You know the old story about how to start a small business: Begin with a big one. I'm not sure that that's changed very much here.

We have to look at the whole picture in this motion. It is suggesting a track that is very, very challenging for business and for people. I go back to what I suggested earlier: The only way you can pay is when you make a profit. If you are in the position of being assaulted on all sides by licences and fees and taxes—

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: All that red tape.

Mrs. Julia Munro: —and the red tape that is costly—even minimum wage. Roger Martin's document, about four years ago, dealt with the impact of minimum wage. I know that in my riding there was a businessman who explained to me that he always hired kids to give them their first job opportunity. He recognized that they needed greater supervision, but he always thought it was a good idea to provide them with that first job opportunity. But there reached a point where he could have three students at minimum wage or two adults who didn't require the same supervision who would actually be doing the job of three younger people. Well, it's a tough call. He's obviously going to take two adults that he knows he doesn't have to supervise the same way as the three young kids. But he recognized the value of being able to give those kids jobs. So it's very unfortunate that that kind of thinking has also surfaced when there are so many situations that we need to understand.

Yesterday, in the National Post, Andrew Coyne had an article about, “Why increase CPP levies when government could force people to save more in a personal account?”

In the few minutes that remain, I want to talk about the PRPP. The Minister of Finance did make reference to it, and it was included in the budget. The week before, I had brought it forward as a private member's bill. Quebec is the first province that has done this, that has completed the legislation that is required, and other provinces are looking at moving in this direction. I think if we were to ask someone, "Would you rather put the money into a PRPP with your name on it, or do you want to increase the CPP?"—I think people need to understand that there are other things. Critics look at this and say, "Well, look, they don't use up all the RRSP room."

Our party has, in its white paper on retirement security, recognized the fact that the most important thing for people to have in this financial environment is a higher level of financial literacy. I've had conversations with people about RRSPs—"Oh, no, I don't have an RRSP." You say, "Have you ever looked into it?" "I'm not rich. I wouldn't be able to do that." "But it's not just for rich people." "Well, I wouldn't know what questions to ask." I said, "That's okay. That's their job: to answer, to give you an idea that would then stimulate you to ask questions."

I think we have a great deal to do, as a government, to encourage people to have greater confidence in building up their own sense of financial literacy. The result of that is that they will then have a greater sense of responsibility: "I can do this." Maybe they can do a tax-free savings account. There are so many opportunities, but it's something we haven't done a good job on. Parents don't discuss it with their kids. Kids don't have savings accounts. We need a culture of recognition that, at the end of the day, you do have a personal fiduciary responsibility and the sooner you learn a bit about it, the better.

One of my constituents, who is the person responsible for writing up the agreement when someone buys a car at the car dealership she works at, came to me about three years ago and said, "You've got to do something. You cannot believe the number of people I see coming into this car dealership who are in their late 20s or early 30s, who sit down to make a deal and write up a bill of sale, and they have no credit rating because they declared bankruptcy. They have no idea that these are the consequences of doing that." It's those kinds of things.

I'm sure all of us—people who live from one credit card to the next that are maxed out, paying the interest rate and trying to lurch from one pay to another. These are things that are part of the whole picture of recognizing what the government can do with a Canada pension plan and what it means to have OAS, old age security. What do these things mean? What do they mean for me, and what should I be doing?

1720

Understand that the only way to increase the role of the private sector is, they have to make a profit. They can't be hamstrung by government costs and regulations to be able to contribute to the wider society. People are in the same boat. They don't have any extra money. They are living from paycheque to paycheque. They have no ability to sign up.

I think that the government is hoping or planning that this proposal will be something that they can use next week to lay the table for their plan. I think they share it with PEI, as an argument that they would like to see this increased CPP. But certainly, the commentators in any of the papers have demonstrated significant information that shows the limitations, generally, not supporting enhancing the CPP at this time.

I think the government should keep in mind that, in this motion, there is nothing to give us any sense of how that cost is going to be absorbed and who is going to be able to pay that kind of money. CFIB and all the businesses that are still here certainly don't have that kind of confidence that they want to see the government actually pursue this particular idea at this time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I almost got caught off guard. I didn't realize I was joining the debate quite at this time. But I'm quite prepared to do so because it's not a hard motion to have some problems with.

You have to ask right off the bat, Speaker, what is the motivation of the government? You know, when Matlock or Kojak or any of those TV cops were investigating a murder, one of the things they looked for was, what was the motive? What is the motive of the government to bring forth this motion today? We have to point out to the folks there in TV land that the government is generally spending most of its time in fantasyland or cover-up land. There's two different places.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I believe the word "cover-up" has been repeatedly ruled out of order by the Speaker, and I would ask the member to withdraw the unparliamentary comment.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'll withdraw it. I thought the minister was not paying attention, but clearly she is. I'll have to be careful.

They spend a lot of time in fantasyland and a lot of time in changing-the-channel land.

They bring out this motion, and it's all about an enhanced CPP. They're not saying a word about what that is going to cost or who is going to pay for it. Kathleen Wynne has been travelling around, giving people the impression that we're just going to double the CPP that people are going to get years down the road; it's not going to cost you a cent.

She's right about one thing: There's an awful lot of people worried in this province.

There is water coming for me, right? Two waters? Here they are. Look at that—as I speak. Thank you very much, William.

There is a great deal of concern about retirement security for people in this country, particularly in this province. What is driving that concern, much of it, is the recognition that not maybe so much us—we're the ones who should be bearing some responsibility—but the next generation is going to bear so much responsibility for the

mess that this government has made of the fiscal condition of the province of Ontario, and it's hurting everybody.

When a government runs deficits like this government is running, at \$12 billion, and the debt is now at \$273 billion, that isn't just a problem for the services the government provides. It's a problem for our economy. It's a problem for every business that is a job creator out there.

What is Kathleen Wynne's position on dealing with the debt and the deficit? It's funny, she used in her motion something about, "And while others will say we can put this off for another day"—my goodness gracious. Who would know better about putting things off for another day than Kathleen Wynne? That is what she is doing with the debt of this province. Instead of attacking this debt—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize for interrupting, but, again, I would remind the House that it's appropriate to use ministers' titles, by calling her the Premier, and members by their ridings.

I return to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I think everyone understands we go by "Premier." Do I have to say "Premier Kathleen Wynne"?

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm just trying to economize my words.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): If you would just say "the Premier," that would be conforming with the rules of the House.

Mr. John Yakabuski: "The Wynne government" is legal?

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: "The Wynne government" is legal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes. It is.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh. So, Mr. Delaney, you're wrong again, you see.

While the Wynne government, who's headed by the Premier—she uses this phrase, "And while others will say we can put this off for another day..." This is a sad commentary that this is what they rely on the week before this Legislature rises, that this is the message they want to put out there. This is what they want to put in people's Christmas stockings: a vague, vacuous, empty, meaningless motion that we'd like to see the CPP rise. It is going to make for pretty poor Christmas cake, this motion.

You know what would make a difference to people's lives? If there actually was a jobs plan. She's talking about enhancing the CPP. Do you know how much a person gets with CPP if they don't have a job? No deduction from the cheque, but no cheque. And if they've never had a job, no cheque when they retire. Because what are they retiring from? They're retiring from unemployment in the province of Ontario, which gets worse and worse and worse every day under this Kathleen Wynne government—the Wynne government.

We heard so much last week about job losses: Kellogg's; a few weeks ago, Heinz. The hundreds of people who lose their job—that's just a part of the pain that is going to be felt. All of the other ancillary industries, peripheral services that are dependent upon the people who have those jobs—the people at Heinz lost their jobs; they're not going to be making ketchup. What about the truckers who used to move that stuff around? What about the people who make bottles? What about the people who make labels? They're all affected. Then, Kellogg's—it's not just the Special K. It's everybody else who's involved in the chain of making this economy work. What is the reaction of the government? "Oh, ho-hum. It's a transition." It's very, very scary what we're seeing here today.

This is about picking a fight with the federal government, because they're losing their own battle here. And the auditor's report this week—we've all seen it. It's the thickest—one of the thickest, one of the most scathing reports on the performance of a government in my time in office here and perhaps in the history of Ontario. So what does the Premier do? "Oh, we don't want to talk about the auditor's report. We want to talk about some vague promise to people about maybe someday down the road, if the federal government doesn't play baseball with us, we're going to bring in a new pension plan." You're going broke in this province, and you're talking about a new pension plan.

It's time you got your fiscal house in order here. It's time you made some kind of effort to say to the people of Ontario, "There will be a future to believe in. There will be a future in Ontario, because this government cares enough to get its own fiscal house in order so that your job tomorrow will be easier—will be easier." But, no, "Let's change the channel. Let's divert people's attention." I don't know what the announcement will be tomorrow, but they'll come up with something. They don't want to talk about the Auditor General's report.

1730

It's interesting, on the very day that we're finding that the pension plans at OPG, where the employees who get massive severances when they leave—and the pensions: They're contributing about one fourth to one fifth of what they should be putting in.

So we've got these kinds of pension plans in this book. And in the fantasy book that Kathleen Wynne brought out today, she's going to give pensions to everybody else.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Hey, he just talked to you about names.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, I made a mistake there; I'm sorry. The Wynne government brings out this plan for higher pensions in the future.

On the surface, I understand that there's going to be a need for more retirement security. The problem is how they're going about it. They want to pick a fight with the federal government. They want to promise all kinds of other things, but they don't want to look in the mirror.

My old friend from Home Hardware, Walter Hachborn, always used to say, "If you can face the man

in the mirror every morning and honestly say, 'I'm doing the best I can and I'm doing what I believe is right,' you're well on your way to doing the right thing." But they refuse to look in the mirror. They've painted the mirror black so there is no reflection. They don't want to see what the mirror says to them. Do you know what the mirror would say to them, in boxcar letters? It would say, "Stop doing what you're doing. You're putting an albatross around the neck of every child being born today, the ones who will be born tomorrow and the ones who will be born years from now, because you're being irresponsible about how you conduct your business here in the province of Ontario."

Interruption.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You can't do that. No, I don't think you can. I don't know if you can. Well, do a point of order.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you so much to my honourable colleague—and my apologies for interrupting his speech. I just want to ask the House to welcome my cousin Janmeet Kaur, who is joining us today from Seattle. She's a Toronto native, but she lives in Seattle now. Please join me in welcoming her here today. Thank you so much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's technically not a point of order, but we welcome you to the Legislature.

I'm pleased to return to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Welcome from Seattle. I actually needed a bit of a break to get some water in me.

Okay, so we're done with that. I was wondering who was giving me that note.

I just want to speak calmly for a moment. If this government would simply reflect upon its own record of the last 10 years and ask themselves—spending in this province when this government came into office was \$68 billion a year. It is now over \$126 billion, and the Premier has promised it's going up by another \$5 billion next year. She's going to spend more because she wants to go to the people and say, "You can have it all, and I'm going to give it to you. The only thing I want you to do is re-elect me." Oh, I'm sorry she has never actually been elected—but she wants to get elected as Premier.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: She has never been elected as Premier.

She wants to go to the people with the goody bag. She wants to be like the tooth fairy. I think she believes that if she just shakes a little fairy dust on her cereal—the cornflakes that won't be done here anymore—that this problem is going to go away.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I respect the member's freedom to have a point of view, but standing order 23(h) prohibits him from ascribing motive or making assertions or allegations about another member, regardless of whether the member is in fact part of the executive council.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I didn't hear the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke make any allegation. I return to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. Every day that I'm in this chamber, I see more good reasons why you sit in that chair: because your wise decisions to put down the frivolous objections of the government side sometimes do impress me. One of these days you're probably going to rule against me, and we'll have a chat about that, too.

Anyway, I think it is very, very discouraging if you live in the province of Ontario and you wake up in the morning and you read the newspapers. You shake your head, and you actually ask yourself, "What are these people thinking? Do they really believe that problems just go away?"

I want you to think about your own house out there. Okay? We're speaking hypothetically, Speaker. So you've been living a little high on the hog, you've been spending a little more than you're taking in, you've been spending a bit of the children's inheritance, as they say, going and having a good time. But you know what? You're making a lot of friends down at the bar because you're a happy-go-lucky fellow, going in there and spending money. You're garnering favours with people.

But, all of a sudden, someday you get hit on the head, I guess. This comes across to you, and you say, "I can't continue to do this. I'm going to go bankrupt, and my children are going to be left with nothing. I've got to reform. I've got to change my behaviour. I've got to become more responsible. I've got to shape up."

That's what this government needs to do. It needs to shape up. It needs to reform its behaviour. It can't just keep going on and spending other people's money and hoping that the problem will go away. If you spend more money than you take in, there's only one remedy: You have to either reduce the amount of money you're spending, or you have to take more money in. This government has already tapped the people out there.

The Premier said—what was it, 50% or more than 50% of eligible people didn't make a contribution—

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Seventy per cent.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Seventy per cent of eligible people did not make a contribution to their RRSP last year. Now, do you think they decided not to make that contribution because they just didn't want to, or is it possible that, in Kathleen Wynne's Ontario, they can't afford to make that contribution, tax-sheltered or otherwise? There's nothing left at the end of the month when the bills are paid—hey, they can't even pay the bills. The hydro bill comes in now, and it takes them four days to open it. They haven't got the courage to open it for at least four days, because they know the news is bad.

That's what they're faced with in Kathleen Wynne's Ontario.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I say to the Minister of Rural Affairs that he may have the chance to have the floor here shortly. I don't know.

I say to the Wynne government, if you truly believe in what you're doing, well, table the legislation, and make sure in that legislation—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: She said she would.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, that is just empty words. That would be the first time the Liberals lied, wouldn't it? Oh.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member to withdraw his—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Good ruling, Speaker. I withdraw. Good ruling on that one, too.

The minister says that the Premier has said if the federal government doesn't do what she demands of them, she's going to bring in the legislation. Oh, we'll be looking forward to that. The Liberals have never broken a promise, have they?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Not that I'm aware of.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Are you aware of it, Minister? Have the Liberals broken any promises?

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yeah, right.

So, Speaker, I believe that this is just another diversion tactic to take people away from the real issues facing Ontario.

Several weeks ago, our leader, Tim Hudak, sat down with the Premier, and he negotiated and worked with her on a plan, a programming motion, to get through many of the bills that this government wanted to get through. But the understanding was that after that was done, there would be a jobs plan come forward to help the people of Ontario—real help for real people. You know what we got? Zero. Nothing.

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Speaker, for that, I believe this government clearly has run out of ideas. In my opinion, and I believe in the opinion of people across the province, it has run out of time.

So, Speaker, I move that the following be added at the end of the motion—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Would you like me to do that one more time?

I move that the following be added at the end of the motion:

“And that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario believes that the Wynne government has failed to put forward a jobs plan over two months after the House cleared the decks;

“Therefore, it is the opinion of this House that the House leaders of all three recognized parties shall schedule a debate one week following the passage of this motion and a vote on the motion of want of confidence standing in the name of Jim Wilson, MPP, Simcoe–Grey.”

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Yakabuski has moved that the following be added at the end of the motion:

“And that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario believes that the Wynne government has failed to put forward a jobs plan over two months after the House cleared the decks;

“Therefore, it is the opinion of this House that the House leaders of all three recognized parties shall schedule a debate one week following the passage of this motion and a vote on the motion of want of confidence standing in the name of Jim Wilson, MPP, Simcoe–Grey.”

The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke still has the floor, debating the amendment.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker. Now, let's talk about debating this amendment.

I believe that when this motion is called and when it is passed, a debate of this House will clearly show—and I believe that my friends to my left, both philosophically and physically, geographically and however we want to put it, are going to side with that, because I have listened to their leader over the last couple of days. I have listened to Ms. Horwath say repeatedly that this government is done, it's finished—I'm paraphrasing—it's corrupt, and it has to be stopped. It has to be stopped.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's an unparliamentary comment again. I would ask the member to withdraw the word “corrupt.”

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw, Speaker. I was just paraphrasing the NDP leader.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I thought you were referring to the Canadian Senate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, no; speaking of the government.

When this amendment to the motion is debated, I am hopeful that our friends to my left will side not with Jim Wilson, MPP Simcoe–Grey, not with the PC caucus, not with Tim Hudak, but with the people of Ontario, who cannot accept what is going on from that side of the House any longer. We believe absolutely that if the people are given an opportunity, they will send this group packing.

Can you imagine having to go out there as a Liberal candidate in a general election and campaign on the slogan, “It's just a cup of coffee”? Is that going to be their campaign slogan for the \$1.1 billion that was wasted in Mississauga and Oakville? “It's just a cup of coffee.” I think people will buy that. What do you think, Speaker? Will people actually accept that as a good reason for cancelling and relocating those gas plants? I want to see the Liberal members campaigning on that.

I looked across today, Speaker, at the faces on the Liberal members. They've all seen this. They've all seen—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Prop.

Mr. John Yakabuski: This is not a prop; this is the auditor's report. It is absolutely legal to show this to the House. The Speaker knows that, and that's why he didn't stop me.

But I want to tell you this: I looked across. I looked across today with this report and I saw the greatest display of collective shame in my 10 years in this chamber. The heads were hung. It would have been a perfect opportunity for a photo op for the shame of the caucus. That's what we could call it: "The Shame of the Caucus," the Liberal caucus all assembled together behind their leader, Premier Wynne, heads hung in shame for their role in this report.

So do they want to talk about the auditor's report? No. Here's what they want to talk about. Here's what they want to say: lovely phrases like, "And recognizing the retirement savings challenge, the Ontario government has developed a comprehensive retirement income strategy and is leading the call for a CPP enhancement." Doesn't that sound nice? Doesn't that sound better than getting up and—how about another apology saying that after 10 years of absolutely wrecking the economy of this province with an attitude of complete ambivalence to everything else that was going around and all the good advice of the citizens of this province, now we have to put the hammer down? Oh, no. Let's not say that. The Liberals wouldn't want to say that. Let's say something like this.

So what did she go out and say when the economic statement came out in the fall? "We're going to increase spending." Every analyst and every economist in the world is telling them, "Whoa. You guys are so deep in the hole, you've got to stop digging." What does the Premier say? "We're going to increase spending." You know, "Let's just increase spending because I think that will fix everything, won't it?" Folks, that's not going to work.

I want you people over there—we'll deal with your silly motion that means nothing, that has no legislative teeth, authority, whatsoever. It's a wish list. But I guess this is the season of wishes. I hope yours come true, and I hope that the fairy godmother visits your house at Christmastime too. This is a wish list.

But let's stop wishing and let's roll up our sleeves and start facing the problems that the people of Ontario need us to face. Let's collectively—I'll use some nice words. Let's have a conversation and let's collectively and collaboratively come up with solutions that will matter to the people of Ontario, not any more of this airy-fairy language kind of stuff that everybody is tired of hearing. The Premier became the leader earlier this year. It all sounded good to start. But you know what? It's wearing out. People are getting tired of the fancy phrases. They're getting tired of living in fantasyland and the thinking that, "Oh, if we just smile at each other and have a big group hug, all our problems are going to go away." It's not going to happen. If you want to fix the problems, you've got to actually come up with concrete solutions that have been well thought out so that when they are implemented, it will show, the results will show, that we will have an economy that is rolling once again, the envy of all of Canada; in fact, the envy of the world.

It's not going to happen until we vote on this amendment.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'm happy to rise and talk a bit about this issue. I thought I was going to have 30 or 40 minutes, but my friend from Renfrew there used all of his time. So I'm going to turn my 10 minutes to talking about some people in my riding.

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But, you know, one has to question why this motion is being brought forward on the day after the Auditor General's report and the day before the Legislature is actually rising. It's kind of laughable that the government would actually bring forward a motion like this the day before we're rising until the middle of February. I think it's a pathetic attempt to change the scandal channel. That's my new buzz word: the scandal channel. I know and the Liberal government knows that this motion is going nowhere.

On December 9, the NDP federally tabled and debated a motion, and it was overwhelmingly defeated by the Conservative government. They have no interest in enhancing CPP pensions. They don't care, so it's going nowhere.

On the other hand, there is a proposal by this government for pooled registered retirement plans with, I think, a date to respond by January 14—not a defined benefit plan, not a plan where somebody can depend on \$600 or \$700 a month when they retire; a plan that will profit insurance companies and banks. They are just rubbing their hands and itching to get into these pooled registered retirement plans.

It's really concerning that the government could have been doing other things, like some oversight of OPG. Today during question period I had an opportunity to read some of the articles in the clippings, and it really turned my stomach. I felt sick reading some of those articles that people—the president is making \$1.7 million. Three people get fired; the one guy gets \$760,000 in bonuses for the last four years and then he gets fired, and he's still going to get severance pay. We all know that he's going to end up, probably, with two years' severance, so those guys will walk away with \$1 million, \$1.5 million each. But in my riding at my local food bank, The Hope Centre, an agency that provides services to the most vulnerable in our society—the Salvation Army—they can't provide Christmas baskets this year to all of the needy people in the Niagara south area of my riding because there are too many people in need. This year, baskets will only go out to families with children.

On this hand, you've got these guys basically raping the public system for dollars, and over here we have people like the member from Renfrew talked about who are in so much trouble they don't know whether to pay their rent or buy groceries, and that's sad.

I had a woman call today, actually, after she read the newspaper in our area, about the OPG salaries. Her name is Norma Heximer, and her daughter is a nurse; I worked with her at the local hospital for a number of years.

She said, "Isn't there something that we can do about these outrageous CEO salaries?" On the one hand, these

people are making all this money, but here's a senior—she needs a hearing aid—and the Assistive Devices Program under the province pays \$500.

Do you know how much a hearing aid costs? Upwards of \$4,000 or \$5,000 today to buy a decent hearing aid. Here's a senior struggling, who needs one, and she's going to get \$500 from the government to assist her, while over here we're not paying any attention to CEOs and VPs of Hydro One or OPG making millions and millions of dollars and making it, actually, on the backs of those people who are paying the freight: the taxpayers of this province.

I had another fellow actually send me an email. His name is Roy Norgrove. He was a Torontonian. He was a successful self-employed photographer until he had a quadruple bypass, and he's now living on CPP and old age security. He moved from Toronto to Port Colborne. He went through all of his savings because he had to use it as income; he could no longer work. His blood circulation is reduced, so it's important for him to keep warm. But guess what? The temperature in his house today is at 62 degrees because his apartment is heated with hydro and he can't turn the temperature up. He's afraid to turn it on. His average bill is \$150 a month, soon to be \$200 a month under the new long-term energy plan. He's beside himself because of the recently announced hydro hikes. He called the energy board to complain and they said, "Nothing we can do about it." They suggested he write a letter. He's articulate and angry, on one hand, about the obscene salaries and bonuses being given out by Hydro One, OPG and their predecessors and, on the other hand, that there's nothing but very high delivery fees, debt retirement charges and peak hour energy prices that effectively punish retirees on fixed incomes. Of course, we still haven't seen what it's going to cost for the cancelled gas plants to save a few Liberals seats.

He calls the folks making money for electricity in Ontario "ruthless thieves"—his words, not mine. He believes there should be a forensic audit ordered of the Ontario Energy Board. He said he'd be happy to speak with any of us on this issue. Those are the kinds of struggles that people are facing in my riding.

I heard from a senior, 67 years old. She's still waitressing, slugging around those heavy trays because she doesn't have enough income. She's collecting CPP. She's still being required to pay CPP because nobody told her that she had to actually sign off so that she didn't have to contribute any longer—not that the few dollars of contributions are going to help her down the road.

So in my hard-hit riding, where we've lost probably 10,000 jobs in the last 10 years, I've got seniors who retired from the private sector. They retired with a pension that they thought they were going to have for the rest of their lives, only to find out that those pension plans were underfunded—governments don't seem to be

too concerned about ensuring that private companies are actually fully funding pension plans—and I've got retirees who are 70 years old and 80 years old who are now finding their pension reduced by 30% and 40%, along with their benefits. I've got GM retirees who have retired—middle-management folks who were in my office last week. They've got a class action suit going against GM because their pensions are about to be reduced because GM, who makes huge profits, didn't fully fund their pension plans and so now they're in trouble.

Is enhanced CPP a good thing? Yes, it is a good thing, but the fact is, it's not going to happen with this motion; it's very problematic. I don't think this Liberal government knows from one year to the next what they are actually doing because if I remember correctly, Dwight Duncan, the former finance minister, had some kind of a pension plan when he was here. In that plan, he was going to actually take money from—

Ms. Catherine Fife: You remember Dwight.

Ms. Cindy Forster: You remember Dwight. He was going to take money from two of the biggest public sector pension plans, and he was going to use it to try and fund the underperforming or underfunded smaller pension plans, right? Now we're moving to this new plan for these pooled registered retirement funds that are not going to provide people with the income they need at the end of the day.

I guess my time is almost up here. I would say that—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, he'll stand up. Keep on going.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Okay. I would say that this is nothing more than a way to change the channel, hoping that people over the Christmas and New Year's break actually forget about the Auditor General's report, forget about the gas plant cancellations and the millions of dollars, forget about all those people who are effectively stealing money from the public utility.

I think the Liberals should be paying more attention to things like Chris Mazza who actually got \$9.3 million over a four-year period and he's now looking for \$1 million in severance pay. What is that about, right? Those are the kinds of things that the Liberal government should be concerned about: the Chris Mazzas of the world, the OPG scandal, autism—we talked about autism today, actually. Today we had a question; I think there were several questions on it over the last few days. We've got more people on the waiting lists than there are kids actually getting the services provided, and the government isn't doing anything about that—

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

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation

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Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
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Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
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Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
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Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
Steven Del Duca, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Douglas C. Holyday, Mitzie Hunter
Monte McNaughton, Michael Prue
Soo Wong
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Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Michael Harris
Peggy Sattler, Laurie Scott
Jeff Yurek
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**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Rick Bartolucci
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Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
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Jonah Schein
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Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Todd Smith
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France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, John O'Toole
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Donna H. Cansfield, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Monte Kwinter
Jane McKenna, Rick Nicholls
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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la politique sociale**

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Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial
sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience
intellectuelle**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
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Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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